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The Influence of Student Perceptions about School Experience on non-University Bound Students' Motivation to Succeed

By

Caroline Mansfield

B.A., Dip Ed.

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Master of Education

at the Faculty of Education, Edith Cowan University

Date of Submission : December 1997

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Abstract

In Australian high schools today there are increasingly greater numbers of students completing a final two years of post-compulsory secondary schooling without the intention of progressing to a university tertiary education. Educators acknowledge that the comparative lack of motivation displayed by these students poses problems within the classroom and the educational system and most are concerned about how best to cater for the distinct and unique needs of this group of students.

This thesis investigates the influence of student perceptions about school experience on Year 12 non-university bound students' motivation to succeed. The study focuses on the perceptions students hold about the classroom processes and curriculum they experience in their final year of school and then explores how these perceptions influence the motivational goal orientations students adopt.

The study is qualitative in nature and focuses on four students enrolled in a non-university bound course of study at a metropolitan high school presenting their perceptions of schooling and discussing how these influence their motivation to succeed. Data were obtained by interviewing the subjects on four occasions over a semester and utilising two questionnaires. The research is presented in the form of case studies and utilises case study techniques for gathering and analysing data. Data were analysed according to student self-perceptions, student perceptions of classroom processes, student perceptions of curriculum and motivational goal orientation.

The findings of this research support much of th ' literature concerning student perceptions and achievement goal theory, however, given this particular group of students and their unique situation, variations appeared with regard to students adopting differing orientations. Students demonstrated the ability to employ either task mastery orientation or performance/ego orientation depending on the conditions with which they were presented. These conditions included features such as subject selected, teaching strategies used, teaching styles, course content, nature of task presented, classroom environment and assessment and evaluation techniques. Most of these variables can be controlled by classroom teachers.

This study provides a useful insight for teachers of non-university bound Year 12 students in terms of student motivation and performance.

Declaration

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

(i) incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;

(ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or

(iii) contain any defamatory material.

Date 19/3/98

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background to the study

Over the last 10 years in Western Australia there has been a significant change in the retention rates at the post-compulsory level in secondary schooling. After 10 years of compulsory schooling students are able to leave to seek employment, begin apprenticeships/traineeships or go on to further training, such as TAFE (Technical and Further Education). Very few students leave school after Year 10 but instead stay on to complete a further one or two years of post-compulsory schooling. However, not all of those remaining at school for a final two years have the academic ability required to enrol in a university bound or TEE (Tertiary Entrance Examination) course, and so a selection of non-Tertiary Entrance Examination courses have now been written to cater for these students. Partly because of school retention rates and the decline in available on-the-job training, TAFE has now become a major player in the tertiary training field and non-university bound students may aim to gain entry to a TAFE course after completing Year 12. Students also have the option of going straight into the workforce, gaining an apprenticeship or traineeship, or attending business college. To accommodate the new directions now available to students school curriculum has had to change.

In designing curriculum and school based programmes educators have been concerned about how best to cater for non-university bound students. There appears to be a diversity of motivational factors exhibited by students arising from their career aspirations, academic ability, previous school experience, self-perceptions and perceptions of curriculum and classroom processes. In order to understand the nature of the student group involved a description of the non-university bound upper secondary school situation is provided.

At a Year 10 level students are strongly encouraged to choose either a university bound or a non-university bound course of study. By the time students reach the end of Year 11 it is anticipated that they have confirmed or adapted their course of study so as to reach the tertiary goal(s) they have set. Goal setting works well for those students who have clear goals and the academic means to believe the goals are reasonable. Due to the range of options available to students and their limited self-knowledge, students generally do not maintain the same career goals throughout their final two years. Some students who are not academically inclined seem to have greater difficulty in determining career paths and other students suffer from having unrealistic ideas about their capabilities. For many students the determination of a suitable and desirable career path does not occur until the end of Year 11 or even midway into Year 12. Due to these factors some students who began a university bound course of study in Year 11 (and found their success more limited than anticipated) may change to a non-university bound course of study for Year 12 hoping to have a greater degree of success with comparatively easier subjects. As a result, at the end of Year 11 students choosing a non-university bound course for Year 12

have quite varied backgrounds. Based on the experience they have had in Year 11 a variety of student types seem to emerge in the mind of the researcher

Some students have attempted a university bound course in Year 11 but did not achieve at an academic standard that would indicate they should continue with the same course. These students then may evaluate their options and enrol in a non-university bound course of study in Year 12 hoping that an easier course will provide them the degree of academic success they require to meet their new career goals.

Other students have completed a university bound course in Year 11 but have decided that TAFE offers a course best suited to their career goals rather than a university course. These students change to an easier course to achieve higher grades which will gain them more points for TAFE entry.

Students who apply for TAFE are assessed for course entry according to the number of A's, B's and C's they achieve in Year 12. For example, students are given 5 points for an A, 3 points for a B and 2 points for a C. Thus it is in the students' interests to gain the highest grades possible to maximise their opportunity to gain course entry. Students can also earn extra points by completing work experience and completing preferred Year 12 subjects for the TAFE course they have chosen. These criteria for TAFE entry play a large part in influencing students when they are determining their course of study at Year 12 level.

There are also students who have completed a non-university bound course in Year 11, have determined the TAFE courses they wish to apply for, and who are striving to achieve their best in all areas for their final year. Other students have completed a non-

university bound course in Year 11, did not do as well as they wanted, do not have any immediate employment prospects and therefore decide to aim to achieve at a higher level this year and graduate.

In order to graduate from Secondary School and achieve WACE (Western Australian Certificate of Education) certification, students must receive an average grade of C in eight full year SEA (Secondary Education Authority) accredited courses, provided they have completed at least ten SEA accredited courses. At least four of the courses studied used to satisfy the 'average grade of C' requirement must be at Year 12 level. Students must also achieve English language competence by obtaining a C or higher in a Year 12 accredited English course.

Also aiming for Secondary Graduation and TAFE entry are students who have completed a non-university bound course and participated in a work placement in Year 11. These students intend to continue with their chosen curriculum including INSTEP (Innovative Skills Training and Education Programme - work placement) for Year 12.

Because of the different characteristics exhibited by Year 12 non-university bound students, there is potential for variations in the motivational strategies they will employ. These strategies are in part determined by the perceptions they hold about themselves and the classroom processes and curriculum they encounter.

All the students in the Year 12 non-university bound group have had the opportunity to apply for a position in the Innovative Skills Training and Education Programme (INSTEP) course which is an SEA accredited subject. The aim of this programme is to provide students with the opportunity to achieve entry-level skills across

a number of industry areas. To gain entry to INSTEP students must meet the entry criteria and be interviewed by a panel of non- school personnel As TAFE assigns extra points for students who have participated in work experience in an area related to their course of application, most students who have a particular TAFE course of study in mind will try to gain entry into the INSTEP programme. Once accepted into the INSTEP programme students spend one day a week out of school at a work placement To obtain a C grade pass (only pass/fail available in 1996) the students must achieve a series of Generic Work-Based Learning Skills (Stage 1 for Year 11 subject) and Industry Specific Work-Based Learning Skills (Stage 2 for a Year 12 subject). If students wish to receive credit for INSTEP as a Year 12 subject they must complete Stage 1 in first semester and Stage 2 in second semester. Students will experience a different work placement for each stage.

If students are accepted into the INSTEP programme their experience in Year 12 becomes entirely different from anything they have encountered. They experience 5 INSTEP periods per week operating on the timetable gridline across 3-4 days, and are at work for one entire day. Thus students have INSTEP periods which they should spend catching up on work they have missed. Accordingly students are required to be self-motivated and take considerable responsibility for their learning.

Within the group of INSTEP students various student types also emerge. Some students enjoy the stimulation a work placement provides and feel motivated to achieve well at school due to excitement about the career prospects in a particular industry. Students who hold this view generally see the value in learning, make considerable effort to be organised and exhibit the self-discipline required to keep up with the academic

programme. On the other hand students who do not have these skills become frustrated Regardless of whether the work placement is enjoyable or not, some students do not possess the necessary strategies or self-discipline to maintain consistency in the school programme. In addition there are students who may find that work placement provides them with little stimulation and begin to view INSTEP as a waste of time. This in turn affects their perception of schooling. Some students find that INSTEP provides a door to employment and leave school because they have been offered an apprenticeship or full time work.

Those students who do not experience INSTEP in Year 12, either because they chose not to apply or because they failed in their application, do not find Year 12 particularly different from Year 11. Not surprisingly most of these students do not achieve at a marked higher or lower level, but seem content to just maintain the standard they set in Year 11. There are students in this group who are striving to achieve Secondary Graduation and raise their course averages because of this, and there are students who become disillusioned with school, are increasingly absent and therefore do not pass.

Staff and students alike acknowledge that at Year 12 level, despite all efforts, motivation of many non-university bound students is a problem. Students who achieve well appear to be mostly task oriented in their motivation and aim to achieve well because they see value in learning. Many students are performance oriented and seem to view schooling as a matter of "jumping-through-the-right-hoops" and perform at a level that is sufficient to maintain average marks and please others. Other students avoid work and employ strategies that ensure they keep effort to an absolute minimum. Teachers become

concerned about the generally low motivation the students as a whole exhibit and deal with them in different ways. Some teachers are able to be creative and enterprising, adapting classroom processes and curriculum to better meet student needs, while others become frustrated and find the effort they expend in their classes to be insufficiently rewarding.

In order to find ways of improving this situation there is a need for educators and researchers to first explore student perceptions of schooling at a Year 12 non-university bound level.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to inquire as to how non-university bound students perceive schooling at a Year 12 level. The inquiry will attempt to ascertain the desired student objectives for Year 12 in terms of academic and non-academic gains, work placement experience and personal gains such as improvement in self-confidence.

This study will explore the range of expectations students hold about their curriculum, focusing on the subject matter of their courses, the assessment tasks assigned and evaluation procedures used. It will attempt to ascertain what these students deem to be relevant and valuable. The students' perceptions of the INSTEP programme as part of school curriculum may also be explored.

The study will also focus on the classroom processes the students find stimulating and which encourage their participation in the learning process. An exploration of the processes that enhance the students' motivation to achieve success at their own level will

be part of the study. In addition, the research will focus on the achievement goal orientations students employ in different situations and attempt to explore the factors influencing adoption of different goal orientations. As well as examining these factors the study will provide valuable commentary about the way students perceive the non-university bound learning situation as it already exists.

This inquiry will attempt to gain insight and understanding about curriculum and classroom processes at Year 12 non-university bound level, through the pe spective of student perceptions. By accessing student thoughts and feelings a more ac urate picture of what is happening in this situation should be ascertained.

Problem statement

The problem inherent in this study is the attempt to gain some understanding about the classroom processes and curriculum which motivate non-university bound Year 12 students. How students perceive classroom processes and curriculum can influence the achievement goal orientation(s) they adopt and this in turn will affect the degree to which they feel they have achieved meaningful success. With this insight, teachers can develop strategies and knowledge about how to work with students and make their final year at school a more meaningful experience.

As a consequence of this problem the thesis will address three specific questions :

1. What perceptions do non-university bound Year 12 students hold about the classroom processes and curriculum they encounter in their final year of schooling?

2. What motivational goal orientations do Year 12 non-university bound students adopt and what factors influence the adoption of particular orientations?

3. How do student self-perceptions and motivational goal orientations influence an individual's ability to achieve success?

Significance of the study

A distinct phenomenon has been emerging in secondary education in Western Australia. A rapid increase in non university bound students at the upper levels of secondary schooling has seen teachers and administrators having to take account of learners and learning situations that vary markedly from the previously traditional university bound style of upper secondary education. A significant aspect of this phenomenon is the lack of motivation of students in non-university bound post-compulsory schooling and this is recognised by teachers and students as being a problem. Most students in this group do not perceive themselves as being high achievers and some are used to experiencing failure at school.

If teachers can understand how these students perceive post-compulsory non-university bound schooling, then they can begin to adapt curriculum and classroom processes in order to motivate students and enable them to achieve meaningful success. Because of the advantage a work placement provides students in their TAFE application, it is predictable that in the future more students will be trying to gain entry into INSTEP.

Thus teachers particularly need to be aware of how the students perceive their school experience and how it relates to the world students experience in their work placement

If teachers are to understand how the experiences they offer are perc   d by their clientele, they can better tailor curriculum and classroom processes to more adequately meet student needs. If students perceive schooling to be valuable and are able to experience meaningful success, then lack of motivation should be less of a problem. Consequently teachers may come to realise how they can provide as worthwhile and meaningful upper secondary schooling for these students as provided for university bound students.

Definition of terms

Crucial to this study are a number of key terms which, at this point in the thesis, need definition.

Curriculum

In the context of this thesis the term "curriculum" applies to the subjects the students have chosen for their Year 12 course of study and the content areas covered in each of these subjects. The INSTEP programme is considered part of the school curriculum.

Classroom processes

The term "classroom processes" is used in this thesis to describe the aspects of the classroom environment that the students experience. This includes factors such as teaching strategies, evaluation and assessment, peer relationships, individual teaching styles, classroom environment and atmosphere, student teacher relationships and group dynamics.

Motivational goal orientations

The term "motivational goal orientation" is used to describe the motivational strategies students employ and by virtue of this the orientation they adopt. Motivational orientations are described in terms of task mastery, performance/ego and work avoidance.

Meaningful success

In the context of this thesis the term "meaningful success" refers to the manner in which the students define success as being meaningful to themselves as individuals.

Year 12

Year 12 in the Australian education system equates to the 12th Grade (final year) of schooling in the American education system. Students are typically 17 years of age.

Summary

Chapter One provided a background to the study. The features of the West Australian educational system which are applicable to this study have been explained along with a description of the types of students which emerge within this system. The purpose and significance of the study were described and the resulting research questions presented. Terms used in this study were then explained and the chapter concluded with an overview of the study.

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature relevant to this thesis focusing on the areas of student perceptions, achievement motivation and in particular achievement goal theory. This chapter explores the motivational goal orientations of task mastery, performance/ego and work avoidance as well as examining the research surrounding the relationship between cognitive patterns and achievement goals, ability perceptions and achievement goals and beliefs about schooling and achievement goals. The research showing the influence of classroom processes and curriculum on achievement goals is discussed along with that which concerns the influence of student background on achievement goals. The literature which focuses on the link between student self-perceptions and achievement behaviour is also discussed. Chapter Two also presents the conceptual framework used for this study.

Chapter Three describes the method of research used for this study. The chapter discusses research design, subjects, the process of gathering data, methodology used and data analysis. The chapter also explores the limitations of this study.

Chapter Four presents the case studies compiled of the four students participating in the research. Each case study follows the model of the conceptual framework discussing student background, Year 11 experience and achievement, goal setting, beliefs about schooling, student self-perceptions, student perceptions (curriculum and classroom processes) and motivational goal orientation. This chapter aims to provide the reader with a overarching view of the conditions under which each of the participants operate and an understanding of their perceptions of schooling.

Chapter Five discusses the findings of the research in relation to the literature discussed in Chapter Two. The discussion aims to both summarise the findings of the case studies and make comparisons between student characteristics and beliefs

Chapter Six concludes the thesis and serves to answer the research questions posed along with considering the implications of the research and the directions for further research in this area.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

The literature relevant to this thesis encompasses student perceptions and motivation. This includes literature about achievement motivation focusing on the theory of achievement goals, goal setting, and the relationship between student self-perceptions and specific achievement behaviour.

The chapter begins by discussing literature related to student perceptions and motivation and then examines theories of achievement motivation focusing on the theory of achievement goals. Literature exploring the three achievement goal orientations of task mastery, performance/ego and work avoidance is discussed along with literature investigating the relationship between achievement goals and cognitive patterns, ability perceptions, classroom processes and curriculum and student background. This chapter also examines how researchers have identified student goal orientations. The role goal setting has in determining motivation is discussed as well as the relationship between student self-perceptions and achievement behaviour. The chapter covers a wide range of literature but with a definite focus on the work of Meece and Nicholls as they have been at the forefront of research in this field.

Student Perceptions and Motivation

Research concerning students' classroom behaviours has begun to focus on the influence of students thoughts, beliefs, and feelings about themselves, other persons and events (Weinstein, 1983). Researchers and educators began to accept that student achievement was not a direct result of teaching behaviour but rather the result of the combination of teaching and student thought processes. Within this process students became mediators of instruction and researchers began to investigate how teaching can be improved and better understood in relation to student perceptions and thought processes. Wittrock (1986) argued that because teachers and teaching can influence the way students respond in the classroom then this in turn affects their achievement. Hence, to improve our teaching we should examine the effect teaching has on students and how their perceptions of teaching can "mediate achievement"(Wittrock, 1986, p. 297). Such a focus on student perceptions requires researchers and educators to view students as "active information processors who affect classroom events as much as they are affected by them" (Schunk, 1992, p.3).

The beliefs students hold and the interpretations they make of their school experience can affect achievement in a variety of ways. How students perceive themselves in the context of the classroom has been found to influence many aspects of their behaviour such as level of interest, persistence, task engagement, and task performance (Newman & Schwager, 1992; Wittrock, 1986). Student perceptions, including self-perceptions and perceptions of classroom factors, have also been seen to influence help

seeking patterns. In a school situation students construct their own reality of self and environment and this reality influences their classroom behaviour (Newman & Schwager, 1992).

In the field of motivation it is essential that the perceptions students have of classroom contexts be investigated and valued. Nicholls (1992) proposes that educators consider students as Educational Theorists and in his research demonstrates how even second grade students are able to discuss classroom practices, make curriculum decisions and provide valuable commentary about their motivation for particular tasks and activities. Nicholls questions the way educators and researchers have sought to improve motivation in the past. "It seems strange that researchers on motivation have generally sought to improve student motivation without asking students what sorts of subject matter and what associated teaching methods make sense to them" (Nicholls, 1992, p. 282). Nicholls argues that the starting point for research into student motivation should be the students and the perceptions they hold about themselves and their classroom.

Achievement Motivation

The term achievement motivation specifically refers to the motivation individuals have to succeed. Individuals have different interpretations of success and what it means to them and thus the strategies they employ and the orientations they assume to succeed will differ. Over the years researchers have formulated and justified many theories of achievement motivation. According to Wigfield and Harold (1992) there are two sets of beliefs which are central to achievement motivation, namely, the beliefs individuals hold

about their ability and the success they expect along with how they value different tasks and how this influences the motivational behaviour they adopt.

Weiner's (1979; 1985, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 143) theory of achievement motivation examines the causes of success or failure on skill tasks. In achievement conditions students often attribute success and/or failure to factors such as effort, ability, task difficulty and luck. The factors to which students attribute their performance will influence their expectancies of future success. These expectancies in turn will produce different emotions and actions.

Dweck and Elliot (1983) discuss achievement motivation as involving goals relating to increases in and judgements of competence. Accordingly three goals are identified, namely the learning goal (to increase competence) and two performance goals (obtaining favourable judgements and avoiding unfavourable judgements of competence). In Dweck and Elliot's process of achievement motivation students form goals in which expectance and value and the anticipatory effect of goals are considered. Students then adopt goals for their performance and learning, perform at tasks and then evaluate their performance. Within this process Dweck and Elliot argue that young children have an incremental view of ability which enables them to improve, whereas students in upper primary and beyond tend to have an entity view of ability which means they will adopt different approaches to tasks.

Covington's (1984) self-worth theory of achievement motivation focuses on individuals' needs to strive for success and wish to avoid failure. He argues that "self-worth theory assumes that a central part of all classroom achievement, is the need for

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students to protect their sense of worth or personal value" (1984, p.8). Like Dweck and Elliot, Covington states that perceptions of ability are a primary activator of achievement behaviour and, for many high school students, ability is equal to worthiness. Likewise low ability can be perceived as failure. This theory embodies the idea that self-worth is influenced by performance level, self-perceptions of ability and amount of effort expended.

The most recent theory of achievement motivation is known as the theory of achievement goals. The theory of achievement goals emphasises the individual's reasons for engaging in achievement activities, specifically focusing on the purposes of student achievement behaviour.

Theory of achievement goals

Researchers have suggested that the motivation students have towards engaging in activities is directed by a complex set of goals (Wentzel, 1992; Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988). This theory of achievement goals suggests there are important relationships between students' perceptions of their achievement goals, reward structures, attributions, types of comparisons for determining progress and achievement behaviours. Achievement goals have been shown to influence patterns of motivation that determine student behaviour with regard to approaching, engaging in, and responding to achievement related activities (Ames, 1992). Different learning situations have been found to prompt students to pursue different achievement goals. Some students may aim to gain competency at a particular task but other students may be concerned with being able to demonstrate high ability. In addition, research shows that giving priority to one achievement goal rather than

others influences how individuals interpret, approach and respond to achievement activities (Meece, 1994). Given this research in achievement goals, it can be seen that students "influence their learning by adopting achievement goals that optimize self-regulatory processes" (Meece, 1994, p.25). Nicholls (1989) argues that motivational orientations are "not just different types of wants or goals. They involve different world views. Students with different motivational orientations collect different data and interpret them differently" (Nicholls, 1989, p. 102). In addition he argues that the term 'orientation' refers to "individual differences in prone-ness" whilst 'involvement' applies to "the states that people experience in a given situation" (Nicholls, 1989, p. 95). Thus although individuals may be oriented toward a particular achievement goal the experience with which they are presented may influence how they become involved with learning activities.

Goal orientations have been shown to account for differences in student motivational behaviour as the way students respond to tasks differs according to their motivational orientation. Three types of goal orientations have been identified (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988), namely, task mastery orientation, ego orientation and work avoidance orientation.

Task mastery orientation

According to Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle (1988), students who exhibit task mastery orientation are those who aim independently to master and understand their work. Such students view self-improvement and skill mastery as a reward and receive a sense of accomplishment from the inherent qualities of the task. They aim to gain knowledge by

doing their best and value learning as an end in itself (Meece, 1991). These students generally have high levels of intrinsic motivation to learn and high cognitive engagement in learning activities (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988). Task involved students are more likely to attribute effort to interest, indicating a desire to improve performance through effort (Butler, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 89). Butler (1987) also found that students who received only task focused comments in response to their school work were more likely to be task involved. Task orientation is associated with the views that school should prepare one for socially useful work and to understand the world (Nicholls, 1992). Students who are mastery oriented believe that success in school is the result of working cooperatively, working hard, being interested in the work and attempting to understand rather than memorize information (Nicholls, 1989). They believe that success is dependent on interest and effort, along with attempting to understand and help each other. These students reject the view that success is influenced by "knowing how to impress and pretending to like the teacher" (Nicholls & Thorkildsen, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 100).

Performance/Ego orientation

Students who possess ego or social goals aim to demonstrate high ability, impress those in authority and wish to be perceived as having high ability in relation to other students (Meece, 1991). They receive a sense of accomplishment from demonstrating superior ability, avoiding negative ability judgements, or receiving external reinforcement regardless of the learning involved (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988). These students'

main purpose is to protect their ego by either achieving at a higher level than others or by employing ego protecting strategies. Ego orientation is associated with the view that school should help enhance one's wealth and socioeconomic status (Nicholls, 1992). Ego oriented students generally possess less intrinsic motivation to learn and are oriented towards gaining recognition, pleasing others, and minimising effort as much as possible. These students also are more likely to attribute success to high ability and the relative performance of other students (Butler, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 89). Butler (1987) also found that students who received marks and comments indicating their achievement relative to other students were more likely to be ego involved. Thus social comparison has been predicted to enhance ego orientation. Students who are ego oriented believe that being successful is the result of being intelligent, performing at a higher level than their peers, having teachers who expect them to do well, knowing how to impress others and showing a liking for the teacher (Nicholls, 1989). They believe that successful students are smarter than their peers and achieve at a higher level than them (Nicholls & Thorkildsen, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 100).

Work Avoidance orientation

Students who are influenced by work-avoidant goals are concerned with completing work with a minimum amount of effort (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988; Meece & Holt, 1993; Nicholls, 1989). Students may adopt this type of goal orientation for a number of reasons, such as avoiding failure, expressing their negative attitudes toward schoolwork, or simply coping with the pressure and requirements of particular learning

situations (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988). Research by Nicholls, Pataschnick and Nolen (1985) indicates that high school students who became academically alienated were concerned with avoiding work, doing well without effort, and escaping teacher pressures. These students were less likely to define school success in terms of high effort, interest and understanding. Due to their beliefs about the value of school these students were found to employ strategies which minimised the effort required, such as copying others work and guessing, and as a result they were found not to actively engage in cognitive activities. They had the most negative attitudes toward learning and reported the lowest level of cognitive engagement in classroom activities (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988). High school students who try to avoid schoolwork have been shown to be less likely to believe that hard work leads to success at school. For these students school success means managing to avoid schoolwork (Nicholls, 1989). Like students who are ego oriented, students who have work avoidance orientation believe that success is a result of demonstrating higher skills than peers with the addition of having the necessary knowledge to impress the teacher and pretending to like the teacher (Nicholls & Thorkildsen, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 100). Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) found that Avoidance of Work orientation was "associated with the belief that school should enable students to attain wealth and status" (p. 686).

Cognitive patterns and achievement goals

Student goal orientations seem to be directly related to students' level of cognitive engagement in learning situations. Meece, Blumenfeld and Hoyle (1988) have shown that

individuals show greater cognitive engagement in, and persistence at, achievement activities when they have learning oriented or task mastery goals. According to Elliot and Dweck (1988, cited in Ames, 1992, p. 327), adopting certain achievement goals sets in motion a pattern of cognitive processes which determine how individuals interpret and respond to informational cues and situational demands.

For instance, Nolen (1988; cited in Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992, p. 170), found that eighth grade students who exhibited task orientation were more likely to be cognitively engaged through their more frequent use of deeper and surface processing strategies. On the other hand, students who exhibited an ego orientation were using only surface processing strategies. Nolen (1988) and Pintrich and Schrauben (1992) support the notion that motivational orientations are not directly related to actual achievement in comparison to use of cognitive strategies. This has led them to propose that motivational orientation and its link to the use of cognitive strategies only plays an indirect role in nurturing academic performance.

Ability perceptions and achievement goals

Research has shown that ability perceptions seem to influence achievement patterns (Meece, 1994). Students who perceive themselves as academically competent are more likely to display high levels of task engagement and have high achievement. This relationship has been consistently supported by researchers whether they measure self-concept of ability, perceived academic competence and beliefs of agency or capacity (Newman & Schwager, 1992). In addition, Newman and Schwager found that students

who perceive themselves as academically competent are more likely to seek academic help than those who do not expect to do well. Those who feel they can control their academic success are also more likely to seek help than those who feel they are unable to control their achievement. Nicholls (1989) argues that task involved students are more likely to prefer tasks that require high effort to achieve success.

Students who are ego involved will make judgements about their own competence based on the demonstrated competence of others (Nicholls, 1989). Ego involved students will not experience increased feelings of competence in activities where success can be attributed to ease of task. Likewise tasks which are perceived to be extremely difficult will not diminish individual feelings of competence. Ego involved students thus form perceptions of their ability and competence or incompetence based on their performance expectations in comparison with others (Nicholls 1989). Nicholls also reports that "estimates of individuals' perceived ability can be based on their expectations of success" (1989, pp. 110-111). Thus students who are ego involved evaluate their ability in comparison to that of others and make predictions about their expectations of success or perceived ability.

By high school, students have either an incremental view of ability (effort related) or they perceive ability as a fixed entity. Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) examined relationships between high school students' goal orientations and their beliefs about the causes of success. Students with task mastery oriented goal orientation saw effort and persistence as an important cause of success while those with an ego involved goal pattern saw success as depending on impressing the teacher and doing better than others. Ability

perceptions guide the selection of achievement goals. Task orientations are more common among students who believe they can improve their ability by investing greater effort and those who adopt ego goals view their abilities as stable traits (Meece, 1994).

Beliefs about schooling and achievement goals

As discussed previously research suggests the motivational orientations held by students are linked to beliefs they hold about the value and purposes of schooling. Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) conducted research using a "Purposes of Schooling Questionnaire" to ascertain the relationship between student motivational orientations and student views about the purposes of school.

This questionnaire had four scales to assess views about the purposes of school, namely, Wealth and Status, Commitment to Society, Understanding the World and Achievement Motivation. Students with task mastery orientation were inclined to view learning as an end in itself and indicated that school should increase students' understanding of the world and encourage commitment to society and achievement motivation. Students who were academically alienated and oriented towards avoidance of work indicated their view that school should increase wealth and status. The responses from students who were ego oriented reflected beliefs that school should enhance wealth and status as well as social commitment, understanding and achievement motivation. Nicholls (1989) reports that from this research "beliefs about what leads to success in school were meaningfully related to views about what school should be for" (Nicholls, 1989, p. 189).

Influence of classroom process and curriculum on achievement goals

Learning environments at school have been found to foster different goal orientations (Meece, 1994; Nicholls 1989). Emphasis on self-improvement, discovering new information, and perceived value of resource material can induce task mastery goal orientations. High effort attributions often result in high perceived competence. Learning conditions which raise concerns about individual ability, such as interpersonal competition, tests of intellectual skills and public learning situations that involve normative evaluations can elicit ego goal orientation (Meece, 1994). Nicholls argues that promoting "competitive or publicly evaluative educational environments" induces ego involvement (1989, p. 117).

Achievement goal orientations can be influenced by classroom processes and curriculum. Nicholls (1989, cited in Ames, 1992, p. 330) has argued that changing motivational patterns may involve changing students' views about society, the purposes of learning, and what school should and can do. Ames (1992) and Meece (1991) note the critical role the classroom structure plays in influencing student motivation. Teachers' roles and instructional practices may have to be modified or changed if they wish to elicit a mastery goal orientation and positive motivational patterns in students (Ames, 1992).

Butler's (1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989, pp. 89-90) research found that students adopted task or ego orientation due to various classroom conditions. Higher levels of ego orientation were found in students who were given marks and grades which indicated the success of their performance in relation to other class members. Students who were given only comments about what they had done well and how to improve were found to adopt

higher levels of task orientation. In addition, students who received grades showed less interest in continued work on the tasks (Nicholls, 1989, p. 92). Butler's (1987) research supports the notion that emphasis on social comparison increases ego orientation in the classroom.

Koestner, Zuckerman and Koestner (1987) found that teacher interaction with individual students had an impact on the orientations they adopt. "Students who were told they were working hard" spent more time "in the task involving than the ego involving condition, whereas those told they were highly able spent more time in the ego involving condition" (Nicholls, 1989, p. 90).

Teachers can enhance mastery orientation by adapting classroom variables and instructional practices. For example, evaluation which emphasises self-referenced standards and minimises social comparison can induce task mastery goal states. Grouping practices that emphasise the inherent value or benefits of the learning material can help students maintain a task mastery focus while engaged in the activity. Classroom processes which allow students to develop an increased sense of competence and to take more responsibility for their learning are likely to promote a task mastery goal orientation. Attitudes and expectations teachers express also influence students' ability perceptions and therefore their goal orientation (Meece, 1994). High mastery teachers expect students to understand, apply and make sense of learned material (Meece, 1994). The degree to which teachers promote meaningful learning, increase personal relevance of lessons, adapt instruction to the developmental levels and personal interests of students, establish

learning structures supportive of student autonomy and peer collaboration and emphasise the intrinsic value of learning will influence student goal orientations (Meece, 1991).

Ongoing research by Ames (1990) and Ames and Maehr (1989, cited in Ames, 1992, p. 332) focused on the issue of changing the climate of elementary school classrooms by enhancing a mastery goal orientation. The research project involved evaluating an intervention program that had been designed to stimulate adaptive patterns of motivation in elementary school age students. In this instance, task mastery orientation was defined in terms of specific classroom parameters and focused on six dimensions of the classroom learning environment - task design, distribution of authority, recognition of students, grouping arrangements, evaluation practices and time allocation. These variables are known as TARGET and were initially identified and described by Joyce Epstein (1988, 1989, cited in Ames, 1992). Within an achievement goal framework, a positive goal orientation does not depend on a single set of strategies or single instructional method. A mastery goal orientation requires a comprehensive view of the classroom processes and an approach that influences a wide range of student's classroom experiences.

Ames (1992) has suggested those students who are most likely to benefit from an enhanced mastery climate are those who are often considered as "at-risk". Further to this, the mastery climate of the elementary school classroom may be increased when teachers implement strategies in the TARGET areas over time. The intervention program has provided promising results in influencing students' interest in learning, use of effective learning strategies, attitudes toward learning, and self-concept of ability.

Competitive and evaluative classroom conditions have been shown to reduce the intrinsic interest students have in attempting tasks (Nicholls, 1989). Maehr and Stallings (1972, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 92) and Salili and colleagues (1976, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 92) "compared the effects of students' evaluation of their own learning with the effects of public evaluations by a teacher". Public evaluation resulted in ego orientation and produced less interest in continued learning. This finding has been supported by subsequent research. Koestner, Zuckerman and Koestner (1987), Deci, Betley, Kahle, Abrams and Porac (1981, cited in Nicholls 1989, p. 92) found that students had more interest in completing puzzles when emphasis was placed on individual performance rather than competitive success. Harackiewicz, Manderlink and Sansone (1984, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 92) found that interest in playing pinball was reduced by the expectation of having results compared to others.

The results from this research indicate that it is possible to affect students' motivational orientations through classroom processes and curriculum. If adapting the six dimensions of the classroom learning environment has the potential to enhance the task mastery motivational orientation of elementary students then the same possibility may exist for the upper secondary classroom.

Influence of student background on achievement goals

Research indicates that certain socialisation experiences students have at home can influence their ability conceptions and achievement goals (Meece, 1994). Ames and Archer, 1987, (cited in Meece, 1994, p.27) examined mothers' beliefs regarding the role

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of effort and ability in school learning, and found that they differed in the way they prioritised achievement goals. About 60 percent of mothers studied revealed a belief pattern which indicated a mastery goal pattern, however, 40 percent saw having good grades and achieving at a higher level than others as more important achievement goals for their children. These beliefs were found to relate to task selection, preferences for normative evaluation, and causal attribution patterns. The findings indicate that mothers could well influence the achievement goal orientations of their children by virtue of the activities they encourage, their own definition of success, and the knowledge they employ to evaluate their children's academic success (Meece, 1994).

Parents have also been found to put pressure on students to be in the top group or to perform well relative to others (Nicholls, 1989, p. 154). Parent responses to school assessment may also influence adoption of task or ego goals. For example, parents may encourage task orientation by asking questions related to students understanding of school work, or ego orientation by asking questions related to student scores and how they compared with the rest of the class.

In the upper secondary classroom student background may still be a powerful influence on the achievement goal orientations students are likely to adopt. Parents hold their own views of education based on their experience and their feelings about the role education has played in their lives, lives of their peers and perhaps other children. Positive and negative parental attitudes about the value of schooling may influence the attitudes held by their children. Parental response to school activities, student reports, and encouragement for home study may well have a significant impact on the achievement

goal orientations children a lopt. In addition by the time students reach the upper secondary level parents have had the opportunity to take an active role in helping their children make career decisions via subject selection. By this time students will also have completed ten or eleven years of schooling during the course of which their perceptions of schooling and the achievement goals they adopt have become fairly well established.

Identifying student goal orientations

Student goal orientations have been identified and measured primarily by questionnaires asking students about their everyday achievement related concerns or criteria for success (Nicholls, 1989, p. 95). Helmreich and Spence (1977; 1978; Spence & Helmreich, 1983, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 95) designed a questionnaire of three scales, with the first assessing competitiveness, the second work and the third mastery. Maehr and Braskamp (1986, cited in Nicholls, 1989, p. 95) developed similar scales for studying motivation in the workplace. Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) constructed scales to distinguish task mastery orientation from ego orientation among high school students. The questionnaire asks students to indicate how much or how little 27 items affect how they feel about success at school. Task orientation was assessed with high rated responses on items such as "I feel most successful if something I learned really makes sense to me" and "...if I get a new idea about how things work". Ego orientation was indicated by high rated responses such as "I feel most successful if I score higher than the other students" and "... if I do the work better than other students". Work avoidance or academic

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alienation was assessed by high rated responses on items such as "I feel most successful if I get out of some work" or "... if I fool around and get away with it".

Meece, Blumenfeld and Hoyle (1988) developed a Science Activity Questionnaire (SAQ) which was administered directly after each lesson had been conducted. Three scales were used to assess students goal orientations, those being task mastery, ego/social and work avoidant. The items on these scales were adapted from questionnaires by Ames (1984) and Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985).

Summary

The significance of the Theory of Achievement Goals in the field of motivation is immense. The literature reviewed indicates that the influence of classroom processes and curriculum, student background and ability perceptions play a large part in determining the achievement goals students adopt. These goals in turn influence student cognitive patterns and thus have the power to control the amount of success students encounter throughout their school careers.

Goal setting

The concept of goal setting also plays a large part in determining motivation. Individuals set goals for themselves and these goals can act as powerful motivators of behaviour. Wentzel (1992) discusses a multiple goals perspective of motivation and achievement in adolescence and argues that students pursue both academic and social goals in the classroom. Her research focuses on these goals that students pursue, how they

relate to intellectual and social competence at school, and how they relate to the behaviour they are intended to produce. The evidence presented indicates that goals can "either facilitate or constrain the learning process to the extent they reflect the social and intellectual objectives of the schooling process" (Wentzel, 1992, p.289). Wentzel suggests that goals contribute in unique ways to academic achievement and this can be seen in the behavioural outcomes and consequences they represent. How students coordinate their school goals can also have a marked impact on their academic accomplishments. Non-academic goals, such as achieving social approval and conformity can be primary motivators of learning behaviour as well. This multiple goals perspective emphasises the relationship between the content of students' goals and their classroom competence. The perspective considers the possibility that students pursue multiple goals at school and acknowledges that academic progress may partly depend on the combined and "interactive effects of goals and other self-regulatory processes on subsequent behaviour" (Wentzel, 1992, p. 293). In addition, social and academic goals can positively influence achievement if the content of students' goals equates with the behaviour required in the classroom. Given the social nature of academic instruction it is vital that educators consider the relationship between social goals and academic achievement. As academic instruction occurs within a social context which is largely regulated by social rules (respect for others, cooperation) and behavioural expectations, academic instruction reflects rules of social conduct designed to guide the learning process.

Student self-perceptions and achievement behaviour

Pintrich and Schrauben (1992) utilise a general social cognitive model of student motivation to show how students' beliefs, cognitions and perceptions about themselves and the task or classroom environment act as mediators of their behaviour. Using this model for research they found that students who have positive motivational beliefs and adopt a mastery orientation will more likely become engaged in learning in a deeper, more self-regulating fashion than those students who do not have these beliefs. Having positive motivational beliefs may not directly lead to improved academic performance but these beliefs can lead to increased cognitive engagement in the task which does have a direct influence on academic performance (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992).

Summary of the literature review

From this brief scan of the literature it is evident that the prominent research in the area of achievement goal theory and student perceptions has been conducted primarily with elementary and middle school students in the context of the education system in the United States of America. Although the literature provides a wide exploration of the factors contributing to and impacting on achievement goal orientations there is limited research about how these ideas apply to upper secondary students, with students who are not university bound and who are part of the Western Australian education system. The literature discussed provides the theoretical basis and support for this thesis and there are many factors which may well be unique to the Western Australian educational system and

culture which affect the achievement goal orientations adopted by Year 12 non-university bound students.

In this regard there are at least three unique factors impacting on the students in this study as compared to the cohorts of studies completed in the United States of America. The first factor in that the West Australian upper secondary students who are not university bound represent a group about which little is known in terms of their aspirations, goals, their style of functioning in the classroom and their patterns of achievement motivation. A second issue pertains to the structure of West Australian schools at the upper secondary level which vary from patterns within the United States of America. A third issue reflects the support structure available to West Australian students especially in terms of different parental expectations and pressures, school demands and general community perceptions. Moreover, the West Australian students discussed in this research are generally of medium to lower ability and may have experienced less success than their university bound counterparts in their prior schooling.

Conceptual framework

A scan of the literature has shown one possible framework for this research. The conceptual framework for this study is adapted from Pintrich and Schrauben's (1992) "Conceptual framework for motivation and cognition in the classroom context". Pintrich's framework has been adapted to provide a suitable framework for this study. (See Figure 1) The adaptation of this framework focuses on how student perceptions of classroom

processes and curriculum blend with, and in part determine, motivational components to enable students to achieve meaningful success.

The framework begins with student entry characteristics. These are the beliefs and values the students hold at the beginning of the year. Students involved in this study will have varying entry characteristics, such as cultural background, reason for being at school, personal beliefs, motivational beliefs, prior knowledge and prior achievement levels. Their parents will hold views about education that affect the students perception of schooling. Student self-perceptions are an important factor since they play an important role in determining how everything else is perceived.

Entry characteristics have the potential to affect students' perception of classroom processes such as teaching strategies, teacher behaviour, instructional processes, the nature of course evaluation, and social interactions among students. These entry characteristics may also affect the way students view curriculum including subject selection (gridline constraints), subject matter, and INSTEP. Such characteristics could also influence the way in which students define success and evaluate their own achievements.

The way in which students perceive and respond to classroom processes and curriculum may influence their motivation for particular activities. Student motivation can also be affected by how students expect to perform, the degree of value they see in the activity, and affective components, such as emotional reactions and emotional needs. These factors may encourage students to assume particular achievement goal orientations.

These goal orientations can influence and in part determine whether students will meet, or fail to meet, what they consider to be meaningful success.

The degree to which students feel they have succeeded in turn then affects the way they perceive and respond to future learning situations and thus this framework operates in a cyclical fashion.

Figure 1. Factors influencing student success at a Year 12 non-university bound level.

Student Entry Characteristics
- cultural background
- reason for being at school
- personal beliefs
- motivational beliefs
- interpretation of success
- prior knowledge
- prior experiences
- prior achievement

Student Perceptions
- student self-perceptions

Classroom Processes
- teaching strategies
- teacher behaviour
- assessment and evaluation
- social interactions with
    peers
- teacher expectations
- task setting

Curriculum
- course selection
- course content
- INSTEP

Motivational Goal Orientation

Meaningful Success

Adapted from Pintrich and Schrauben's (1992) "Conceptual framework for motivation and cognition in the classroom context".

Chapter Conclusion

The literature review and conceptual framework presented in this chapter will focus the direction of the study in terms of research design and methodology. These are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

Method of Research

Introduction

This chapter provides a discussion of the method of research used for this thesis. The chapter begins by outlining the research design used, the subjects chosen and following this the method of gathering data. The next section examining the methodology focuses on the techniques of case study, interviews, journal keeping, participant observation and questionnaires. The process of data analysis is then discussed along with limitations that exist in the study.

Research design

The research questions for this thesis have prompted an exploratory research design. Within the realm of qualitative research an exploratory research design allows for the data to be described and then interpreted to identify variables. As the literature indicates there have been very few studies of this nature at an upper high school level and even fewer still in the uniqueness of the West Australian education system. These factors helped determine case study as the preferred approach for undertaking this qualitative research. The research will be presented in the form of case studies and will utilise case study techniques for gathering and analysing data.

Participants

The students chosen for this study were Year 12 students at a metropolitan high school who were enrolled in a non-university bound course of study Year 12 is the final year of secondary schooling in Western Australia. Six target students were invited to participate in the research, although only four students are discussed in this thesis. The six target students were chosen according to their subject selection for Year 12 and the subjects they completed in Year 11. Three students attempted a university bound course in Year 11 and the other three students completed a non-university bound course. Of the six students three were enrolled in INSTEP (work placement) in the year of research. The four students discussed in this thesis are those who are most typical of the student types at a Year 12 non-university bound level.

Gathering data

Kinds of data sought

The kind of data sought in this study was that related primarily to student self-perceptions and student perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum. In addition, particular data relating to the achievement goal orientations of students were sought. In gathering the data the emphasis was on investigating the perceptions of the participants with regard to their school experience and gaining an understanding of their thoughts and feelings in a Year 12 non university bound course.

This study attempted to find out what students thought of the classroom processes they experienced. Specifically, students were invited to comment on what they thought about the teaching strategies, behaviour of teachers, evaluation practices and social interactions between students in the class. Some understandings about how these classroom processes influenced the students' motivational goal orientation had been developed by the researcher.

Data were obtained about the way students view curriculum, for example, course selection, course content, course assessment and INSTEP. How students felt about each of these variables and the influence these factors had on their motivational orientation was explored.

Other data regarding the goal setting habits of these students were obtained. Students were asked to comment about whether they set goals and how they felt when they achieved the goals they set. Some discussion took place about the reasons students provided for achieving or not achieving goals. How students felt when they reached goals or failed to reach goals was also explored. The nature of goal setting and its relationship to motivation was addressed.

Finally, data about motivational goal orientation were sought. It was first necessary to establish the types of goal orientations students adopted with regard to particular subjects and tasks. This orientation and possible changes to it was then monitored throughout the course of the year. When changes were detected, the reasons for the change were explored. Student motivational goal orientations, with particular

emphasis on how they facilitate or inhibit students achieving meaningful success were also studied.

Overall the data obtained enabled links to be made between and among the school experience, student motivational orientation and perceptions of meaningful success. The framework of sought data was derived from the patterns found in the literature review.

Source of data

Given the type of data being sought, the primary source was the students themselves. In addition to participating in interviews the students completed a journal which provided some data for discussion during interviews. As a teacher of the students in one subject area, the researcher was able to observe student behaviour and use this for discussion during interviews. Data regarding student motivational orientations and beliefs about the purpose of schooling was obtained through use of questionnaires developed by Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985).

The kind of data gained was that which related to student experience of school with particular regard to the curriculum and the classroom. Students described their thoughts and feelings about particular activities and subjects or curriculum they encountered and were able to indicate how their perceptions of these factors influenced their behaviour and their motivation. Conceptions of progress were also discussed, as was the purpose of their final year of schooling particularly in relation to life after school.

The data obtained in this study were gained from multiple sources, namely, interviews, student journals, participant observation and questionnaires.

The students participated in semi-structured interviews where the interviewer used an interview guideline (see Appendix A). Initially the interviewer aimed to establish a rapport with the students by allowing them to speak freely about their past and present experiences and feelings. This flexibility enabled the researcher to describe accurately and understand the students' perspective in subsequent interviews.

The target students were, by virtue of their subject selection, enrolled in Year 12 Senior English. As a part of this course all students were required to maintain a journal where they were asked to reflect on their progress at particular times and to undertake self-evaluation. All students in the class wrote a journal so those who were part of the study group would not feel that an extra burden was being placed on them. Entries focussed on particular topics, such as self-evaluation of assessments, the differences in being a Year 12 student, thoughts and expectations for the term and expectations for the final year of school. (see Appendix B)

Through journalling students had the opportunity to express themselves openly using their own language which often can be much more revealing than the spoken word. Students wrote journal entries every month for three months and then every week for the final month. During the final month students also wrote an entry every day for a week. Journal entries required students to reflect on their own writing and progress in Senior English, discuss their thoughts and expectations for the term, reflect on the most difficult

and most rewarding aspects of the semester and reflect on how their school experience relates to the careers they intend having once they leave school. The journals provided a reasonably rich tapestry of student experience which aided understanding of their perspectives and perceptions.

Some participant observation also took place with the group of students. As their teacher for 1 out of 7 subjects the researcher was able to observe and monitor their reactions to activities and their responses within the class group. Notes were made of significant student responses to classroom activities. The researcher was then able to discuss, in an interview, how each student felt about particular activities in the course. Having this frequent interaction with students provided some interesting starting points for interview discussion topics.

Data regarding student motivational orientations and their beliefs about the purposes of schooling were obtained by use of a questionnaire developed by Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985). Students completed the questionnaire after the final interview and results were used to supplement ideas discussed during student interviews (see Appendix C).

Phases of gathering data

Preliminary phase

The first phase of gathering data involved speaking with Year 12 students about their courses, goals and the classroom processes they experienced throughout the year.

From the preliminary phase it became evident that students were able to identify

factors that they felt strongly influenced their success in particular subjects. Students

commented about how students in the class related to each other and how this made it

easy or difficult for individuals to succeed. They felt that the positive attitudes some

teachers held towards them made them feel motivated to do well, and that these teachers

used positive reinforcement so that students were striving to be complimented by that

teacher. Students also had specific views about the course of study they had chosen and

were able to relate this to their attitudes towards the course. Students also had very set

views about their ability and the type of success they could achieve in Year 12. From these

discussions and the writing the students undertook in response to questions they were

asked, it became evident that there seemed to exist phenomena which required exploring

and analysing about the way teachers teach at this level and the strategies they should be

employing to motivate students to succeed.

Getting to know target students

The second phase involved getting to know the target students. This took place at

the beginning of the school year and involved a short session with the group so as to make

them feel comfortable with the research process and the role they were to play in it. This

session also enabled the researcher to become familiar with the students as individuals.

Students also completed (as a class activity) a personal profile in which they discussed

their aims for the year, their interests, their career goals and their philosophy of life. At this

stage it was possible to understand the entry characteristics the students had and become

familiar with their expectations for themselves and what they felt they were capable of achieving.

Final phase

The third phase involved interviewing students over a period of time and recording findings. Students were studied for the duration of two terms which is the equivalent of 20 weeks. They were interviewed at the beginning of the year, at Week 10 in Term 1, prior to 1st semester exams (Term 2 Week 5) and at the end of Term 2. Four interviews in total were conducted. In addition, students were given two questionnaires (Motivational Orientation Scales and Scales Assessing the Purposes of School) to complete at the end of Term 2.

Methodology

This research is qualitative and takes the form of four case studies using data obtained from students by way of interview, written records, observation and questionnaire.

Case study

Because the nature of this study requires description of students as individuals who are part of a system, a case study approach had been selected.

This research was essentially one of enquiry where the researcher was seeking evidence to "describe, understand and explain" (Hook, 1985, p. 252). The research questions posed focused on key elements such as 'how', 'why' and 'what' and in order to investigate these questions case study strategies were preferred. The research questions and conceptual framework were also holistic in as much as they required the study of a number of variables both individually and then as part of a complex system. Case study "allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events" (Burns, 1994, p. 313). A case study was the most effective way to describe these variables and their inter-relationship. In addition, a case study also allowed the rich description of student background, which in this situation was essential, because it affected the way students perceived and related to classroom processes and curriculum. Student background also played a part in determining student motivational orientation. As students had differing perceptions of the variables under consideration the only way these could be described in a meaningful way was through a case study.

In essence because this study is particularistic, it needed to be descriptive, heuristic and inductive to examine the research questions and thus case study techniques have been used.

Interviewing

Student interviews was chosen as the main method for obtaining data because "the value of the interview lies in its ability to gather information about people's knowledge, about feelings and attitudes, about beliefs and expectations, about intentions and action

and about reasons and explanations" (Hook, 1985, p. 136). In this research, interviews were valuable, as they enabled the researcher to build rapport with the interviewees by allowing them to talk freely of their past and present experiences at school. In the interview situation rapport is also built through use of non verbal communication, for example facial expression, eye contact and body language. The interviewer is also able to use their knowledge of the students as individuals and their understanding of non verbal communication to ascertain the honesty and relative importance of interviewee responses. Interviews allowed interviewees to give examples of particular experiences and to convey their ideas using conversational style language. In this particular case interviewees were more comfortable talking about ideas than they were with writing about them. The interviewer was able to clarify student responses, where necessary, and reach an understanding of the total student experience whilst narrowing in on key areas. Interviews also allowed flexibility in terms of how much discussion took place about particular ideas.

The main types of questions used in the interviews were open ended questions where the "respondent became more of an informant than a respondent" (Burns, 1994, p. 319). This allowed interviewees to fully describe their experience and views on particular issues. Interviewees were asked to explain their ideas, to give examples and to convey as much as possible their perception of the issue. The interviewer made every attempt to avoid questions that may be leading or loaded. Questions were pretested during casual conversation with other students to help avoid this. Although the interviews were unstructured, an interview guide was used in an attempt to avoid bias. All questions were asked in the same order.

The interviews were conducted at times convenient to both the students and the researcher. All interviews were held in the same place and were audio taped. Where appropriate the interviewer used student vernacular to promote understanding and enable students to fully comprehend questions.

Journal keeping

Journal keeping was chosen as a method of obtaining data because of the inherently reflective nature of journal writing. Subjects were also familiar with journal style and journalling experiences. Journals were valuable as they contained "observations, feelings, attitudes, perceptions, reflections" of a highly personal nature (Hook, 1985, p. 128). The advantage in journal writing was that it could be undertaken at the subject's leisure and in a situation where they had more time to consider their responses than they would have in an interview situation. As previously explained, the students kept a journal in which they expressed their ideas about the experiences they had throughout the semester. Each entry had a focus so students were reflecting on different aspects of their course. The journal was also used for goal setting.

The researcher had access to these journals prior to the final interview and collected data relating to the students' perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum along with data related to achievement goal orientations. Relevant data were then discussed with individual students in the final interview.

Participant Observation

Participant observation was also used as a method of collecting data. The value of using participant observation in this instance was that observations made in the classroom could be used to either confirm or reject ideas presented by interviewees in the interviews. Participant observation allowed the researcher to make comparisons between subject responses, classroom relationships, behaviour in various situations and non verbal communication in the classroom. In interviewing, as a participant observer, the researcher "knows much about the persons or incidents referred to in the answers" to questions (Wilson, 1977, cited in Hook, 1985, p. 109). The participant observer is able to also have a unique understanding of the context from which subject responses emerge. Observations made could also be used as a starting point for discussion and allow interviewees to express ideas and opinions that related directly to classroom behaviour.

As the researcher taught the students being studied for 1 out of 7 subjects, observations were made about specific motivational behaviour. The researcher was able to observe many variables that may reflect or influence student motivation, for example, student enthusiasm and participation in the classroom, the impact of peer relationships on individual student progress, student responses to tasks and activities set, student progress and ability to set and achieve goals along with effort and attempts toward self-improvement. The observations were informally discussed during interviews and in some cases were used to confirm statements the interviewees had made. The interviewer was also able to discuss student behaviour during the interviews so as to gain an understanding

of how student perceptions of what may be happening could manifest themselves in particular behaviour patterns.

Questionnaires

To confirm students' motivational orientations and their ideas about the purposes of schooling two questionnaires designed by Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) were used. The questionnaires were administered at the end of Term 2 and have been used primarily to supplement comments students made during interviews.

The Motivational Orientation Scales questionnaire was chosen to assess subjects' motivational orientations towards school. The questionnaire asked students to respond (in the form of strongly agree, agree, neutral and disagree) to a selection of phrases using the stem "I feel most successful if..". Responses indicated the degree to which students were task oriented, ego oriented, concerned with avoiding inferiority or easy superiority, work avoidance oriented or experiencing alienation. This questionnaire enabled confirmation of data obtained regarding student motivational orientations during interviews.

The Scales Assessing the Purposes of School questionnaire was also useful as it allowed the researcher to support subjects' ideas about the value of the schooling system. Even though the questionnaire was designed for students in the American educational system, many of the concepts it addressed are relevant to the West Australian education system. The questionnaire asks the students to respond (using strongly agree, agree, neutral and disagree) to a variety of phrases using the stem "A very important thing a school should do is ..". The responses given ascertain how highly the students rate the

purpose of schooling according to wealth and status, social commitment (community spirit, loyalty, self-sacrifice and useful work), understanding (science, the media, politics) and achievement motivation (creative work and persistence). The responses given reflect students own personal philosophy, the ideas reinforced by their parents, and the value of schooling as espoused by our own system and those who work within it. All of these factors are components of the complex system investigated in this research.

The use of the questionnaires enabled links to be made between student motivational orientation and the ideas students held about the purposes of school.

Data analysis

The data collection and analysis in this research was an ongoing process over one semester. Once each interview had been conducted data obtained were converted to transcripts, then categorised, coded and analysed. This process of analysis took place after each interview session. At the conclusion of all interviews all the data were reviewed.

Process of analysis

Stage 1 - Transcripts/Fieldnotes

A transcript was made from each interview and kept in a transcript file. Fieldnotes were made from these transcripts and from student journals. Where appropriate fieldnotes included relevant information about student behaviour. All these were organised and stored on computer disks.

Stage 2 - Category Coding

Four main categories of data were established. These were student self-perceptions (SSP), student perceptions about curriculum (SPC), student perceptions about classroom processes (SPCP) and student motivational goal orientation (MGO). Coding and categorising allowed various themes and trends to emerge. The themes that arose were useful when planning interview questions.

Stage 3 - Content analysis

Once data were coded and categorised the content was then analysed for emerging themes, concepts and meanings. Recognition of such themes allowed the interviewer to narrow the foci of interviews and justify why some ideas were focused on and not others. The themes and concepts identified through content analysis were then either strengthened or weakened by successive interviews.

The interviews and journals were analysed to ascertain the motivational goal orientations the students adopted towards different subjects and tasks and the factors which may have affected these orientations. The researcher also looked for any changes in motivational orientation. Students adopted different motivational goal orientations for different subjects and the reasons for this were explored.

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (S.P.S.S.). These data were then examined in the light of student

responses during interviews and journal entries. The data from questionnaires were used to confirm student motivational orientations and ideas about the purposes of school.

Content analysis also involved comparing student perceptions about aspects of schooling and identifying common themes. The researcher compared the perceptions and orientations of those students in the INSTEP programme with those who were not involved.

Figure 2. The coding system used to code and categorise data.

SUBJECTS

Student A (INSTEP)	SAI
Student B	SB
Student C (INSTEP)	SCI
Student D	SD

STUDENT SELF-PERCEPTIONS

(SSP)

CLASSROOM PROCESSES

(SPCP)

SPCP1 - teaching strategies
SPCP2 - teacher behaviour
SPCP3 - assessment and
    evaluation
SPCP4 - social interactions with
    peers

CURRICULUM

(SPC)

SPC1 - course selection
SPC2 - course content
SPC3 - course assessment
SPC4 - INSTEP

MOTIVATIONAL GOAL ORIENTATION

(MGO)

MO1 - task mastery
MO2 - performance/ego
MO3 - work avoidance

Reliability

The reliability of this research was enhanced through adherence to three main procedures. A thorough explanation for the research was given and the major research questions explained at length. The perspective of the researcher was also stated including any acknowledgment of any biases and assumptions that she may have. A detailed explanation of data gathering procedures was also given (Burns, 1994, p. 271).

Reliability of the research was enhanced through the varied methods of collecting data. A reliable instrument (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) was used to confirm data obtained through interviews, journal keeping and participant observation. Reliability was also established by utilising the services of an outsider (colleague) to interpret some student comments.

Reliability of interviews was monitored by the use of audio tape to administer interviews in the same way. The researcher also employed self-monitoring strategies to ensure reliability.

Validity

To improve internal validity four methods of data collection were used. The data obtained from interviews, journals, participant observation and questionnaires were analysed individually and then cross referenced. Internal validity was enhanced by the confirmation of data through more than one source.

Interviewer bias was to be overcome by adhering to the interview schedule of questions and avoiding any bias in questioning style. The interviewer became skilful in the

type of questions asked and the response given to student answers through a number of rehearsal trials with non research students.

The researcher was the teacher of the students in one subject area Potentially this could raise difficulties in terms of students providing valid comment and perceptions about life in the classroom of that particular subject area. Students were not asked questions by the researcher on matters soliciting evaluative comment on the teacher, teaching and classroom processes in this subject.

Limitations of the study

The findings of this study will be confined to those Year 12 non-university bound students who have been targeted. As this is an exploratory study no attempts to generalise findings will be made but rather the study should identify variables for future research.

CHAPTER FOUR

Case Studies

Introduction to the case studies

Chapter Four presents the case studies examined in this research thesis. The information presented in each case study is the result of four student interviews and two student questionnaires namely "The Purposes of Schooling" and "Motivational Orientation" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985). Each case study follows the design of the Conceptual Framework provided in Chapter Two beginning with a discussion of student entry characteristics followed by student self-perceptions, student perceptions of curriculum and classroom processes and motivational goal orientation.

The discussion of student entry characteristics includes features such as student background, Year 11 experience and achievement, along with goal setting. This section also discusses students' beliefs about schooling as indicated by results from the "Purposes of Schooling" questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) and comments made during student interviews. The section focusing on student self-perceptions is organised according to the chronological order of interviews and follows the emotional path of students as they progress throughout the semester. The section discussing student perceptions of curriculum and classroom processes is also organised chronologically and illustrates the perceptions students have of particular subjects throughout the semester. The final section examining motivational orientation draws largely on information from the

"Motivational Orientation" questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) and links with comments made during student interviews.

The chapter concludes with a summary chart of all four case studies.

Case One : Anna

Student Entry Characteristics

During the first interview Anna was given the opportunity to discuss her background with relation to school, other commitments and interests, her experience of Year 11 and the goals she had set for herself this year.

Background

Anna is a Year 12 student who has chosen a non-university bound course of study for both her final years of secondary school. The subjects Anna chose for both Year 11 and Year 12 are those which would allow her entry into a variety of courses at TAFE. In both years Anna elected to take part in the INSTEP programme because she wanted work experience to help her ascertain her suitability for various careers. When selecting subjects for Year 12 Anna initially intended to pursue the career of a legal secretary and go to business college. Accordingly she chose subjects that she felt would be beneficial in this field.

Anna is a keen and successful sportswoman and finds her main difficulty with school is juggling time due to sporting commitments during the weekend, Monday and Tuesday. Anna also has a part-time job where she works on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. In terms of completing schoolwork Anna feels that she usually leaves things to the last minute and prefers classes where time is given to complete assignments. "I prefer in-class work because out of school I don't have any time. I prefer to do all my work at school and not have any homework".

Year 11 experience and achievement

In Year 11 Anna's most enjoyable subject was Drama because she found the activities increased her confidence. She felt the class had a pleasant environment and the teacher was relaxed in her approach to the students. "She didn't have really high expectations of everyone, they just had to do their best - there wasn't any pressure." The highest grade Anna received was for Work Studies even though she acknowledged that the work was not the most enjoyable. She found that she did well in the subject because the teacher

> gave us a lot of time to do our assignments and she went through exactly what was needed and, like, if you hadn't done it by the due date she just said, 'Well keep working on it and hand it in when you finish it,' and at the end of the last term anyone who didn't finish off their assignment got to come back and you got to

choose whether you wanted to finish it or just fail it, so I got to finish off any assignments I hadn't done and I got a Ь in the end. And that was alright.

Although assignments were given due dates and the students tried to complete the work by these set dates, Anna felt the teacher was appreciative of the students' total workload and therefore negotiated for students to submit work when it was completed.

Goal Setting

Anna believed that it was important to have goals, however, she felt that goals imposed by other people should be open to negotiation. "You need to have a goal but I like it when teachers appreciate how much work is being done in class and adjust to you." Anna's goals for Year 12 were to achieve the highest grades she can, complete Year 12 successfully without any fails and gain work experience in offices. Anna believed that success was achieved when individuals reached goals they had set.

Beliefs about schooling

Anna believed that an important aspect of the purpose of schooling was to provide students with knowledge and skills they required to successfully enter the workforce or continue their education.

As well as acknowledging the vocation importance of schooling Anna also indicated her beliefs about the relative importance of other aspects of schooling through her responses to the "Purposes of Schooling" Questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick &

Nolen, 1985). This questionnaire contained forty-eight items which were related to four main purposes of schooling, namely, wealth and status, social commitment, understanding and achievement motivation. Students responded by indicating either strongly agree, agree, neutral or disagree. Anna responded most positively to the notion that school should develop students achievement motivation by strongly agreeing with items such as ("A very important thing a school should do is ...") "prepare us for jobs where we can keep learning new things", "help us to always work hard to do our best" and "teach us not to give up when work gets hard". Anna also strongly agreed with items such as "help us get into the best tertiary courses", "recognise the talents of able students to ensure they move toward the top jobs" and "give us the drive to get higher and higher jobs" thus demonstrating her belief that school should help students achieve wealth and status. Anna believed that school should develop students' social commitment as she indicated it should "make us responsible law-abiding citizens", "teach us to respect authority", "teach us to work cooperatively with others" and "teach us things that will help society". The results from this survey indicated that Anna rated the purposes of schooling in the following order - achievement motivation, social commitment, wealth and status, and understanding.

Student self-perceptions

During each interview Anna was asked to comment about how she was feeling with regard to her course and her progress.

At the first interview Anna seemed to be positive about the year ahead. She had a career direction to pursue and was confident her subject selection would be beneficial to her achieving this goal. So far Anna was enjoying her Year 12 course.

At the second interview Anna was very stressed as she had a number of assignments due in around the same time. On the day of the interview she was required to submit three assignments for different subjects. She admitted that she had known about all assignments for a considerable amount of time, however, found that she had left them to the last minute. Anna was finding that the stress was compounded because of her lack of spare time and at this stage was feeling that everything "is just too hard". Anna felt she was having most success in English and working to the best of her ability at a B level. She felt, however, that "I'd probably get an A if I had more time, but I've never really had more time so I don't really know". Anna has not set specific subject or task related goals. The goals she is required to reach are set by teachers who assign due dates to assignments. "I've got three assignments due this afternoon and I've only done one".

Anna is unsure of her expectations for school at Year 12 level. She felt, however, that this year should prepare her for the years to come in terms of the subjects she had selected and the curriculum covered in each of these subjects.

By the third interview Anna had decided that she no longer wanted to be a legal secretary. "I got stuck doing accounts in INSTEP. It wasn't as good as I thought it would be. Now I've decided to be a travel agent." It appears Anna is a little disappointed that her experience of work as a legal secretary was not as she had anticipated, however, she has

begun to investigate the opportunities available in the travel field and seems reasonably interested in this area.

When discussing the aspects of schooling she felt were most important to Year 12 students Anna stated that as well as being prepared for the workforce Year 12 students needed freedom. "We should be able to choose what earrings we want to wear .. we're old enough to decide whether it's going to affect our study."

At the final interview Anna felt that everything in general was going well and when reflecting on the semester felt that "I was happy with most of them (subjects). It's only computing I wasn't happy with - I didn't do half of the work so I didn't get the grade I would have if I had done it". She felt that there was not enough class time in which to complete the tasks assigned as she was a slow typist due to not having selected this subject last year and thus having limited skills. When asked about the highlights of Semester One she replied "I don't know if there were any". Anna has not set specific goals for Semester Two. She intends to "just come back to school and carry on".

Student perceptions - curriculum and classroom processes

During the second, third and fourth interviews Anna was able to make comments about the curriculum she encountered and the classroom processes she experienced through discussion of particular subjects and her ideas about schooling.

During the second interview Anna was asked to discuss her most successful and most difficult subjects thus far. She discussed her performance in Senior English, Applied Computing, Modelling with Maths, Computer Fundamentals and Work Studies.

At the second interview Anna felt that Senior English was her most successful subject "because I'm able to get my work done". Her goal for English was to complete the assignments, however, she stated "it's hard when you miss a day of school and you have to catch up. It all piles up at once". When asked about her latest English assignment Anna said she was happy although she said she had not had a "chance to go through it yet but I had a look at the mark". The mark was pleasing as "I left myself hardly any time to do it. I crammed it into a weekend."

Anna's most difficult subject at that stage was Applied Computing as she had not studied Computing in Year 11 and felt as though she was always struggling to work at the required pace. Despite her efforts she constantly felt as though she was behind other class members. Unfortunately for her, all the work had to be undertaken in class and as she was a slow typist she found she was constantly behind everyone else. This led to a feeling of helplessness or, as she stated "it's all too hard. I'm just trying to finish up". In addition, for this subject she had three assignments due on the one day. This compounded the problem.

Anna felt she was doing "okay" in Modelling with Maths. "I miss a class of that as well. You don't know what you miss and it's hard to catch up." Anna also found this subject difficult and had problems understanding the teacher. "It's difficult, I don't know

if it's the new teacher I've got but she'll explain it and then I do it, but I do it wrong, then I feel frustrated that I've spent that time mucking around with it".

The most exciting class for Anna at this stage was Computer Fundamentals where the students were working on presenting catalogues. As well as finding the work interesting Anna particularly liked the teaching style adopted by the subject teacher. This teacher

> is just really good ... doesn't give us assignments - just gives you the work each week, you just have to make sure you get it done. You just make sure it's all done by the end of the term for your portfolio. It's good because ... gets you to draw pictures and scan things.

Anna also found the environment and classroom atmosphere conducive to work.

> It's just a really relaxed class. We don't have to just sit there and type. You can talk to the person next to you. You can muck around so long as your work's done. Most people work though because it has to be done but you don't feel as though you have to.

Anna was bored in one subject only, namely Work Studies. She was the only Year 12 student studying a Year 12 subject in a class with others studying a Year 11 subject. She stated that the teacher "has to look after the class so I sit there. I don't have any work

to do or it's not fully explained so I have to sit there basically doing nothing until ... ready

to talk to me."

Third interview

During the third interview Anna was asked to discuss how she felt she was

performing in some of her subjects and to describe the atmosphere and typical classroom

processes she experienced in each.

At this stage Anna had decided to withdraw from INSTEP because she was

disinterested in the type of work she had been asked to engage in. She was unsure of

whether this would affect her end of year mark for the INSTEP for she appeared to be

unaware of the assessment criteria for this subject. Instead of INSTEP she has now altered

her subject selection to include Directed Study.

When discussing her Maths class, Anna reported that the teacher provided

examples, and set practical activities for the students as well. ("You'd get bored out of

your brain otherwise.") Anna found there was variety in this classroom and the content

was challenging most of the time. She still found it frustrating that she misses out on work

(two lessons out of five per week) while on INSTEP, however, was hoping that

withdrawing from the programme would help solve part of this problem. Anna understood

the assessment and task expectations in this subject. If unsure she felt she was able to ask

for assistance.

At this stage Anna was finding Senior English to be her most challenging subject She recently completed an anthology about her family "I thought oh good.. you just learn things that you didn't know before about your family and stuff".

Anna was finding Applied Computing problematic. She found the subject difficult (due to her lack of prior knowledge and typing skills compared to other class members) and also perceived difficulties in "getting along" with the teacher. Anna said "it's mostly because I'm so far behind. She didn't know I hadn't done computing last year. We find it hard to get along because I'm so far behind. The teacher just says sit there, type and don't talk to anyone." Anna also found difficulties keeping up with the work and had only completed two of the five assignments due. She perceived that because she was behind she often ended up in trouble with the teacher. At this stage she was trying to negotiate a change to another class of the same subject with a different teacher, which was run partly after school. Being in this other class would also suit her timetable as it would allow her time away from school to attend personal training sessions for her sport.

Anna was still enjoying Computer Fundamentals. "It's different. We have an assignment. We asked when it's due" and the teacher "said 'last week' but everyone is still doing it." The teacher "just says keep working on it ... puts the radio on - it's really relaxed". When asked about the assessment structure and procedure in this class Anna replied "I don't know". The teacher "doesn't show us our mark, just gives us our work to do". Anna indicated that she cannot remember receiving an assessment outline for this subject and was unaware of how she was being assessed. This does not bother her. "We just put in the work we do. We just put it in our file and ... looks at it at the end of term."

All assignments for this subject were done in class and this suited her. "It doesn't really get handed up. We just put it in our files." Anna was unable to predict her grade in this class, but this was not a concern to her "because as long as we do the work given we can't really go wrong. I don't know how the grades are worked out".

At this time, Anna's least challenging subject was Work Studies. "There's really not much to do. I just sit in class. There's not much (the teacher) can give me at the moment. There's nothing I can do until ... gives me something to work on".

Final interview

During the final interview Anna was asked to reflect on her Semester One performance and respond to some questions about schooling in general.

Anna felt that English and Maths were her most successful subjects, however, she felt she had had most success in Maths. During Semester Two she aims to improve her performance in Applied Computing and try to complete as much of the work as possible.

The teaching strategies Anna felt motivated students were activities that directly included the students such as class discussion, practical activities and excursions. Anna felt that teachers should involve students as much as possible as "people get motivated by each other". When asked whether she felt small group work to be motivating in this way Anna replied "it doesn't work. It's just a social occasion, people just talk. In pairs is good, rather than groups". Anna also felt that to motivate students the most powerful thing teachers could do was to provide positive feedback and engage in individual conferencing with those students who require it. Anna felt that it was important that teachers do not

allow students to become slack and that Year 12 students needed to have teachers "on their back".

The most satisfying thing about school for Anna was the social side of things as she enjoyed getting to know different people.

Generally Anna found that she was able to relate well to her teachers. She felt that at Year 12 level teachers treated students with more respect. According to her, teachers "should be easy to talk to and treat you like an adult rather than just teacher/student kind of thing ... not so many rules and detentions". Anna believed that a good teacher was encouraging, approachable, easy going, supportive, and had an ability to relate well to the students. She maintained that a good teacher was able to relate well to students according to their individual needs and level of maturity.

According to Anna students try to meet the expectations of others but these are not so much set by the teacher as by the peers. Students "try to stay up with the rest of the class. If the teacher expects you to do well it puts pressure on you to do well" and this can be a negative thing. "If you have high expectations and don't meet them it lowers your confidence."

Motivational Goal Orientation

Throughout the interviews conducted Anna appeared to adopt different motivational goal orientations for different subjects and indeed for different tasks within each subject. It seems that the motivational goal orientation(s) adopted were influenced by a number of classroom processes including level of involvement with tasks/activities,

classroom atmosphere, teaching styles, the degree of work to be completed outside class time, teacher's adherence to due dates, the class time she missed due to INSTEP and the degree of positive encouragement provided by teachers. Curriculum factors such as interest in the subject and tasks along with types of assessment procedures used were also seen to influence the motivational goal orientations Anna adopted. In addition her personal time management skills and peer expectations were also influential.

In the Computer Fundamentals class Anna seemed to adopt a task mastery motivational orientation as she was concerned primarily with engaging in a positive manner with the tasks set and completing the work because she found it interesting. Anna perceived this to be an enjoyable class where the reward was inherent in understanding and completing the work. Due to the assessment process in this subjects there also appeared to be less competition between students about grades and marks. Anna appeared to not be concerned with comparing her work with others, but rather completing the required work pieces.

In Applied Computing, however, Anna was concerned with her progress as compared with the progress of other students in the class. Relating well to the teacher was also of concern to her in this subject as much of her commentary revolved around difficulties with the teacher and resulted in the decision to move to another class with a different teacher. Although Anna was concerned with the fact that she did not have the necessary background to do well in this subject her emphasis was not so much on strategies she could employ to improve her understanding of concepts but rather on strategies she could use to protect her ego (ie. "it is not my fault because I have not done

this subject before ... the teacher doesn't like me"). These factors indicated that Anna had adopted a performance/ego motivational orientation towards this subject.

Results from the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen 1985) also reflent the fact that Anna adopted both task and ego orientations. Anna strongly agreed with responses such as ("I feel most successful if..") "something I learn makes me want to find out more", "I solve a tricky problem by working hard, "I finally understand a really complicated idea" and "something I learn really makes sense to me", reflecting a task mastery motivational orientation. Anna also strongly agreed with responses such as "I score higher than other students", "I am the only one who can answer the teacher's questions" and "I do the work better than other students", reflecting a performance/ego orientation. Interestingly, Anna strongly agreed with "I score high on a test without studying" possibly indicating her desire for easy superiority and "I don't have to do any homework" which suggests work avoidance. In the context of Anna's situation and with an understanding of her time management skills it could be seen that in fact these responses were a result of her desires based on a busy schedule.

Student Entry Characteristics

During the first interview James was given the opportunity to discuss his background with relation to school and other commitments, his interests, his experience of Year 11 and the goals he had set for himself this year.

Background

James is a Year 12 student who has chosen a non-university bound course of study for his final year of secondary school. In Year 11 James chose a university bound course of study, however, he decided to change to a non-university bound course "because I failed most of my TEE subjects like Maths, English, Art and Design and Geography." When James chose a university bound course of study he admitted he was not consciously selecting subjects suited to a particular career path, but had thought he would like to go to university and maybe study "psychology or something". Although he did not have many of the Year 10 pre-requisites for the Year 11 subjects he chose and was advised by various staff members to pursue an easier course for Year 11. James still felt confident enough about his ability to attempt a Year 11 university bound course. When he reached the end of that year and the need to change courses became apparent James decided that he should select different subjects to enable him to have a greater chance of gaining entry to a TAFE course instead. James' father owns a printing business and James has become interested in

pursuing a career in this field. Thus he aimed to either gain an apprenticeship or enrol in a TAFE course in this area after completing Year 12.

Year 11 experience and achievement

In Year 11 James' best subject was Applied Computing as he felt it was the subject he could "do best at" and receive one of his highest grades (C) for. "It made it easier because I enjoyed it." Because James liked this subject he "worked hard at it" and "wasn't distracted in class. I can do something good with it, that's why I liked it". James describes receiving an A for Applied Computing in first term as his most memorable experience of Year 11 schooling.

James also felt that he got a "good mark" (C) for Foundations of Maths. He feels that "Maths is good" and part of the reason for his success in this class was that "there was no one I knew in the class" and so "I worked pretty hard at it. I get distracted easily by people".

James was disappointed with his TEE English results in Year 11, given the effort he put into his work. "I tried really hard at English, because for the last four years I wasn't really good at it. I tried really hard last year but still got poor marks. It was the only subject I tried really hard in but got poor marks." James feels that Senior English "is more my level".

James had set academic goals for his Year 12 year based on his previous experience and the activities he enjoys at school. He expected to do well in Modelling in Maths "because I got a C for Foundations of Maths and that's a higher grade (more difficult subject) so Modelling is like, really easy". James expected to do well in Applied Industrial Arts "because I like working with wood". He was pleased to have chosen Directed Study as he could "catch up on work and other subjects". For Maths and Computing James aimed to achieve A's or high B's. He also aimed to achieve an A or B in Applied Industrial Arts "because I like it". Based on his experience in English over the last few years he stated he would be "happy to pass Senior English".

James was under pressure from his parents to achieve these goals because he "did so bad last year". He was also under pressure to achieve a C average across 5 Year 11 and 5 Year 12 subjects otherwise he would not graduate. "I can't get a C or I won't graduate."

James had begun to make changes designed to help him achieve his goals. He had begun to organise his time more effectively which he found difficult "because I've never done it before". He had also begun to complete school work at home for the first time. James realised that this was his final year of school and that he had to "put the hard work in now".

James believed that success was achieved when you "try your hardest and get your best results when you try your hardest". He argued that if you do not try you cannot possibly succeed, in the same way as he did not try nor succeed in Geography last year.

James measured his success on his own goals ("how much I can get") and on how hard he tried.

Beliefs about schooling

James believed that school had a very important vocational purpose, which was to provide students with the skills and knowledge they needed to enter the workforce.

As well as acknowledging the vocation importance of schooling James also indicated his beliefs about the relative importance of other aspects of schooling through his responses to the "Purposes of Schooling" Questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985).

James most positively responded to the ideas that "a very important thing a school should do is ..." provide the opportunity for students to develop understanding, enhance their wealth and status, achievement motivation and social commitment. James strongly agreed with five of eleven items indicating understanding such as "prepare us to evaluate critically what experts say", "help us to understand how what our country does affects the world", "make us critical readers of the news", "help us to think clearly about what politicians say" and "help us think clearly (critically) about what we read and see on TV". James also strongly agreed that school should "help us get into the best tertiary courses", "prepare us for jobs that will give us money for luxuries", "prepare us for jobs that will give us enough money to buy the best of everything" and "give us the skills that will help us get top jobs with high status" thus enhancing our wealth and status. In addition, school should "teach us to be creative problem solvers at work" and "prepare us for jobs where

we can keep learning new things" .long with "teach us to follow orders even when we don't feel like it" and "prepare us to do things we have to do, even if we don't want to". These responses reflected a sense of achievement motivation and social commitment.

The importance James placed on understanding the media and being able to critically evaluate information could well be a reflection of his involvement in a TEE course of study during Year 11. This course, in particular, taught critical evaluation of a range of texts including speeches, TV news and current affairs. His concern with school enabling him to perform tasks he does not wish to may be a reflection of how he coped and responded to school on a daily basis. As he believed wealth and status to be important results of schooling James began to give up when it became clear that his progress during Year 12 would not enable him to achieve either of these.

Student self-perceptions

During each interview James was asked to comment about how he was feeling with regard to his course and his progress.

At the first interview James projected a positive attitude towards the year ahead. He seemed confident with the decisions he had made about subject choice and positive about his potential to succeed during the year. When reflecting on his results from last year in the light of the year approaching he stated "I failed because of laziness, no motivation, but this year I'm changing because I want to go to TAFE so I'm putting the extra work in." James acknowledged he would need to work harder than he had

previously and appeared to be making an effort to ensure he achieved a degree of success through his organisation and commitment to his studies.

At the second interview James was feeling reasonably happy about the term and felt that he was "going alright". He was happy that he felt he was achieving at a higher level than he was last year and was content with the subject selections he had made. "I'm doing all the subjects I want to do - it's good".

At the third interview James felt he was "going okay". His enthusiasm seemed to have waned and he no longer projected the positive impression seen in the first interview. James was not as organised as he had intended to be and was not completing extra work at home. He gave the impression he was just managing to keep up with the subjects he had chosen and he seemed less confident about his ability to do as well as he had anticipated.

At the final interview when reflecting on the semester James felt "I've gone pretty good" although "not as good as I hoped". James had encountered a number of difficulties throughout the semester including poor time management, failure to submit assessments on time and the disruptive influence of a peer. James has set clear goals for the final semester and has arranged with various teachers to submit work which should have been submitted in Semester One. Despite his obvious disappointment James revealed that he felt "pretty good about next semester". He has resolved to try to submit his assignments on time. Comparing his present feelings with those he voiced at the start of the year he stated "at the beginning of the year I thought going down to lower (less difficult) subjects would be easier. Easier subjects would mean I'd get As and B's.. it was harder than I thought." James indicated that it had taken him longer than expected to adjust to his altered course

of study and that the standard of work he encountered was more difficult than he had originally anticipated.

Student perceptions - curriculum and classroom processes

During the second, third and fourth interviews James was able to make comments about the curriculum he encountered and the classroom processes he experienced through discussion of particular subjects and ideas about schooling.

Second interview

During the second interview James was asked to discuss his most successful and most difficult subjects thus far. He discussed his performance in Applied Industrial Arts and Work Studies.

At this interview James felt he was having most success in Applied Industrial Arts. He enjoyed working with his hands and was in the process of completing a design project which was a letter holder made out of clear plastic. "It's pretty good. I look forward to doing the classes in that." For this particular project students had a choice of two designs. James stated "it's better if you can choose what you want to do because you like it more". He was enthusiastic about a major assignment students have further on in the course where they could make "what you want". James felt he had ability in this subject because "when I make things they look good. I take a while to finish them well". He also acknowledged the teacher gave positive encouragement sometimes and said his "work is good". When discussing the expectations the teacher had of him James stated "I think he

expects me to do well .. I'm not really sure". The last assessment students were asked to complete was a letter box. James was pleased with his result of 36/42 although he lost 30% of this mark due to submitting the assessment three days late. James described the atmosphere in this class as industrious as students spent most of the time working on their individual projects. James had good friends in this class, however, he did not find himself distracted by them as he declared "because of the different activities you don't talk or muck around". Within the friendship group students commented on each other's work and offered each other advice with task related problems.

At this time James' most difficult subject was Work Studies. "I don't really like it. It doesn't really interest me ... history of work force ... discrimination ... doesn't interest me." He discussed an activity students completed recently where they examined their personal role models and discussed individuals who had influenced them in the decisions they had made in their lives so far. The students were given questions to answer. Although James acknowledged the activity was quite interesting he stated "the questions were easy and then we just mucked around". There appeared to be little challenge in this subject for James. In describing the atmosphere in the class he admitted that it had changed because "everyone used to muck around heaps, now we don't". James indicated the teacher had begun to be firmer with student behaviour and so students were less obvious in displaying their inattentiveness. Even though James expects a B or a C for Work Studies he does not expect to achieve success in this subject because he does not like it.

Over the two week holiday break James' father had organised some work experience for him at a motor mechanic's. James was "kind of interested in motor mechanics ... I'll see what it's like when I get there".

At this stage of the year it appeared that James was less clear about his career goals and that he was endeavouring to perform well in some subject areas.

Third interview

During the third interview James was asked to discuss how he felt he was performing in some of his subjects and to describe the atmosphere and typical classroom processes he experienced in each.

In Modelling with Maths James reported that the teacher kept control of the class most of the time. "You get to talk while you're working on problems and help each other work things out. It's a good way to learn unless you get sidetracked." James felt that Maths was not a really valuable subject and described it as "pretty easy stuff". He also found that this subject was not challenging for him although he admitted "you learn some valuable skills such as problem solving where there is more than one answer for each problem". The emphasis in the problem solving activities lay in how the problem was solved rather than the answer arrived at. James found this a little frustrating as he considered arriving at the correct answer to be more important than how the problem was solved.

In Applied Industrial Arts James reported that the class had a relaxed atmosphere where the students as individuals worked on their own projects. James felt that the skills

he was learning were useful and thus he perceived Applied Industrial Arts to be a valuable subject "You learn time management, planning ahead   there's only so many machines so you have to work out when you'll use it and fit in with everyone else "

James enjoyed Recreation as he felt it provided him with the opportunity to get away from school for a while He also found the subject relaxing because "you can talk to your friends while you're playing "

At the moment James was finding Religious Education difficult "I don't like it It doesn't suit me I don't believe in that kind of thing   I'm not a devoted Catholic any more." Even though James disagreed with some of the ideas presented in this class he refrained from voicing his own opinion and instead ignored what was happening by mentally withdrawing from the class He took the opportunity to talk to his friends, but not about ideas related to the class James perceived a lot of the content of this subject as irrelevant to himself, his ideas and his lifestyle He felt the subject should be optional even though he admitted that those who dislike the subject have the option of attending a school where Religious Education was not compulsory

James was quite enjoying Applied Computing For most of the classes the students worked on tasks and assignments individually In each class he stated "you just do your work" When discussing the value of this subject James felt that "it's pretty good You learn time management because you can't do it at home - you have to work really hard in class."

A new member in the Senior English class has caused a few problems for James Instead of attending to the class he talks to this friend and said "he likes to talk I find it

hard to do my work" Even though James admitted this was a distraction he did not admit this affected his progress to a great extent "maybe a little bit, not much" James felt that the course "is good actually   it's more what I'll need when I leave school" Within the variety of tasks in this class James felt that some of the content areas are more valuable than others Tasks he perceived to be valuable were those such as essay writing, letter writing and class discussions He felt that activities which focus on understanding the media, such as film study are not valuable because "you don't need it for a job" He saw value in oral activities because they "build up your confidence"

James believed that school should provide students with skills to obtain employment and be successful in the workforce In addition students should have the opportunity to develop leadership skills and social skills as he perceived talking to people and "getting along with people you don't know" important skills to possess in the workplace

Final interview

During the final interview James was asked to reflect on his Semester One performance and respond to some questions about schooling in general.

James felt in Semester One he had most success in Applied Industrial Arts where he achieved a C even though he failed to finish his major assignment ("it took longer than I thought") and he ran out of time with his projects. James was happy that his C grade was only two marks off a B. James felt he has had least success in Applied Computing where he received a D because there was an assignment due every week and he "ran out of

time" In English James just received a C which pleased him as he stated "I got what I wanted which was a pass" There are two subjects that James felt he would have to "catch up on" For Work Studies he received a D "because in first term I didn't hand my assignments in but I'm catching up on them and handing them in" He confirmed "I've handed them all in now" so "next term I'll get a better mark" James also wished to "catch up on" Maths where he received a C "I thought I'd get a better mark but a C's alright - the assignments are different from last year, so I'll have to catch up on that as well"

The teaching strategies James felt motivated students were those which included hands- on practical work for the students For example, he spoke about a Maths project where the students were required to hypothetically purchase some shares on the stock market and then follow the shares for six months Even though he lost money James felt that an activity which closely mirrored a real life situation meant that students had increased interest in the activity and were more motivated to follow it through and learn from it In Work Studies the students were in the process of preparing a career night presentation concerning an area of careers which interested them James also felt that this type of practical activity motivated the students to do well James also found that class situations where students focus on their individual work and were able to work at their own speed were valuable as they provided the opportunity for students to individually conference with teachers when necessary and achieve at their own level In-class discussions were also of great value to James as he believed they allow students to learn from one another. The most satisfying thing James experienced in school this year was the hands-on work engaged in Applied Industrial Arts.

James felt that the expectations others hold of you are irrelevant when it comes to succeeding at school. Even though his parents expected him to achieve at a certain level, he felt that "if you don't do the work at Year 12 it's your own fault". James disliked being told to work hard and felt that this made students rebel rather than encouraging them to work harder. He stated that "how hard you work determines how well you do" and the only thing teachers could do was to give students positive encouragement. "Positive encouragement makes you want to achieve more, it builds up your confidence."

James believed that to be a good teacher an individual had to "have a good way of explaining things". According to him good teachers should have superior knowledge about "how to work with students", let students work at their own pace and "don't hassle you", created a relaxed classroom atmosphere and were not too strict by allowing extensions on assignments. When discussing one of the best teachers he had ever had he referred to the manner in which the teacher structured the content of lessons so that there was a gradual development of ideas and concepts. "I could understand what she was talking about."

Motivational Goal Orientation

Throughout the interviews conducted James altered the motivational orientations he adopted according to certain dimensions of tasks he was asked to complete within the various subject areas. Among the factors seen to be influencing his motivational orientation were prior experiences of similar tasks, perceived value of task, perceived

degree of potential success, level of challenge, classroom atmosphere, level of choice within the task and task relevance

When approaching activities of a practical nature James seemed to adopt a task mastery orientation as he saw the value and reward in the task itself For example James approached the practical tasks in Applied Industrial Arts with task mastery orientation as he found reward in completing tasks because "when I make things they look good" He believed the skills he learnt in this subject were valuable and found there was a satisfactory degree of challenge in what he did

Results from the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) also reflected the idea that James approached tasks with both task mastery and performance/ego orientation. He strongly agreed with responses such as ("I feel most successful if .") " I solve a tricky problem by working hard", "I work hard all day" and "I finally understand a really complicated idea", and these reflected task mastery orientation James also responded by strongly agreeing with items such as "I do the work better than other students", "I show people I'm good at something" and "I score higher than other students" and this reflected performance/ego orientation. James also strongly agreed with "I don't do anything stupid in class" and this showed his desire to avoid feelings of inferiority. James demonstrated his desire for easy superiority by strongly agreeing with "I score high on a test without studying".

Case Three   Matthew

During the first interview Matthew was given the opportunity to discuss his

background with relation to school and other commitments and interests, his experience of

Year 11 and the goals he has set for himself this year

Background

Matthew is a Year 12 student who has chosen a non-university bound course of

study for both his final years of secondary school. The subjects Matthew has chosen for

both Year 11 and Year 12 are those in which he is interested and those which will enable

him to gain an apprenticeship, employment or entry into TAFE courses. In selecting his

Year 11 subjects Matthew was closely guided by his Course Coordinator as he had "no

particular goal in mind, it was more what my Coordinator told me would be good subjects

to do, more what he told me to do plus what I thought I needed to do". When asked

whether he felt pressured to make particular choices because of the advice his Coordinator

gave him he stated "I sort of felt pressured into them but I also knew that I had a choice. I

went with his choices because they made sense".

For both years Matthew has chosen to participate in the INSTEP programme to

gain work experience in his field of interest. He has a keen interest in sailing and hopes to

gain employment in this area. In Year 11 Matthew completed two work placements with

Oceanic Cruises where he worked as a deckhand. He enjoyed this work and stated that "it

was pretty good" In the year prior to this (1995) Matthew had the opportunity through his involvement with Scouts to be part of the Leeuwin tour which was a sailing trip he felt "taught people to survive in the world, not so much sail training" Matthew found this to be an extremely rewarding experience as "it taught me to work better in a team We got to know each other in one day and then had to sail a ship together" This year Matthew hopes to again obtain work experience in the boating field

Matthew found home study difficult "I find it pretty hard to sit down for a while More often than not I leave things to the last minute " Matthew knew he "should set time aside each night" and admitted that he tries to "get things done" but struggles He frequently leaves work to be completed in the non-class contact time he has at school (due to participating in the INSTEP programme). Often though he finds that this time is insufficient.

Matthew's philosophy of school is "you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't so ... Yeh, just try, try to pass." With this in mind he aimed to pass his subjects in Year 12.

Year 11 experience and achievement

Matthew's Year 11 course consisted of seven non-university bound subjects including INSTEP (work experience).

In Year 11 Matthew enjoyed Outdoor Education the most because "I just like learning about the outdoors, doing hikes and learning about the outdoors" He also reported that the subject was challenging to a certain extent "because some of the people

in the class were quite disruptive but they were good to go on excursion with because you could talk to them easily"

Matthew's poorest subject was Applied Computing because he found it difficult "keeping up with everyone else and the studying," and "just the work it takes " As well as finding this subject had a heavy workload Matthew felt he was disadvantaged because of his poor typing skills "It's easy to fall behind if you haven't got good typing skills - they've improved this year but could get better "

Matthew felt that there were subjects he could have improved his performance in last year and stated "subjects like Work Studies I know I could have done better in, that was sort of me" In other subjects he felt he had less control over his performance "Subjects like Maths in Practice and Applied Computing I thought it was sort of up to, well, as long as I did the assignments, it's really up to the teacher how well I was going to do I sort of felt like I couldn't have done much better in those subjects " Matthew felt he had the power to perform at a higher level in Work Studies as "the teacher was actually marking what she should have been marking but I could have done better "

To explain why he felt this way Matthew made comparisons "In Applied Computing I knew I was doing the same sort of standard of assignments as I was in Senior English but I was only getting pass marks for that, whereas I was getting B's in Senior English." Matthew felt that how a teacher interprets a student's work also affects that student's grade.

Quite often it's how the teacher takes what you write as well In Applied Computing we had a switch of teachers throughout the year I was doing okay with the first teacher, but then my grades sort of slipped when the other teacher came in It just made me wonder whether it was something to do with the teacher, how the teacher was marking

When asked how he felt about the control he perceived teachers to have had over his grade he replied

I felt like I sort of had to take what they gave me. because when we got the new teacher in Applied Computing it was getting near the end of the year and they were starting to rush us along with assignments and push us a bit and so it was a bit hard to talk to the teacher in Applied Computing

Matthew also felt he had little control over his success in Maths in Practice In this subject he stated

how the teacher took to marking us was slightly unfair because she'd write a list of things we had to have done, but we wouldn't get the list until after we'd done the assignment, so we might not have fulfilled that list and as a result we didn't pass. Also I know some of the things I put in the assignment were actually pretty valid as far as the assignment goes, but it was because I didn't have what was on

the list that I didn't pass So she sort of didn't look at what you had, she looked at what she had and whether you had what she had

In this Maths class Matthew "felt influenced by what everyone else was doing because I know there were a lot of people in the class that felt the same as me but no one actually spoke to her so it was just sort of sliding along with that"

Matthew was happy with his results in Senior English He still felt though that teachers have control over how well students perform in English as he stated "I was happy with how I went, but it is up to the teacher as well because I think that with English it's up to the teacher whether or not they like the story as well as basing the marks on structure and things like that " In essence he felt that it was "pretty much up to the teacher as to what they give the student" He found that "as far as structure and things go I'm pretty sure about what I'll be marked on but sometimes I find I'm unsure about my sentence structure and things like that"

Goal setting

Matthew had set goals for himself based partly on his experience of particular subjects in Year 11 and on the success he expected from each subject In Year 11 he had

expected to do well in Outdoor Education and INSTEP because I liked them and I wanted to do them. I thought I'd do alright in all of the subjects which I did and I

did so it worked out - I was happy I didn't get any Ds I got an A and a couple of B's I think I think I got the A for Outdoor Ed

In Year 12 Matthew wanted to "try and get an A" for Outdoor Education and "a pass mark" for INSTEP because "you can only get a C for that" Matthew aimed to "keep up" with his other subjects by achieving a C grade in each

In terms of improving any aspect of his performance this year Matthew stated that he was not striving to improve anything "I'm aiming to find employment when I leave school" and aimed to just pass the subjects he has chosen "It would be nice to get a better grade so I guess I could be working towards that, but I'm happy with a C grade in most subjects."

Matthew defined success as meaning "I have achieved what I set out to do, but I take a C grade in a subject as success because I passed it but if I pass a subject it's success but if I've done well in a subject it's glory" When Matthew was asked whether he believed achieving success did not mean "doing well" he replied "I'd rather take doing well as success in out-of-school activities" For example, Matthew was involved with the Scouts Venturers programme where achievement was noted as either a pass or fail rather than as a grade. Matthew stated that "a pass is success at school". Thus he perceived school success as passing subjects, however, he was not content with this definition in out-of-school activities.

Matthew's goal for this year was to pass but also to work towards gaining adequate TAFE points to gain entry to particular courses. He felt he put pressure on

himself by "leaving things to the last minute", and was also affected by pressure from teachers and his peers Matthew stated that peer pressure affected him because he had to "keep up" with his peers in terms of his progress with assignments He put pressure on himself "to do more if others have done more than me" This pressure, however, did not seem enough to motivate him to complete extra work at home as he said "when it comes to going home I feel guilty for not doing it (work) but I can get over that" Matthew admitted that he would often procrastinate and defer tasks until the next day if he had some available time He found that the new time then allocated for the task was often not enough and so he was forced to work before school began or leave work incompleted

Beliefs about schooling

Matthew believed that school was necessary to gain employment but he saw that one of the most valuable parts of school was that "as you get older you begin to see school as a community - a family rather than a hierarchy"

As well as acknowledging the vocational importance of schooling Matthew also indicated his beliefs about the relative importance of other aspects of schooling through his responses to the "Purposes of Schooling" Questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985).

Matthew only strongly agreed to one item of this questionnaire which was ("A very important thing a school should do is ..") "prepare us for jobs where we can keep learning new things". This indicates that Matthew believed one major function of schooling was to develop students' achievement motivation with relation to tasks and

work The items Matthew agreed with reflected his belief that school should help develop achievement motivation, social commitment, understanding and wealth and status respectively Responses such as "help us to always work hard to do our best", "teach us to be creative problem solvers at work", "teach us not to give up when work gets hard", "help us to keep working in spite of obstacles", "prepare us for challenging jobs" and "teach us to set high standards for our own work" indicate the importance Matthew placed on achievement motivation Those such as "prepare us to do things we have to do, even if we don't want to", "make us responsible law-abiding citizens", "teach us to respect authority", "prepare us to be active in the community", "teach us to work cooperatively with others", "teach us things that will help society", "prepare us to be useful to others", "teach us to do our duty to our country", "prepare us for jobs that will make the world better for everyone", "prepare us for jobs making or doing things that are useful to others", "make us loyal to our country" and "prepare us for jobs that will make other people's lives more interesting or satisfying" indicate the importance he placed on school developing students' social commitment. Matthew believed school should develop students' understanding of science and politics by providing opportunities to "help us to understand how what our country does affects the world", "help us to understand nature and how it works", "help us to understand technology and how it works" and "help us understand the issues facing our state and country" Matthew rated wealth and status as the least important function of a school and responded positively to "help us get into the best tertiary courses".

During each interview Matthew was asked to comment about how he was feeling with regard to his course and his progress

At the first interview Matthew discussed his reasons for selecting particular subjects in Year 11 over others. In doing so he stated that he selected Maths in Practice "because I didn't get too good a grade in year 10 Maths so I had to fall down into that" Senior English he describes as "another thing I dropped down into from General English in Year 10" When asked about his use of the terms "fall down" and "dropped down" he replied that he felt he was "going down" even though "there wasn't anything in Year 10 that said to me I was going down" He admitted he thought "why put myself through the stress (of selecting more difficult subjects) if I don't want to"

Matthew seemed quite happy about the year ahead. He was aiming to pass all his subjects and based on his previous experience in Year 11 felt fairly confident that he would do so. He was not anxious to really apply himself and achieve at a higher level, but seemed content to just pass.

At the second interview Matthew reported that so far the term is "going pretty well" for him. He believed he was averaging B's in most of his subjects.

> I feel pretty good. I still think I could do better though, I'm feeling like sitting
> back on it and not doing much work. I'm not actually sure why I'm getting B's. It
> might just be when I'm doing my assignments I'm following the assessment
> layouts. That might have something to do with it

Matthew perceived that he was performing at the highest level in Maths at this stage, however, he did not consider himself to have ability in this subject Matthew's conceptions of ability appeared to be based on his prior experience of Maths "I've not done too well in Maths over the years. I often have to ask questions to make sure I'm right. Just listening a bit more has helped." He also stated the relevance of the course content has enabled him to understand concepts more clearly as he is able to "see the connection for the future".

By the third interview Matthew stated that "so far I feel mainly good" about the semester. Although he admitted "there are times when you feel things aren't going so well" he had resolved to "focus on the good things".

In the final interview when reflecting on the semester Matthew felt he performed "pretty well actually - better than I thought I would". He was "feeling fairly good" about Semester Two and stated "hopefully I can keep up what I've got so far and improve those subjects I'm not doing so well in". When comparing his results with the expectations he held at the beginning of the semester he said "I didn't know how I'd do 'cause Year 12 is the last year. I thought it might be harder." He admitted the work was not easy as "it's still difficult but not as difficult as I thought".

Student perceptions - curriculum and classroom processes

During the second, third and fourth interviews Matthew was able to make comments about the curriculum he encountered and the classroom processes he experienced through discussion of particular subjects and ideas about schooling.

During the second interview Matthew was asked to discuss his most successful and most difficult subjects thus far He discussed his performance in Maths in Practice, Applied Computing and Work Studies.

Matthew felt he was having most success at this stage in Maths. Even though he was not receiving the highest mark in this subject he felt "I'm doing better than I've ever done before. I'm paying more attention in class". He still felt that the teacher was affecting his success as "maybe the change in teacher had a little bit to do with it. Last year I got C's now I'm getting B minuses." In describing the activities given in class he stated "we do mostly in-class activities - we're actually doing work in class. Last year we mostly had time to work on our assignments". Matthew felt that the main difference in Maths this year was that although the students completes exercises they "are learning how to do new things" whereas "last year we did assignments based on what we did in Years 10, 9 and 8". The present unit the students are exploring is "interest and banking". Matthew reported that this unit was relevant and interesting and that this year he has found the Maths course to be more relevant by providing students with "things you need to know for everyday life. Before it's just been things we had to learn, now we see why we should know these things." Maths in Practice was assessed according to student outcome statements. When completing assignments Matthew reported he was closely following the assignment outcomes to "get the marks". He found he was able to see what needed to be done and do it. When asked how he felt about the outcomes based marking he admitted

that he has felt there have been problems with the interpretation of the answer key and that this affected how he felt about his performance.

The students in this class frequently compared marks "out of interest" to find out "how badly or how well you had done". Students would also predict marks "based on whether students think it's better or worse than the last assessment". Although Matthew actively engaged in comparison of marks he declared that "knowing you've done your best is more important than what everyone else does". The teacher Matthew had this year is new to the school and so he felt she did not hold expectations of individual students. He was conscious however, of the fact that he thinks she will form expectations based on his first assessment, "so I'll have to keep that up". Matthew acknowledged that he felt the need to "keep up to the expectations of the teacher". In this class Matthew said "there's pressure for students to work hard. It's not negative pressure. It keeps me going. It's what I need".

At this time Matthew's poorest subject was Applied Computing. The activities in this class mainly consisted of exercises in learning how to use Word for Windows '97 and assignments. At the present time the students have a business report to complete. Matthew does not express any enthusiasm or interest in the tasks he is asked to complete in this subject.

Matthew is bored in Work Studies. "It's just that there's nothing to do." He believed the course had solid subject matter and that the students were required to complete questions and assessments, however, he felt that the subject "doesn't test me in any way".

At this interview Matthew was asked to discuss how he felt he was performing in some of his subjects and to describe the atmosphere and usual processes experienced in each subject.

In Applied Computing the students work individually on their assignments. Matthew found that he spent a lot of the time attempting "to keep pace with the rest of the class", however, he worked reasonably hard as he believed this subject will be valuable in the future. He reported that the majority of the class felt the subject "is okay", however, a few people like himself "have trouble keeping up". Matthew felt that "a lot of people have been using computers a lot longer" and because of this he struggles to work at the same pace as other students. In this subject Matthew aimed to "get the assignments done on time" and "get them to look as good as possible". He stated that he found the subject challenging because "I haven't used the things we're using all that much". He found it "challenging to interpret words in book and learn to use the program". The reward in this subject for Matthew was in "creating a good document" and obtaining a most professional finished product along with performing at a level equivalent to most students in the class.

Matthew was finding Maths in Practice to be a rewarding subject as he was "actually learning new things" and felt as though he was achieving at a higher level than he did last year. He reported that they mostly engage in in-class activities to learn new concepts and sometimes work on assignments.

Matthew chose to do Beliefs and Values for both Year 11 and 12 because he liked "studying things about other religions as well as Christianity" He was finding that this year the course requires more writing and that the students had less opportunity to participate in class discussions. Matthew found this disappointing as he preferred in-class discussion. "I can get involved more. I enjoy listening and talking more than writing" Matthew thought the majority of students preferred talking to writing. Even so he was quite happy with the progress he was making in this subject as he stated "I'm learning about other religions now, that's interesting"

Matthew was finding his Senior English grades "are about the same as last year". He reported that he was enjoying this subject and was working to "keep up with the schedule". He felt that Senior English along with Applied Computing and Maths had a fairly "tight schedule" which makes students work faster. Matthew liked the change of topics in Senior English and found that having a large variety of topics made the subject more enjoyable. Matthew found Work Studies to be "not really challenging". He believed that the level of challenge in a subject or a task affects "the way you approach it". In Work Studies he felt that there were two to three topics a term and that the subject "starts interesting", however, it "gets boring as you go along".

Matthew enjoyed the expeditions in Outdoor Education. At the present the class was preparing for a major expedition into the north-west of Western Australia and so they have been "doing mainly in-class stuff". Matthew disliked the "thought of sitting in a classroom rather than going outside" in this subject and referred to it as "Indoor Ed.".

In the final interview the students were asked to reflect on their Semester One performance and discuss their thoughts about various aspects of schooling.

Matthew was quite pleased with his progress in Semester One. He had achieved an A in Outdoor Education "but I could go down to a B when the external moderator comes along 'cause" the teacher marked "over the class". The external moderator is employed by the Secondary Education Authority to ensure that marking is consistent across the state. When asked how he felt about the possibility of his mark being changed by a moderator he replied "It's okay, it's still a pretty good mark".

Matthew felt he had not been performing too well in Applied Computing as "in some of the assessments we've been doing lately I haven't been doing too well in compared to the rest of the class". He felt unable to estimate his mark in this subject and considered it to be his least successful subject because he found "just keeping up with assessments and in class work" difficult. Even so he acknowledged that "I'm learning things in it".

Matthew thought he was performing "fairly well" in Maths and estimated his grade to be "I think a high C". He hoped he "can keep that up over the next term".

Matthew was "fairly happy" with his results in Senior English but thought he would "have to keep it up though". Matthew felt that he has had most success in English and admitted "I know I shouldn't do it, comparing my average to other students". It appears this comparison makes him feel successful. The other factor that contributed to his

feelings of success was the fact that "also I've managed to keep my mark where it was last year"

Matthew discussed a number of teaching strategies he finds motivating in the classroom. He reported that he learnt a lot from in-class discussions and enjoyed "getting an argument going". The subjects in which this strategy was most used were Beliefs and Values and Outdoor Education. Matthew felt that group work in class can be useful, however, he does not "find it helps me over assignments and things". The value of group work depends largely on "who's in your group". Matthew found that most of the learning he had encountered in first semester had been teacher directed, where teachers have given handouts and organised activities for the students. He compared this with his Venturers experience where the students organise activities. Matthew felt that allowing students to organise activities was better "because you learn a lot". Considering this in a classroom context he reported that "to a certain degree the teacher has to organise things for the class because you've got different people - sr ne are slacker than others".

For teachers to motivate students Matthew felt that the students should have more of "a say in what they do" and that students should have the opportunity to participate in the organisation of the class. Matthew also suggested that teachers create more "activities that are fun to do", for example, excursions based on relevant activities. Regular changes in environment he believed can be motivating and stimulating to students. Generally he felt that teachers should be doing more "things to make it more interesting". He also believed it was important for teachers to show students that they want them to do well and be seen to be making a genuine effort to help them along as a class and as individuals. Teachers

also need to "be enthusiastic about what they're teaching - it rubs off on the students"
Matthew acknowledged that positive encouragement was also important to student
motivation because it puts "pressure on them to do well" and "they'll put more effort into
it" Matthew believes a good teacher is strict and knows the different levels of different
students for example "who needs a push and who doesn't" Good teachers according to
Matthew need to have a good memory and have the ability to easily recognise the
individual strengths of the students in their class.

At Year 12 level Matthew believed that "to a certain degree teachers should leave
students alone" because "it's important they develop their own skills". Even so he felt that
"teachers have a duty to make sure the work's done". Matthew says it is important that all
students hand in all assignments even if they do not score any marks. "Students can't do
nothing. Teachers need to push a bit even in Year 12".

Matthew believed teachers have control over student success. Even though he
acknowledged "teachers have to mark as they're told to mark by the SEA" he felt that
"English teachers can decide on whether or not they like something they sway (alter the
mark) on whether they like the work or not".

Matthew also believed that teacher response to students affects achievement. For
example, he discussed his Applied Computing class where the "teacher doesn't talk
assignments over" and so "students don't know where they went wrong". This results in
behaviour where "students get slack" and often give up even trying in the class.

Matthew recognised that different teachers have different expectations of students.
"Some teachers make you hand things in on time, others don't. Some teachers take marks

off for handing work in late." Matthew also recognised that in some classes the students had power to change the expectations and standards set by teachers. "You tend to find that if you get a teacher (who deducts marks for handing work in late) and the whole class gets slack then they'll tend to stick together and the teacher will actually just go on and not take marks off us at all". When asked to explain how this works Matthew continued

How the teacher marks the assessment and when they get it they treat as two different things so they'll still mark it. They still go through and say this one's worse than this one so I'll mark this one down, but just the fact that they don't take marks off for handing it in late does give the students a bit of   like a bit of power ... 'cause you arrive at school and you ask   like ask people if they've done something and you sort of are looking for safety in numbers.

The most satisfying thing Matthew finds in school is "passing at the end of the year" and "doing well in subjects".

In comparing the assessment system used at school with that used in his Venturers (for which he exhibits a high degree of motivation and enthusiasm) Matthew stated that "school would be better without marks in a certain respect - there wouldn't be any criticism as to how well you've done from other students". The problem he felt, however, was that "we need to know how well we're doing" and for this marks and grading are good. Matthew admitted that criticism from other students affected him because it made

him mostly "feel bad Criticism makes me want to do better than that person in the next assessment."

<center>Motivational Goal Orientation</center>

Throughout the interviews it became evident that although Matthew enjoyed and valued learning where the reward was to be found in the task itself, his highly competitive nature and concern about appearing to perform at a slightly higher level than others suggests that for many of the tasks he performs he adopts performance/ego orientation.

Matthew feels he has succeeded in Senior English because he compares his marks to others who have not performed as well as he has. Comparison of marks in Applied Computing leads him to feel unsuccessful and this he attributes to poor typing skills. The high degree of control he perceives teachers to have over his success also suggests performance/ego orientation as such a concern could quite likely manifest itself in teacher pleasing behaviours.

The results from the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) support this view as Matthew only strongly agrees with one item ("I feel most successful if .") "I show people I'm good at something". This is one item of seven which indicate performance/ego orientation. Of the items Matthew agrees with, some reveal that feelings of success originate from task mastery involvement, for example "something I learn makes me want to find out more", "I get a new idea about how things work", "I solve a tricky problem by working hard" and "a class makes me think about things". These answers, however, contrasted with responses such as "I do the

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work better than other students", "I show people I'm smart" and "I score higher than other students" indicate performance/ego orientation Responses such as "people don't think I'm dumb", "I don't do anything stupid in class", "I score high on a test without studying" and "I do well without trying" reflect his desire to avoid being perceived as inferior and to achieve easy superiority over others. These responses have been associated with performance/ego orientation.

Student Entry Characteristics

During the first interview Karen was given the opportunity to discuss her background with relation to school and other commitments and interests, her experience of Year 11 and the goals she has set for herself this year.

Background

Karen is a Year 12 student who has chosen a non-university bound course of study for both her final years of secondary school. The subjects Karen has chosen are those in which she is interested and those she believes may be useful for building a career. At the beginning of Year 11 Karen had initially selected a university bound course of study, however, after two weeks decided to change because "I got a bit slack and so I went with ones (subjects) I thought I could cope with better". Karen changed "because of work and stuff. I couldn't do all the assignments and stuff". When selecting her subjects Karen had not been mindful of a particular career as she stated "I don't know what I want to be or anything". This has also negatively affected her application and effort in subjects and grade wise, she has not fulfilled her potential. At the beginning of the year Karen thought she might choose to enter the field of childcare or "something like that" through gaining entry to a TAFE course.

Karen's strongest subjects last year were Food Production and Early Childhood Studies as "I found them interesting so I actually got a good mark in them". Karen considers an A or a B to be a good mark.

Karen considered her weakest subject in Year 11 to be Foundations of Maths because she "didn't really try hard. If I had put some effort into it I know I could have got like a higher (grade), but I got a D for it". When asked why she failed to put effort into this class Karen replied

> I don't know. It's because for the last two years I had a teacher that I didn't ...
> 'cause of that teacher I just lost my ... I don't know I just got slack. I mean I'm
> not blaming the teacher it was my fault, but ... just let it get away if you know what
> I mean and because of that I wasn't really used to doing Maths so I wasn't taking
> Maths that seriously and last year I just mucked around again.

Karen felt the teacher had a certain degree of responsibility to ensure she completed the required work, "cause like last year I had like four teachers and one of them was really good and like he'd always check homework and stuff like that and so I'd actually learn, but for some other ones I didn't do anything". When asked how she felt teachers could help motivate students in her situation she replied "the only way they can help is just the way they teach. Some are more interesting than others, some explain it easier, some just talk, talk, talk, they don't really get to the point, but some do get to the point and that's

when you learn" Karen admitted that she had little confidence in her ability to do well in Maths because in Year 10 she "didn't do much work and so I didn't think I could get a good mark".

Karen also felt that Drama was a weak subject for her as "I got a D but only because I didn't hand up a written section, like if you fail that, it's like everything". Karen considered Drama to be her "slackest subject" because they "didn't do any written work in class, but at the end we had to hand in this portfolio, and I did a portfolio but I didn't really do much work in it so I didn't hand it in so I got a D for that, but the actual drama and acting was okay. The written work was boring, it was about Greek theatre".

Karen's most successful subject last year was Early Childhood Studies. Even though she acknowledged "I didn't get the best grade in it" she felt she had the ability to achieve at a higher level. Karen perceived this to be a successful subject because "I find it interesting and quite fun actually". Karen felt she "worked hardest at Early Childhood Studies because I was interested in it and I knew I could get good grades".

To be successful at a subject Karen stated "you have to get what I consider a good grade but you have to enjoy it, do okay at it like good at it and you have to be interested in it". With this in mind Karen stated that subjects she chose last year (such as Foundations of Maths) were unsuccessful because "I wasn't interested in it (them)". Karen found the most satisfying aspect of school was "getting good grades in return for hard work".

Karen had not set specific goals for herself this year and when asked about her expectations for the year replied "not much, I just hope that I get a passing grade" When discussing her expectations for different subjects Karen felt confident that she would "get a good grade for Early Childhood studies and stuff like that" because she was confident in her ability in this area and enjoyed the subject.

Karen believed that prior experience affected her perception of subjects and the level at which she performed "because you know you can do it and you feel better about yourself and stuff like that". Karen also stated that "knowing you can get the grades" gave students the incentive to work hard.

Karen has selected an easier Maths course this year and feels that she will perform "okay actually because it's heaps easier and stuff". She is aiming for a B in Food Production as this is a subject she enjoys and has interest in.

Karen discussed the fact that many Year 12 students feel pressured to do well in their final year of school. She felt that this kind of pressure did not apply to her and that no pressure of this nature had been placed on her at all. She concedes she does not pressure herself to complete tasks and do well and confesses that her "parents bother me about it all the time but I just tell them to go away...they always tell me to do my homework and stuff, but I just can't be bothered". Even though Karen rejected pressure from her parents she indicated that she may benefit from a little pressure when she stated "sometimes I wish someone would (put pressure on me)".

Karen did not expect to perform well in English. "I'm getting put off English, getting worse every year ... last year I moved from TEE English to Senior English and I got even slacker in Senior English, and I didn't do much work, I nearly got a D as well cause I didn't do enough work and stuff, never handed anything up so ... slack again" Despite being a capable student Karen indicated that she did not feel confident in her ability to achieve a "good" grade in English.

Beliefs about schooling

Karen believed that school should provide students with the requirements to gain employment or enter a tertiary course.

As well as acknowledging the vocational importance of schooling Karen also indicated her beliefs about the relative importance of other aspects of schooling through her responses to the "Purposes of Schooling" Questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985).

When responding to the questionnaire Karen indicated that she strongly agreed with the notions that "A very important thing a school should do is .." develop students' achievement motivation, social commitment, wealth and status and understanding respectively. Items such as "teach us to be creative problem solvers at work", "help us to always work hard to do our best", "teach us not to give up when work gets hard", "help us to keep working in spite of obstacles", "prepare us for challenging jobs" and "teach us to set high standards for our own work" indicated the development of achievement motivation. Those answers that indicated a positive response to social commitment were

"prepare us to do things we have to do, even if we don't want to", "make us responsible law-abiding citizens", "teach us to respect authority", "teach us to work cooperatively with others", "teach us things that will help society", "prepare us for jobs that will make the world better for everyone", "prepare us for jobs making or doing things that are useful to others" and "teach us to follow orders even when we don't feel like it". The importance of wealth and status as a goal of schooling is indicated by responses such as "help us to get into the best tertiary courses", "recognise the talents of able students to ensure they move toward the top jobs", "prepare us to reach the top in our jobs" and "give us a drive to get higher and higher jobs". Belief in understanding the media and politics as a purpose of school is indicated by responses such as "help us think clearly (critically) about what we read and see on TV" and "help us to think clearly about what politicians say".

Student self-perceptions

During each interview Karen was asked to comment about how she was feeling with regard to her course and her progress.

At the first interview Karen did not appear to be particularly enthusiastic about the year ahead. However she was confident in her ability to perform well in a few of her subjects. The motivation she had at this stage was largely based on feelings of guilt for doing poorly last year. She perceived her Year 12 courses to have the same level of difficulty as Year 11 courses, however, she felt "more motivated to do it, because I feel really bad about last year, I did all these really slack subjects and I did really bad at it and so now I haven't really got a wide selection of things t choose from". Karen stated that

this year she was making more of an effort "I'm doing my assignments, more classwork rather than just mucking around, trying to do more homework". Although Karen reported that she felt more motivated this year she revealed that sometimes "I just can't be bothered ... just mere laziness ... I don't know ... I just can't be bothered doing things any more ... cause like I'm not sure if I really want a career, I don't know what I want to be so I just think what's the point of choosing hard subjects when I could do that and then repeat a year next year if I do find out so what's the point of doing hard subjects and trying and stuff" Even though Karen had considered a career in childcare this year she stated that "if something else comes in my head I will change because I'm not really certain about that now".

At the second interview Karen reported that thus far "everything's okay. It's going okay". Karen said that some subjects have heavier workloads than others, however, she felt she was coping well. "I think I'm doing the same in all subjects except Applied Computing". Karen thought she was working at a B or C level in most of her subjects and was still thinking of entering the field of childcare.

At the third interview Karen still felt that "everything's going okay" and appeared to be quite content with her progress in most subjects. Having experienced thirteen weeks of Year 12 she re-affirmed her expectations for the year as "hoping for good grades". She felt she had a chance of achieving "good grades" because after talking with others she reported that "lots of people said Year 12 is easier". Karen was still undecided about her career path and stated that "if I decide what I want to do I don't mind doing more years of school" and is prepared to undertake a university bound course if it will enable her to

work in an area of interest. She felt that "if I know what I want to do that will give me a motive to work hard and I'll enjoy it".

At the final interview Karen reported that she felt content with her achievements in the semester past. She felt she had performed "quite good actually" and that she "got what I'd hoped for".

Student perceptions - curriculum and classroom processes

During the second, third and fourth interviews Karen was able to make comments about the curriculum she encountered and the classroom processes she experienced through discussion of particular subjects and ideas about schooling.

Second interview

During the second interview Karen was asked to discuss her most successful and most difficult subjects thus far. She discussed her performance in Early Childhood Studies, Applied Computing and Senior English.

At this stage in the semester Karen felt her most successful subject was Early Childhood Studies because "I like the way we get taught". Karen describes the work as interesting and liked the fact that the class was small with not more than ten students. Because the class was small Karen felt there was a relaxed atmosphere and that the students could "just talk whenever". In this subject the students planned and conducted playgroups for six to seven children every Thursday. The students prepared the activities in pairs and Karen describes this as "great fun". The pairs then conduct the activities

during the playgroup session. When asked about how they were assessed in Early Childhood Studies Karen replied "I'm not really sure, we get marks here and there for assessments and playgroup". The last assessment Karen completed was a scrapbook where students were asked to find five articles related to child development and then write summaries and answer questions about each. When asked whether the assessments were marked according to Outcome Statements Karen first replied "I'm not sure - I think it is". Once Karen established that the subject was marked according to students outcome statements Karen said that she did not really like this style of marking as "it's too general".

Karen revealed that in Early Childhood Studies the students "compare our marks to see how we've done .. see if you're up to standard". The standard in this case is set by one student who the others use as a benchmark to establish and evaluate their own success. According to Karen the students "try to get a high as the best student" and "try to get marks close to those who do well". Performing at a level close to those who are perceived to have done well makes Karen feel happier and she believed that it "changes how you feel about your mark". Karen stated "you might think you've done well and then you see someone else has done heaps more". Comparisons such as these can have both positive and negative effects on how students rate their success and levels of confidence in particular subjects. Karen believed that she had substantial ability in Early Childhood Studies because she found it interesting and liked it. "I like it. It's easy. It's basic." Karen also enjoyed the subject because "I get along with everyone in the class".

The most difficult subject for Karen at this stage was Applied Computing. "I haven't done it since year 8". She finds that "you're s'posed to know all this stuff" and

because she does not use computers at home she "just (has) to learn all this stuff". At the present time the students have an assessment which is a business research. They are required to "interview a business manager and type up all this stuff". Karen stated that she found it interesting, however, the teacher expected a lot of work and Karen was not used to this. She found she needed "more time 'cause I haven't done it in ages". Karen felt that despite the difficulties she was encountering she was trying hard and achieving average results. " I'm happy with it - at least I'm not failing."

Karen was unsure of how well she was performing in Senior English. " I can never tell what the grade is going to be". She conceded that she does not look at the marking criteria and that perhaps this would help her examining assessment requirements. Karen felt that she "should take more time" with English assessments. The most recent assessment was an anthology and Karen "didn't work on it as much as I should have". Karen felt that she should organise (her) time better" but declared that her part time job working at Target "gets in the way".

Third interview

During the third interview Karen was asked to discuss how she felt she was performing in her subjects and to describe the routines and activities she usually experiences in each. Karen felt that she was performing successfully in three subjects being Modelling with Maths, Food Production and Early Childhood Studies.

Karen stated that she was working more in her current Maths class. She felt that the class was relaxed and the work was interesting and relatively easy "I like it because I understand what I'm doing. If I don't understand after a while I give up "

In Early Childhood Studies Karen found the atmosphere really relaxed because "there's hardly any of us". She stated "we're always discussing, plus we always complain about the work." At this stage Karen felt that "not many people take it (the subject) seriously", however, the teacher tries to make it fun. Karen preferred "more practical hands on work" such as the playgroup rather than written activities. Karen was still finding the playgroup is "quite fun" and "rewarding at the end if the child enjoys it".

Karen found Senior English to also be a relaxed class "plus we do work". She described the environment as "not a tense class" and the work as "challenging but good". Karen enjoyed the time set aside for the Reading Programme (last period on Friday afternoons) as it is the only time she reads and even though it is relaxing she is still "doing work".

When asked how she felt about Applied Computing Karen replied "that's challenging". Even though she acknowledged that "I don't know what I'm doing, don't know all the stuff" she finds that "it's challenging to try and get the work in by the due date". Karen reported that she sometimes uses the computer room after school to "try and catch up when there's assessment". Karen described the teacher as "really helpful" and stated that "she treats us like adults" and "expects us to get on with our work". When describing the atmosphere of the class Karen reported that "everyone works really well in that class". Although she conceded that some class members "slack off" she said that

"most enjoy computing, that's why they do the work". Karen has made an effort to improve her skills in this subject and to complete the tasks set because she believes the curriculum to be valuable.

Karen describes the best aspect of being a Year 12 student as "feeling a bit more adulty". She reported the teachers "treat us like we're more grown up" and that this means that "students try to act more mature". She even tells of some students telling others to "grow up".

Final interview

During the final interview Karen was asked to reflect on her Semester One performance and respond to some questions about schooling in general.

At this interview Karen was "feeling good about marks from Semester One". She was pleased to report she was averaging a B in most of her subjects and nearly received an A for Early Childhood Studies. She received a C for Food Production, Maths, Senior English and nearly received a B for Applied Computing. Karen was pleased because she was "hoping for these grades". She felt "really surprised about Applied Computing". Next semester she hopes to achieve the same grades by continuing to complete her work at the same standard.

Karen was asked to discuss subjects in terms of her perceived achievement. Karen felt she had been least successful in Early Childhood Studies as she "didn't really try". She felt she could have performed at an A level and felt guilty and disappointed because of her lack of effort. Karen felt she has had most success in Applied Computing because "I

passed and most people failed and they've been there for ages". In the first instance it appeared that Karen based the degree of success achieved on her own expectations whereas in the second instance comparison and prior experiences influenced how successful she perceived her performance to be.

When discussing the types of teaching strategies that motivate students Karen felt that "it's up to the individual" to be motivated about the subject. Even though teachers could encourage students to be motivated she believed that motivation must come from the students themselves first. In the classroom Karen preferred "discussions and stuff like that". She also found group work stimulating because "you get to share opinions and stuff". Group work was used in Early Childhood studies and this "makes it fun". Karen felt that motivation is really "up to the students". Although teachers could make classes interesting Karen believes that if students are not motivated there is not much that can be done about it. She stated "it's up to you and how motivated you are - that's going to affect you in the future". She believed that "if students don't care it's up to them - too bad".

When discussing the characteristics of good teachers Karen felt the most important aspect of good teaching was that "teachers should be able to teach the subject". They also "should be easy going" and allow students to chatter as "it's up to the individual to get work done". Good teachers also must control the class and should make the course content interesting. Karen believed good teachers to be "not too strict" and "not too slack". They should also "be able to explain things". Finally, good teachers "have to be smart so students respect them". As well as being "smart in their subjects" teachers should

also be seen as generally smart for example "some tea hers don't know how to spell   it makes you think less of them".

Karen believed that most students try to meet the expectations of teachers as " you don't want a teacher on your back the whole year". She declared that "if a teacher thinks you're capable you work hard".

Motivational Goal Orientation

Throughout the interviews Karen showed that she had the capacity to employ both task mastery orientation and performance/ego orientation depending on the types of tasks she was presented with and how she felt about the tasks and the subject.

Karen employed task mastery techniques when engaging in Applied Computing as she found the work challenging, believed it was valuable and found the reward in succeeding at the tasks given. Karen also employed task mastery techniques when preparing for the Early Childhood Studies playgroups and found the reward in presenting an activity which the child found interesting. Karen reported feeling successful when she felt as though she was learning new concepts and when she got high results from working hard.

Karen also employed performance/ego strategies in her approach to various tasks. For example, in Early Childhood Studies she compares the results of her written tasks with other students and this affects how she feels about her success and her performance in the eyes of her peers. Karen also reported always trying to achieve as highly as the top student(s) in the class and employed ego strategies to help her achieve this aim. The

degree of success peers perceived her to have had the power to either heighten or weaken Karen's own feelings of success. With this in mind Karen revealed she had chosen some subjects that she thought would be easy, however, the degree of difficulty of some subjects did not alter her perceptions about how successful she had been.

The results from the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) support the view that Karen felt successful according to both task mastery and performance/ego orientation. Of the thirteen items she responded in the form of strongly agree to, six items which indicated task mastery orientation, three which indicated performance/ego orientation, two which indicated easy superiority and one item indicating both avoiding inferiority and work avoidance. Karen strongly agreed with items such as ("I feel most successful if...") " I solve a tricky problem by working hard", "a class makes me think about things", "I learn something interesting", "I finally understand a really complicated idea", "something I learn really makes sense to me" and "I work hard all day". These responses show that Karen feels successful when she finds reward in the tasks themselves. However, feelings of success are also enhanced by "I do the work better than other students", "I score higher than other students" and "I am the only one who can answer the teacher's questions". These behaviours provide her with the opportunity to be seen as more successful than her peers. Karen also finds success in "I score high on a test without studying" and "I do well without trying" reflecting the fact that she has chosen subjects she knows she will find easy. Karen also finds satisfaction in completing easy work "all the work is easy" and in not being made to feel inferior to her peers "I don't do anything stupid in class".

Figure 3. Summary of Case Studies

	Anna	James	Matthew	Karen
Student entry characteristics	- non university bound course in Year 11	- university bound course in Year 11	- non university bound course in Year 11	- non university bound course in Year 11
	- believes school to have important vocational role	- believes school to have important vocational role	- believes school to have important vocational role	- believes school to have important vocational role
	- believes school should develop achievement motivation, social commitment, wealth and status and understanding	- believes school should develop achievement motivation, understanding, wealth and status and social commitment	- believes school should develop achievement motivation, social commitment, understanding and wealth and status	- believes school should develop achievement motivation, social commitment, understanding and wealth and status
Student self- perceptions	- conceptions of ability based on prior performance	- conceptions of ability based on prior performance and comments from others	- conceptions of ability based on prior performance	- conceptions of ability based on prior performance, level of interest and confidence
	- believes success means achieving your goals	- believes success means trying and receiving good results	- believes success means passing all subjects	- believes success means receiving a good grade and enjoying a subject
	- sets achievement goals based on expectations and conceptions of ability	- sets achievement goals based on expectations and conceptions of ability	- sets achievement goals based on expectations and conceptions of ability	- sets achievement goals based on expectations and conceptions of ability
	- changes career goals throughout the semester	- has no strong career goal	- has a general career direction	- has no strong career goals

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	Anna	James	Matthew	Karen
Student perceptions of classroom processes	- enjoys class discussions	- believes using student centred learning enhances student motivation	- enjoys class discussions	
	- finds fun activities and changes in classroom environment stimulating		- finds fun activities and changes in classroom environment stimulating	
	- believes practical classroom activities enhance student motivation	- believes practical classroom activities enhance student motivation		- believes practical classroom activities enhance student motivation
	- prefers to work at own pace in class activities	- prefers to work at own pace in class activities		
	- believes teachers control student success through assessment policies, explanation skills and attention to individuals		- believes teachers have a high degree of control over the success of their students	- believes teachers control student success by insisting work is completed
	- believes use of positive encouragement by a teacher enhances motivation	- believes use of positive encouragement by a teacher enhances motivation	- believes teachers can motivate students by using positive encouragement	- believes use of positive encouragement by a teacher enhances motivation
				- believes teachers are powerless to motivate unmotivated students
		- easily distracted by others, works well when isolated from peers	- experiences peer pressure to achieve at an average level	

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	Anna	James	Matthew	Karen
			- rates own success according to other students' level of performance	- rates own success according 'o other students' level of performance
			- believes students aim to meet expectations teachers have of them	- believes students should keep teachers happy by meeting their expectations
			- believes students have the power to alter expectations of some teachers	
Student perceptions of curriculum			- finds lea ning new concepts motivating	.
		- prefers practical activities	- prefers activities related to life in the outside world	- prefers practical activities
	- believes courses should provide students with a range of topics and experiences	- believes subjects are easier when you enjoy them, works well in subjects he enjoys	- believes courses should provide students with a range of topics and experiences	
	- believes subjects should be challenging to students	- believes tasks that are valuable and interesting enhance motivation	- believes level of challenge affects the way students approach tasks	- believes tasks that are valuable and interesting enhance motivation
	- believes small classes have a relaxed atmosphere and enhance motivation			- believes small classes have a relaxed atmosphere and enhance motivation

	Anna	James	Matthew	Karen
	- finds when teachers and curriculum emphasize tasks rather than grades then motivation increases			
Motivational Orientation	- adopts different orientations depending on subject, task, classroom atmosphere, teaching style, confidence	- adopts different orientations depending on prior experience, value, potential success, level of challenge, classroom atmosphere, task relevance	- adopts different orientations depending on prior experience, task value and relevance and potential success	- adopts different orientations depending on value of task, challenge, level of difficulty, potential for success
	- engages in both performance/ego orientation and task mastery orientation	- engages in both performance/ego orientation and task mastery orientation	- engages mostly in performance/ego orientation	- engages in both performance/ego orientation and task mastery orientation

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

Introduction

This section of the thesis aims to both summarise the findings of the case studies and make comparisons between student characteristics and beliefs. This chapter also serves to discuss the findings of the research in the light of literature consulted in Chapter Two.

Student Entry Characteristics

This section begins the discussion of entry characteristics for the Year 12 non-university bound students studied in this research. The purpose of this section is to provide a framework of knowledge by which student behaviour and perceptions can be better understood. The literature consulted for this thesis does not emphasise the same type of student entry characteristics of the unique group of students discussed in this research.

The entry characteristics evident in the Year 12 non-university bound group of students were largely a result of the culmination of sixteen to seventeen years of their own learning experiences as well as influences from parents, teachers, role models and peers. These experiences resulted in the students possessing a complex set of cultural and educational beliefs which frame their perceptions of experiences in the future. The students' cultural and educational beliefs would have been reinforced by their parents as the socialisation experiences at home have been shown to influence the beliefs and

motivational orientations adopted by children (Meece, 1994). When studying student

motivation in the classroom it is vital to consider the "entry" characteristics of each

student for these characteristics will "help to shape their interactions with and personal

construals of the academic tasks and instructional processes that they confront in different

classroom situations" (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992, p. 152).

The following sections provide a brief summary of the entry characteristics of the

Year 12 non-university bound students studied in this research.

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Student Background - Year 11

The group of students discussed in this thesis have a range of background

experiences which influence their perceptions of schooling at Year 12 level. Anna and

Matthew have already completed a Year 11 non-university bound course of study and

appeared to be confident in their knowledge of what Year 12 will entail in most of their

subjects. Although Karen had also completed a Year 11 non-university bound course she

conceded that she had not performed as well as she was capable of performing and begun

the year with a resolve to change her habits based on her feelings of guilt for performing

so poorly last year. James on the other hand had completed a Year 11 TEE course and so

began this year with a degree of enthusiasm at being able to start afresh with the

perception that because he had chosen easier subjects he had an increased chance of

performing at a higher level than last year. Initially all students appeared to be positive

about the year ahead and had already formed expectations about their success.

Student approaches to study

This group of students had also developed particular study habits over the years and these had the potential to influence their academic performance and feelings of control over their success. Matthew admitted to procrastination. He leaves work to the last minute and acknowledged that he finds home study difficult. James and Karen also admitted to not being used to studying at home, however, they began the year by making an effort to do some home study. Anna preferred to do work in class as she indicated that she does not have time to complete work at home. As a group these students acknowledged the importance of home study, however, they appeared to be reluctant to actively engage in such.

Parental influence

None of the students perceived their parents to take an active role in their education. Although James' parents put pressure on him to graduate and Karen's parents remind her to do her work neither of the students perceived these influences to be helpful. Matthew's parents do not appear to have had a significant influence in his subject selection as he mostly chose subjects his Counsellor recommended. Given the highly competitive nature of the students with regard to scores and grades it could be anticipated that parents also are concerned with their child's performance in relation to the rest of the class. Parents may well be contributing to the adoption of ego/performance goals by asking questions related to student scores and how they compared with the rest of the class

(Nicholls, 1989). Through the perceptions the students have of their parents' involvement in their education it can be surmised that the students' views about the purpose of schooling have been shaped and reinforced by their parents. If parents believed schooling to be an end in itself, rather than a means to an end, it is possible that they would take a more active role in helping their children achieve success.

Beliefs about schooling

The group of students studied in this thesis shared ideas about the purpose of schooling. Most of their discussion revolved around the importance of the vocational nature of school (Nicholls, 1989). Both Anna and James believed the purpose of schooling at Year 12 level was to prepare students for the future. This included providing students with skills to help them obtain employment and be valuable members of the workforce. James in particular focused on the importance of learning time management and social skills which would enable him to get along with others in the workplace. Both Anna and James also felt that school experience should enable students to be confident with others. They both speak of the value of oral activities in English and Drama in terms of helping them become more confident with other people. Anna believed school should provide students with the opportunity to study subjects which are valuable in terms of developing careers, for example, Computing, English and Maths. Karen believed school should also help you develop a career, however, as she had no definite career goals it seemed that school had in a sense failed her in this respect. Matthew agreed that school is necessary for employment and believed school should provide students with the skills they required for

the future. His view differs from that of the others. However, as he also believed that as he has become older he has begun to perceive the value a school as a family and a community rather than a hierarchy.

When responding to the "Purposes of Schooling" questionnaire (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) all students responded positively to the notion that the most important element in schooling was to develop students' achievement motivation enabling them to be creative at their work and show persistence in their chosen occupations. In addition, James felt that developing an understanding about the media and politics was as important as developing achievement motivation. Anna, Matthew and Karen responded that the second important aspect of schooling was to develop social commitment with regard to community spirit, loyalty, self-sacrifice and participating in useful work. There was some differentiation of the third level of importance in that Anna and James opted for wealth and status while Matthew and Karen preferred understanding. Matthew and Karen also felt that wealth and status was the least important purpose of schooling whereas Anna and James felt that wealth and status were more important than understanding and social commitment respectively.

Some of these beliefs about the purposes of schooling are consistent with the literature on the beliefs held by students with performance/ego orientation. Nicholls (1989) argues that students who are performance/ego oriented view schooling as a means to an end and believe that school should first and foremost enhance wealth and status as well as develop students' social commitment, understanding and achievement motivation. As the sample students view developing achievement motivation as more important than

enhancing wealth and status, it would appear that they are perhaps not strictly performance/ego oriented in their beliefs about school.

On the other hand task mastery students are more likely to view understanding and social commitment as the most valuable aspects of schooling (Nicholls, 1989). The relatively high rating this group of students gave to social commitment and understanding, as opposed to wealth and status, could indicate that these students perhaps occupy a niche in between strict performance/ego orientation and task mastery orientation. It may be possible that the religious ethos of the school these students attend has in some way enhanced their feelings of social responsibility and their attitudes towards school and work.

Student self-perceptions

In addition to student entry characteristics, student self-perceptions have a significant impact on student behaviour and student motivation in particular learning situations (Meece, 1994; Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985; Nicholls, 1989).

The students discussed in this thesis perceived themselves to be average or below average achievers. This is evident in the fact that they aimed to pass Year 12 and appeared to base their perceptions of success on how they performed in comparison to other students, and their attributions of ability in particular subjects. Combined with their varied perceptions of tasks and classroom environments they did not appear to have positive motivational beliefs. As Pintrich and Schrauben (1992) suggest task and environment can

act as mediators of student behaviour and this may limit the degree of cognitive engagement in particular activities.

Student conceptions of ability

Each of the students studied held perceptions of their ability in each of the subjects selected for study. These conceptions were largely based on their previous experience of that (or a similar) subject, and their previous achievement in that subject area.

Matthew's perceptions of ability were influenced by his prior performance in subjects. He believed he did not have ability in Mathematics because of the marks he had received in Maths in previous years of high school. Karen's perceptions of ability were also influenced by her prior performance, along with such factors as level of interest, confidence and task difficulty. She believed she had ability in Early Childhood Studies as she enjoyed the subject, found it interesting and knew she could achieve at a high level. James' perception of ability in Applied Industrial Arts is affected by how the finished product looks and how others responded to his work. Praise from teachers and peers boosted his confidence in his ability to do well in this subject.

Overall, this group of students do not perceive themselves to be high achievers. Interestingly, their conceptions of ability seemed to influence their achievement (Meece, 1994) in both positive and negative ways. Matthew perceived himself to have low ability in Maths, but his first Semester results indicated that he was performing at a satisfactory level in this subject. On the contrary Karen and James both perceived themselves to have a high degree of ability in Early Childhood Studies and Applied Industrial Arts, however,

their first semester results indicated that their achievement was not consistent with their ability perceptions. Both students could account for their lack of success through either not submitting assessment work or being short of time to complete tasks. However, it seems that having a relatively high perception of ability has prompted behaviour consistent with the attitude that because they believed they had ability, less effort was required.

The perceptions of ability formed by this group of students were consistent with Nicholls (1989) view that students who are ego involved will make judgements about their own competence based on the demonstrated competence of others. Matthew, Anna and Karen in particular formed perceptions of their ability and competence based on their performance expectations in comparison with others. This supports the view that ego involved students view success as depending on performing at a higher level than others (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985). The four students discussed in this research also made predictions and estimates about their success based on their perceived ability. This supports Nicholls (1989) view that ego involved students evaluate their ability in comparison to that of others and make predictions about their expectations of success or perceived ability.

Student expectations

The perceptions the Year 12 group of non-university bound students had of their ability were strongly linked with the expectations they held for success. Each of the students had set expectations for their performance in various subjects based on their experience of that (or a similar) subject, the degree to which they enjoyed the subject and

the perceptions they held about their ability to perform well at that subject. The expectations students had for success also support Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen's (1985) research that students expected success based on the types of activities they preferred.

The derivation of performance expectations can be illustrated by the group of Year 12 non-university bound students discussed in this research. Anna and Matthew set their performance expectations based on how they performed in similar or the same subjects last year. Karen set her performance expectations on her prior performance as well as how she felt she should have performed in each subject. James' performance expectations were based on his interpretation of the level of difficulty with this year's subjects as compared to that of last year's subjects.

Student interpretation of success

Students had also developed performance expectations in relation to how they defined success. The link between performance expectations and perceptions of success apparent in these case studies is not generally reported in the literature.

Each of the students had differing conceptions of what it means to be successful. Matthew believed that he would achieve meaningful success if he passed all his Year 12 subjects. His prior experience and perceptions of ability told him he was capable of passing all subjects without working too hard. If, however, he were to achieve more than a pass in any subject he would consider this to be more than success, in fact, "glory". From this it appeared that Matthew had one definition of success for schoolwork and another for out-

of- school activities where he was able to aim for top level performance. Matthew believed success was a result of receiving a particular grade whereas Anna believed she would achieve success if she reached her goals. The goals Anna set for individual subjects had been determined by her prior experience and achievement in each subject. James' beliefs about success were more focused on the process of achieving success for he considered success to be related to trying his hardest and gaining his best results. Karen also believed part of achieving success was in how she approached a subject. To her success meant gaining a good grade in a subject and finding it interesting and enjoyable. She expected to do well in subjects she enjoyed and in which she had previous success. Karen considered her interest level, and her ability to achieve a good grade, key factors in achieving success.

The group of students held different beliefs about why they were successful or unsuccessful and attributed their performance to a number of factors. Matthew was not striving to improve his performance in any subject and was happy with a C grade. As he knew this grade would be easily achieved he could feel confident and comfortable knowing he would be successful without extending himself too much. When reflecting on his Semester One results Matthew stated he was unsure of why he was achieving B's and this may indicate a success attribution of luck. He performed at a higher level than he had anticipated but is unable to account for why this occurred. This could indicate that as an ego-involved student Matthew intentionally underestimates his ability and potential success so as to protect and inflate his ego when he achieves at a higher level than he reveals to teachers or peers. Anna aimed to perform as well as she can, and so depending on how she attributed performance in relation to capacity, she will consider herself to have

been successful. For example if she attributed poor performance to lack of time or other external factors beyond her control she could still consider herself to have been successful. As Anna's short term goals appeared to change depending on circumstance, altering the goals to suit her situation allowed her to feel successful, and protect her ego, even if she had not achieved at the level she initially anticipated. At the beginning of the year James made a genuine effort to try his hardest, however, as the year progressed this effort became significantly reduced. He attributed his lack of success to poor time management skills and the fact that he felt his expectations for the year were a little unrealistic because he had anticipated the subjects to be easier than they were. The goals James had set were based on his expectations of success in regard to the activities he enjoyed and his prior experience. By the beginning of Semester Two James was noticeably detached from school and had resolved to "catch up" in some subjects with the aim of passing. In this instance James found himself unable to try his hardest due to a variety of academic and non-academic difficulties he encountered. Once he became aware of the fact that he would not do as well as he had anticipated he tended to give up. Although James did not admit to perceiving himself as unsuccessful, his lack of application to work and effort invested were indicative of this fact. Karen acknowledged that she worked hard when she had a high level of interest in a topic and she knew she could get good grades. She felt that knowing you can do well gives the students incentive to work hard. Karen revealed that she suffered from lack of motivation last year and seemed to attribute successes to luck and failures to her own inadequacies. In this way Karen projected the image of being unable to control the degree of success she had at school. Initially Karen found that her most

difficult subject was Applied Computing and she described it as challenging reporting that she tries hard, receives average results, perceives the tasks to be valuable and has a really helpful teacher. Interestingly, this turned out to be what she considers her most successful subject because she passed and most people failed. In this instance her feelings did not match her definition of success. The subject Karen expected most success in turned out to be her least successful subject as she stated that she did not try and could have performed at an A level. She felt guilty and self-dissatisfied. Karen's expectations and ability perceptions seem to have influenced her achievement in a negative manner, as high expectations and ability conceptions seem to have resulted in low effort, whereas relatively low expectations and a high degree of challenge appear to have manifested themselves in a positive achievement pattern.

Goal setting

The concept of goal setting is particularly relevant to the students discussed in this research as they are at a crucial stage in their school life where they are having to make decisions that will affect their careers. The relationship between goal setting and student motivation has not been fully explored in the literature consulted for this thesis and thus the following will seek to illustrate some of the phenomena operating within the group of students studied in this research.

Based on their expectations of success the students perceived that they set achievement goals for their subjects. The students interviewed for this thesis shared the common goal of passing Year 12, however, this goal on its own is distal rather than

proximal and global rather than specific. In her discussion Anna referred to some proximal goals she pursues in the classroom where the end is determined by a teacher, however, aside from these she did not appear to set any of her own proximal or specific goals. Anna also felt that goals should be negotiable rather than fixed and so it follows that goals of this nature are in fact more difficult to attain. Matthew, James and Karen all referred to goals in the distant future rather than specific goals that can be achieved directly. At the beginning of the year James had attempted to employ study strategies which will enable him to pass Year 12, however, as the year progressed these faded. Given this, it then follows that this group of students had little knowledge of what goal setting and goal attainment entailed, but rather perceived their expectations to be their goals. They lacked the skills and strategies to enable them to pursue goals seriously and improve their performance through goal setting.

Career goals, and in particular goals for further study or employment, have the potential to be a "driving force" behind student motivation. This is because students who have clear goals are able to immediately work towards them. Without career goals students become easily distracted and find it difficult to focus on maximum achievement at school. Although the students appeared to have an interest in a particular area they were unable to set their minds to one set of goals. James and Karen had vague ideas about careers they may wish to pursue, however, neither seemed very keen about these careers. Karen acknowledged that if she had a strong career goal she would be motivated to work hard. Lack of a strong career goal appears to have significantly influenced their motivation.

The absence of short term goals pursued by these four students and their competitiveness indicates that social goals are perhaps of greater importance to them at this stage than academic goals. As Wentzel (1992) suggests students do pursue multiple goals at school and these can be powerful motivators of behaviour.

Student perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum

Throughout the interviews each of the students indicated that they held quite firm perceptions of particular classroom processes and curriculum especially in regard to what made them feel motivated to engage in classroom activities and content being taught. This section aims to summarise the findings about student perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum.

Teaching strategies

The students discussed a variety of teaching strategies which they felt were effective in teaching Year 12 students. Matthew and Anna felt that in-class discussion was an effective teaching strategy as they liked lively discussion and felt that they learnt more from discussing rather than writing. James also felt that being able to talk to others in the class made the class relaxing and made it easier to learn. Matthew and Anna felt that classes which had fun activities and a change of environment (excursions) were also stimulating. Matthew and James reported that using student centred learning techniques and allowing students a choice of activities enhanced motivation in the classroom. They believed students should have more input into classroom tasks and dimensions. Karen,

James and Anna felt that practical activities in the classroom aid the motivation of students like themselves and that, if teachers want students to engage positively in them, classroom activities should be interesting. James and Anna also preferred to be able to work at their own pace during class time and not feel pressured to keep to deadlines set by others. Both of these students preferred to work individually. Anna felt that group work did not enhance student motivation as students fail to focus on the activity at hand by becoming distracted and the group disintegrates into social discussion.

Teacher behaviour

The students interviewed acknowledged that teacher behaviour does have an impact on the students in the classroom and some were able to describe how this process works. Of the four students Matthew had the strongest views about teacher behaviour.

Matthew believed that teacher behaviour was very influential in the classroom and that teachers have a significant degree of control over how well the students in their class perform. He believed teachers have control over student success and achievement by the manner in which they assess work and how they interpret student work. Under these conditions Matthew felt powerless as he believed teachers allocate marks depending on their preferences (for example, Maths and English) and that he had little control over the degree of success he achieved. This feeling is also indicated when Matthew discusses the possibility of his Outdoor Education grade being changed by the moderator. Although this does not bother Matthew as he stated he would still be happy with the changed grade, it is yet another instance where he felt powerless to have control over his achievement.

Matthew believed that teachers not only have the power to control student success by how they assess and interpret students work, but also by how they respond to students. This includes their individual conferencing with students and the interest teachers show in helping students to achieve their best. This idea is supported by other students. Karen believed that teachers have a degree of control over student success by ensuring that students complete set work. Anna believed that teachers can control student success through their assessment policies, how well they explain things and their attention to individual students.

Matthew believed that teachers have the power to motivate the students they teach by using genuine positive encouragement and being enthusiastic about what they are teaching. The importance of using positive encouragement is also acknowledged by Anna, Karen and James who indicated that they had more motivation to complete a task when the teacher acknowledged their efforts and commented on the positive aspects of their work.

The students discussed what they felt were the vital characteristics of good teachers. Matthew reported that good teachers should be strict, have good memories and should know the different levels of different students by being able to recognise student strengths. Karen indicated that good teachers should ensure work is complete and should be able to teach the subject. Teachers should be easy going but control the class. They should have good explanation skills and have a good general knowledge including the ability to spell. James believed that good teachers should use genuine positive encouragement and have a superior knowledge about how to work with students. They

also let students work at their own pace and were not too strict on assignment submission. Good teachers can also develop ideas and concepts gradually through lessons so students can understand what they talk about. They create a relaxed classroom atmosphere. Anna felt that the most important aspect of good teaching was the ability to encourage students to do their best.

The students also isolated some factors that they felt were particularly important for teachers dealing with Year 12 students. Anna believed that teachers should show positive encouragement to students and not allow them to become "slack". Matthew felt that Year 12 teachers should leave students alone to a certain degree whilst still maintaining their duty to make sure students complete their work. Karen felt that teachers should be really helpful and treat Year 12 students like adults. James felt that Year 12 teachers should let students work at their own pace and not be strict on assignment submission dates.

When talking about what teachers can do to motivate Year 12 students Karen stated her belief that it is up to the students whether they want to be motivated to learn and that there is not really anything much teachers can do about unmotivated students.

Peer relationships

The students were able to describe their classroom relationships with peers and comment on how these may be likely to influence their feelings about the class and achievement. Peer relationships significantly affected Matthew's performance in that he was happy to achieve at about the same average level of others. Matthew also felt

pressured to keep up with his peers, in terms of work quality and quantity. Peers also played a vital role in how Matthew feels about his success. He admitted to comparing marks on a regular basis to find out how well or badly he had done. Karen also rated her own success according to the level of performance of other class members. She responded emotionally to her marks based on how they compared with the mark of others. Karen reported that it was important to be in classes with students you could get along with easily. James found that he was easily distracted by other students and so worked more effectively in classes where he had few friends.

Teacher expectations

Some discussion took place about the expectations teachers had of students and how this influenced their classroom behaviour and performance. Matthew acknowledged the power of teacher expectations as he stated that students feel the need to keep up with the expectations teachers have of them. Karen spoke of the need to keep teachers happy by meeting their expectations in order to prevent them from continuously harassing individuals to work. Anna reported that she responded positively to tasks where the teacher's expectations in terms of assignment submission dates were not strict. Matthew also acknowledged the power he felt students had to change the expectations a teacher may have of a class. He described the way students use a "majority rules" type of attitude to change the assessment expectations of particular teachers. With some teachers he perceived the students to have a significant degree of power in this regard.

The students also discussed the features of curriculum they found motivating Matthew felt positively motivated when he was learning new concepts in a class. He felt that understanding the why of what he learns to be important and that curriculum should be relevant to students. He also felt that students should be taught things they need to know for everyday life and perceived that if he saw value in an activity then he was more motivated to engage in it in a positive and meaningful manner.

Matthew and Anna felt that courses should provide students with a variety of topics. Matthew felt that courses should run on what he describes as being a reasonably tight schedule so that students do not have the opportunity to "slack off". Matthew reported adopting negative motivational patterns in classes where he felt there was nothing to do and no challenge presented. He acknowledged that the level of challenge in a task affected the way he approached it. Anna agreed that subjects should provide a degree of challenge to students.

Anna, James and Karen reported feeling more motivated to engage in tasks that they perceived to be of value and contain interesting ideas. James in particular found that a subject was valuable if he was able to learn useful skills from it.

James felt that subjects were easier when he enjoyed them and found he worked harder. This sentiment was echoed by Karen and Anna who agreed that enjoyment of a subject could make students more motivated to participate and perform well.

Classroom environment

Karen and Anna felt that a positive motivational environment was created in classes where the number of students was relatively small and there was a relaxed atmosphere. Anna also felt that a relaxed class atmosphere enhanced motivation and helped the students focus on their work. Both Anna and James preferred environments which allowed them to work at their own pace at their own level. Matthew discussed the value of offering students a stimulating environment in which to work through variety of surroundings and activities.

Assessment and evaluation

Student perceptions of assessment and evaluation can influence the motivational orientations they adopt. Whilst the students discussed how they felt about the competitive nature of most of the assessment techniques used Anna reported that in Computer Fundamentals where the emphasis was on the work rather than the grades she found she enjoyed the subject more and had more positive feelings about her success.

Influence of classroom processes and curriculum on achievement goals

The perceptions held by the students about classroom processes and curriculum influences the achievement goals they are likely to adopt. Learning environments, teacher behaviour and curriculum in particular have been found to foster different goal orientations (Butler, 1987; Nicholls, 1989; Ames, 1992; Meece, 1994). This section discusses the findings of the research in light of the literature discussed in Chapter Two.

The learning environment surrounding the students discussed in this research is mainly competitive in that normative evaluations are used and students felt the need to compete with each other to establish their level of ability and achievement. The students were also competing for an entrance to TAFE and thus were quite competitive about how their results rated with those of other students. Research by Meece (1994) indicates that learning conditions focusing on individual ability, involving interpersonal competition and public learning situations that involve normative evaluations can elicit ego goal orientation. Nicholls (1989) also argues that the promotion of competitive or publicly evaluative educational environments can induce ego involvement

Classroom conditions can also influence student motivation (Meece, 1991; Ames, 1992). Butler (1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989) found that students adopt motivational orientations due to various classroom conditions. In most classes the four students interviewed were given grades to indicate their level of achievement. Butler (1987) found that students who were given marks and grades which indicated their performance in relation to other class members were more likely to adopt an ego orientation. Interestingly, Anna appeared to employ task mastery motivational orientation in a class where she received little feedback in the way of grades, but rather comments from the teacher about her progress. The fact that receiving comments only, as opposed to grades, can enhance task mastery motivation is also supported by Butler's research. The marking system used in subjects where tasks are evaluated according to achievement of student outcomes appeared to lessen the degree of interpersonal competition amongst the students as this system makes direct comparison difficult.

Interestingly some of the aspects which the literature suggests enhanced task mastery orientation are those the students acknowledge as being important for their motivation in the classroom. For example, Matthew spoke about the advantage of teachers allowing students to have greater input into the learning situation thus developing an increased sense of competence and being more responsible for their learning (Meece, 1994). The emphasis the students place on the importance of positive feedback can be linked to their desire for comments about their strengths and how to improve. In turn this would enhance task mastery orientation (Butler, 1987, cited in Nicholls, 1989). Meece's (1991) research indicates that the degree to which teachers promote meaningful learning, increase personal relevance of lessons, adapt instruction to the development levels and personal interests of students and establish learning structures supportive of student autonomy and peer collaboration all influence the goal orientations students will adopt. In this instance the sample students support Meece's data. As Ames (1992) suggests task mastery orientation can be promoted in a classroom through adapting six dimensions of the learning environment, namely, task design, distribution of authority, recognition of students, grouping arrangement, evaluation practices and time allocation. Each of these dimensions were acknowledged by students as potential influences on their motivation.

Motivational Goal Orientations

This research found that the four students discussed were able to involve themselves with tasks in either a task mastery or performance/ego orientation. It appeared that dimensions of tasks and the perceptions students held about various subjects

influenced their motivation as did their perceptions of ability and the degree of success they felt they could achieve. For the most part their involvement within school activities appears to suggest performance/ego orientation.

Anna seemed to adopt different orientations depending on the subject being studied and the dimensions of the task required within that subject. Among those factors which were seen to affect the motivational orientation she adopted were level of involvement with task, classroom atmosphere, teaching style, the degree of work to be completed outside class time, teacher's adherence to due dates, class time missed due to INSTEP and the degree of positive encouragement provided by teachers. Curriculum factors such as interest in the subject and tasks along with types of assessment procedures used also appeared to influence the motivational orientation she adopted. Anna appeared to adopt a task mastery orientation in Computer Fundamentals as she engaged in a positive manner with the tasks set and was concerned about the value of the tasks rather than the mark she may be likely to receive. This contrasts with Applied Computing where the emphasis is on comparing her results to those of other class members and evaluating her success based on the relative success of others. Anna employed ego protecting strategies in this class. The results of the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985) indicated that Anna adopted both task mastery and performance/ego orientations as she strongly agreed with four responses indicating task orientation and four responses indicating ego orientation.

Similarly James also altered the manner in which he involved himself with tasks depending on various factors such as prior experiences of similar tasks, perceived value of

task, perceived degree of potential success, level of challenge, classroom atmosphere, level of choice within the task and task relevance. James seemed to be more likely to adopt a task mastery orientation when tasks were of a practical nature. Results from the survey also support this idea as James strongly agrees with three items indicating task mastery orientation and three items indicating performance/ego orientation.

Matthew demonstrated the ability to engage in a task mastery manner with activities, however, it appeared that with most of his schooling he was highly competitive and involved himself in an ego/performance manner. The degree of control he perceived teachers to have over his success also suggested that he may well engage in behaviour to please the teacher, once again indicating ego involvement. In the survey Matthew strongly agreed with the item "I show people I'm good at something" indicating a strong response to ego involvement.

Karen's feelings about tasks and subjects appeared to influence the motivational orientation she adopted. Her motivation was influenced by the perceived value in the task and the intrinsic reward it presents, challenge, level of difficulty, and degree of success she felt she could achieve. Survey results indicated that Karen employed both task mastery and performance orientation as she responded strongly to six items indicating task mastery orientation and three indicating performance/ego orientation.

The overall results from the "Motivational Orientation" Questionnaire indicated that these students are not strictly performance/ego involved or task mastery oriented but that they had the potential to involve themselves in either one of these ways. They agreed that schools should teach understanding of content areas and social commitment as well as

prepare them with skills that will enhance their achievement motivation and enable them to do well once they leave school. It appeared, however, that certain classroom dimensions and aspects of curriculum along with the highly competitive nature inherent in the students and the system in which they operate did lead them to be performance/ego involved.

Summary

This chapter makes links between student beliefs about schooling and the literature reported in Chapter Two. From this data it appears that whilst students possess some similar entry characteristics and participate in similar subjects as individuals they have the potential to engage in activities in markedly different ways. Students perceive the same subject in different ways and depending on their perceptions will engage in activities employing either task mastery or performance/ego involved strategies.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions

Introduction

Chapter Six presents the conclusions of the research. The chapter begins by giving a brief overview of the research and then discusses the research questions posed in light of the findings to draw conclusions from the study. Implications for teaching and learning are also discussed as are recommendations for further research.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to inquire as to how four non-university bound students perceive schooling at Year 12 level. Within the area of student perceptions of schooling the research focused on student self-perceptions and student perceptions of curriculum and classroom processes. Using these student perceptions as a starting point the research then examined motivational orientations adopted by the group of students studied and examined the influence student perceptions had on the nature of orientations adopted. This inquiry attempted to gain insight and understanding about curriculum and classroom processes at Year 12 non-university bound level, through the perspective of student perceptions.

Problem statement

The problem inherent in this study was the attempt to gain some understanding about the classroom processes and curriculum which motivate non-university bound Year 12 students. Within this inquiry three research questions were posed.

1. What perceptions do non-university bound Year 12 students hold about the classroom processes and curriculum they encounter in their final year of schooling?

2. What motivational goal orientations do Year 12 non-university bound students adopt and what factors influence the adoption of particular orientations?

3. How do student self-perceptions and motivational goal orientations influence individual's ability to achieve success?

Method of research

The research was conducted with four Year 12 non-university bound students at a metropolitan high school. The research was presented in the form of case studies and utilised case study techniques for gathering and analysing data. The data were obtained primarily from the students themselves through interviews and from two questionnaires namely the "Purposes of Schooling" and "Motivational Orientation" questionnaires (Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985). Data were then analysed according to the categories student self-perceptions, student perceptions of classroom processes, student perceptions of curriculum and motivational orientation. Once analysed the data were then discussed in the form of case studies presented in Chapter Four.

Case studies

The case studies presented in this research were constructed using information from student interviews and student questionnaires. These case studies followed the design of the conceptual framework discussing student entry characteristics, student self-perceptions, student perceptions of curriculum and classroom processes and motivational orientation.

Conclusions from the Research Questions

The data gathered throughout this research enables the research questions posed to be answered and for conclusions to be drawn from the study.

1. What perceptions do non-university bound Year 12 students hold about the classroom processes and curriculum they encounter in their final year of schooling?

This question is embodied in the literature focusing on student perceptions which reports that student perceptions of the learning situation play a critical role in influencing student behaviour and achievement (Wittrock, 1986). Weinstein (1983) discusses the importance of learning about classrooms from the point of view of students and maintains that by the early 1980s researchers were just beginning to investigate seriously classroom processes from the student perspective. In discussing the realm of classroom processes about which students have an opinion, Weinstein focuses on a number of domains including student knowledge about the teacher and teacher behaviour, peers and peer

behaviour, other school personnel, the self in school, the cause of behaviour in school, the classroom and the school. In line with Weinstein's theories the research reported in this thesis investigated similar domains such as student perceptions about the teacher and his/her behaviour, peers and peer behaviour, the self in school and the classroom and the school. Investigation of these areas allowed for a clear picture of how the group of four Year 12 non-university bound students understand schooling at this level to be developed.

Wittrock (1986) argues that student achievement is influenced by the way students respond to teachers and teaching as students' thinking "mediates" learning and achievement. In the context of the research discussed in this thesis it is evident how the students discussed "mediated" their experience throughout the semester. On the one hand they openly discussed their hopes and aspirations for the year and as the semester proceeded these hopes and aspirations became modified or mediated by what occurred in the classroom. For some students these "mediations" meant that initial hopes and aspirations became out of their reach and so new hopes and aspirations at a different level were established. For one student hopes and aspirations were raised as he found he was able to achieve at a higher level than originally expected.

Newman and Schwager (1992) state that the way in which students perceive themselves in the context of the classroom has been found to influence many aspects of their behaviour such as level of interest, persistence, task engagement and task performance. Within the research reported in this thesis how students perceived themselves and their self-perceptions were found to influence their behaviour in the classroom. The students acknowledged that positive behavioural patterns on their behalf

were a result of different environments which caused them to have either positive or negative feelings about themselves. This difference in behaviour patterns resulting from student perceptions of the classroom context and self-perceptions becomes especially evident when studying high school students as they participate in at least six differing classroom situations. The students perceive different subjects in different ways, their perceptions appearing to depend on their interest in the subject, the types of tasks given, the teacher and the potential they feel they have for success in the subject.

Student perceptions of schooling are also influenced by their beliefs about the purposes of schooling. As Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) show beliefs about the purposes of schooling are linked to motivational orientations which can be determinates of behaviour and potential success. The students in this research believe school is important vocationally and should develop skills such as achievement motivation and teach students social commitment. These students do not just see school as a means to an end or to enhance their wealth and status. The beliefs students hold about schooling influence their perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum factors and through their questionnaire responses it can be seen that they are looking for more out of their schooling than merely a grade at the end of the year.

The students discussed in this research hold a number of strong perceptions about classroom processes and curriculum they encounter in their final year. They have firm ideas about preferred teaching strategies, course content, classroom environment and assessment and evaluation techniques. Students believe that teachers play a significant role in impacting on student achievement through their behaviour and their expectations of

individuals and the group. The students acknowledge that peer relationships also impact on their behaviour and achievement in a variety of ways.

Given the literature emphasizing the impact of student perceptions on behaviour and performance along with the data from the students discussed in this research a number of conclusions can be drawn.

* The perceptions students hold of classroom processes and curriculum have a powerful influence over their behaviour and achievement in their chosen subjects for study. The students in this research were found to respond in varying ways according to the classroom processes and curriculum they encountered.

* Individual students hold differing perceptions of similar subjects based on their own level of interest and response to tasks and others in the class including the teacher.

* The perceptions of students about the classroom processes and curriculum of particular subjects share common ideas and so can be considered to provide a fairly accurate view of the classroom processes and curriculum the students experience in those subjects.

* Student beliefs about the purposes of schooling influence the interpretations and perceptions they hold of their everyday encounters with various classroom processes and curriculum.

2. What motivational goal orientations do Year 12 non-university bound students adopt and what factors influence the adoption of particular orientations?

Research conducted regarding motivational goal orientations describes the characteristics of those adopting each of the three orientations and considers factors which may encourage or discourage the adoption of either motivational orientation (Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988; Ames, 1992; Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985; Butler, 1987; Nicholls, 1989; Meece, 1991; Meece, 1994). Much of the literature reports theory derived from studies that deal with elementary students. In this study evidence derived from students in their final year of secondary schooling was obtained.

Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985) report findings from a study conducted with ninth and twelfth graders examining their theories of education including factors such as the aim of education, their personal goals in school and their perceptions of the causes of success in school. Two instruments used in this study ("Motivational Orientation" questionnaire and "The Purposes of Schooling" questionnaire) aimed to ascertain the motivational orientations adopted by students and their views about the purposes of schooling. These instruments were used in the research reported in this thesis. Students were found to acknowledge that feeling successful at school was a result of employing varying degrees of both task mastery and performance/ego orientations. Students appeared to have the knowledge that success is a result of employing task mastery orientation, however, they also believed that success could be found in employing performance/ego strategies. This theory may be a reflection of the fact that this group of students experience six different learning situations every week and also have had twelve

years of school experience about which to consider what promotes feelings of success in the classroom. In addition two of the students discussed have achieved notable success in out-of-school activities illustrating that they know what it feels like to be successful in ways most meaningful to them. Within this small group of vocationally oriented students it is surprising that none exhibit strong characteristics of work avoidance. These students are not trying to avoid work but are rather making the best of the situation as it exists and employing the strategies they feel are necessary to survive until the end of the year.

These findings differ from much of the research about motivational orientations which deal primarily with elementary students within the American school system. Researchers in this field have tended to suggest that students adopt only one type of orientation and that even though task mastery orientation can be enhanced through adapting certain classroom processes little of the literature reported in Chapter Two suggests that students employ more than one set of motivational strategies given the conditions in which they find themselves. Much of the existing research is also quantitative in nature. Perhaps because this study is largely qualitative and moves to a micro-analysis of individual students through case study techniques it may have been able to capture a more descriptive sense of student motivational orientations among these Year 12 non-university bound students.

The "Purposes of Schooling" questionnaire revealed that the four students believed an important aspect of schooling was to encourage achievement motivation to be creative and to show persistence in their work. The students also reported that schools should teach understanding and help students develop social commitment. According to Nicholls,

Patashnick and Nolen (1985) these beliefs about schooling have been most commonly associated with task mastery motivational orientation and thus these results would support the view that the students examined in this thesis are not strictly performance/ego oriented.

Nicholls (1989) maintains that adopting a particular motivational orientation involves a particular view of the world and that students with different motivational orientations "collect different data and interpret them differently" (p. 102). He argues that a motivational orientation reflects individual differences in "prone-ness". Nicholls also discusses the way in which students "involve" themselves in a particular way and describes involvement as "the states that people experience in a given situation" (1989, p. 95). Thus it appears possible that whilst students may have a general motivational orientation which reflects their attitudes towards schooling, it is feasible that they have the ability to involve themselves in different ways according to the situation in which they find themselves. The group of students examined in the research appear to adopt both task mastery and ego/performance motivational orientations depending on the subject in which they were engaged and the type of task they had been asked to complete. The students studied had a tendency to operate in performance/ego ways whilst demonstrating the ability to involve themselves in task mastery ways when confronted with circumstances which they considered favourable. The students involved themselves in either performance/ego or task mastery ways according to differential perceptions of classroom processes and curriculum.

Those factors that seem to encourage the students to involve themselves in a task mastery manner are those which encourage intrinsic motivation and provide the students

with what they perceive to be favourable classroom conditions. Subjects which had

evaluation and assessment procedures which made it easy for students to compare scores

seemed to be those in which students involved themselves in performance/ego ways. On

the other hand subjects in which comparison was difficult seemed to be those where

students were more able to involve themselves in task mastery ways. This finding is

supported by Butler (1987) whose research reports that students who received marks and

comments indicating their achievement relative to other students were more likely to be

ego involved.

Meece (1994) reports that student ability perceptions seem to influence

achievement patterns. Prior to this Nicholls (1989) had argued that students who are ego

involved form perceptions of their ability and competence or incompetence based on their

performance expectations in comparison with others. Students involved in this study

formed conceptions of their ability and performance expectations based on their

performance relative to that of others. This factor encouraged them to adopt

ego/performance orientations in some subjects.

The literature reports that student motivational orientations can be influenced by

classroom processes and curriculum. Nicholls (1989, cited in Ames, 1992, p. 330) argues

that changing student motivational patterns may involve changing students' views about

society, the purposes of learning and what school should and can do. Ames (1992) and

Meece (1991)maintain that the classroom structure plays a critical role in influencing

student motivation. Butler (1987) also reports that students adopt either task or ego

orientation due to various classroom conditions. Meece (1994) argues that teachers can

enhance task mastery orientation by adopting classroom variables and instructional practices. Research by Ames (1990) and Ames and Maehr(1989) focused on the issue of changing the climate of elementary school classrooms to enhance a mastery goal orientation by focusing on task design, distribution of authority, recognition of students, grouping arrangement, evaluation practices and time allocation. Through the evidence reported in this research it can be seen that task mastery orientation can be enhanced in the secondary classroom through adapting similar variables.

The students in this research were able to identify classroom processes they found motivating. The students had definite views about the types of teaching strategies they prefer and reported that they found teaching strategies which involved "hands on" interactive activities such as class discussions and student centred activities were motivating. Student centred learning techniques appear more likely to encourage students to take responsibility in and for their learning and therefore seem more likely to encourage task mastery orientation (Meece, 1994). The students acknowledged that evaluation and assessment techniques, types of tasks presented and teacher handling of tasks influenced their motivation. The students also had particular perceptions about how they went about accomplishing tasks based on their self perceptions. Teacher style in terms of approachability, acceptance of student individuality, use of genuine positive encouragement and teacher expectations influenced how they responded in the classroom. Student perceptions of what the teacher thinks of them and why the teacher has particular ideas about the students as individuals and as a group were found to influence student behaviour. The literature reports profound evidence to show that students (even those of a

primary level) hold clear and reasonably accurate perceptions of what teachers think of them and why they hold the ideas they do. The students also reported finding some subjects more competitive than others and such competition has been found to encourage performance/ego orientation (Nicholls, 1992). The students also reported that peer relationships in terms of the cohesiveness of the group, peer leadership, competition and the "pecking order" of student achievement influenced their behaviour.

The students were able to discuss curricula that they felt were motivating. Student perceptions of curriculum were influenced by the subjects they had selected for study, the particular reasons for their subject choices and their perceptions about their own wisdom for choosing subjects. These perceptions existed before the students entered the classroom. Once in the classroom the students were able to identify curriculum factors which they felt were motivating, for example, those subjects which had challenging relevant content and those which contained content that mirrors the real world. The increased personal relevance of classroom content has been found to encourage the adoption of task mastery motivational orientation among students (Meece, 1994). The students also identified subjects which presented no challenge and discussed the fact that they felt bored and understimulated by what they should have been learning. In these subjects the students either opted out of activities or did the minimum required to pass the subject and employed ego/performance orientation. Different environments caused students to have feelings about themselves which caused them to respond in performance/ego ways.

Therefore the conclusions to be drawn from this research consist of the following :

* Students may involve themselves in either task mastery or performance/ego oriented ways depending on the conditions they experience at a particular time. The students discussed in this research were found to involve themselves in either of these ways according to various elements of the subject being studied and the task required.

* As young adults these students have specific reasons for subject selection and are able to differentiate their approach to particular subjects and respond to particular activities in different ways. These students have the capacity to view subjects as individual entities and respond accordingly.

* The students discussed in this research were found to be more likely to respond in task mastery oriented ways when certain conditions related to task requirement, assessment and evaluation, teaching strategies and teacher style prevail. Students are more likely to adopt task mastery orientation depending on conditions of curriculum such as relevance of content, subject and reasons for selecting subjects, level of challenge and degree of personal relevance.

* The group of students investigated were found to be highly competitive and in some cases comparison of marks and grades amongst students prompted adoption of performance/ego strategies.

3. How do student self-perceptions and motivational goal orientations influence individual's ability to achieve success?

This question relates to the literature concerning student self-perceptions and motivational goal orientations. Students' self-perceptions have been found to have a significant influence on student motivation (Meece, 1994; Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985; Nicholls, 1989). The students discussed in this research hold particular perceptions about their academic ability, social standing within their peer group and how they belong in the context of the classroom.

In the case of these four non-university bound Year 12 students there appear to be many factors that influence the self-perceptions these particular students hold. As students who are enrolled in a non-university bound course of study they are influenced by the prevailing impression that the work they engage in at school is not as academically challenging or important as the work their peers engage in as part of a university bound course. Considering that this attitude exists and is perpetuated by various groups within the community the students, with the help of dedicated vocational teachers, still manage to perceive value in their school course and acknowledge that within the Year 12 peer group no distinctions are made between those enrolled in a non-university bound course and those attempting university entrance.

The students' prior experience of schooling and their beliefs about their academic ability with relation to the total year group leads them to perceive themselves as average or below average achievers and they mostly aim to pass the year as best as they can. The students have formed conceptions of their ability based on their prior performance and previous experience in particular subjects. Students also hold conceptions of their ability based on their performance expectations in comparison to others. Student expectations are

strongly linked to their concept of ability and thus they find themselves in a perpetual cycle of expectation leading to degrees of achievement.

Student self-perceptions have a marked influence on the individual's ability to achieve success. How students perceive themselves in the context of the classroom has been found to influence many aspects of their behaviour such as level of interest, persistence, task engagement, and task performance (Newman & Schwager, 1992; Wittrock, 1986). As student self-perceptions have been shown to influence classroom behaviour these also must impact on their ability to achieve success. Each of the students in the research had different definitions of what it meant to achieve success and these definitions were "flavoured" by their own self-perceptions. By the perceptions students have of success they make it either relatively easy or difficult to perceive themselves to be successful. Those students who defined success as something they felt would be easy to achieve appeared to have more chance of achieving it.

In the same way student self-perceptions influence the students' ability to achieve success, the motivational goal orientations adopted by students influence their ability to achieve success as they determine many aspects of how students will respond in given situations. The literature suggests that individuals adopt particular motivational orientations as a result of the conditions they experience, the beliefs they hold and their prevailing self-perceptions. Students who adopt task mastery strategies have positive self-perceptions and they believe that success in school is the result of working cooperatively, working hard, being interested in the work and attempting to understand rather than memorise information (Nicholls, 1989). Students who adopt performance/ego strategies

believe that being successful is a direct result of having high ability, performing at a higher level than other students, having a teacher who expects them to do well, liking the teacher and knowing how to impress others (Nicholls, 1989). The students in the research were found to be more likely to consider themselves successful according to their own definitions, if they employed task mastery orientation. However, not all situations they encountered lent themselves to this. Some classroom situations encouraged students to employ performance/ego strategies and it appeared that where the students employed performance/ego orientation they were less likely to perceive themselves as having been successful.

From this research a number of conclusions can be drawn :

* Student self-perceptions influence an individual's ability to achieve success as they influence classroom behaviour and partly determine how students will respond in particular situations.

* Adoption of particular motivational goal orientations also influence an individual's ability to achieve success and certain conditions were found to influence the types of orientations adopted.

* The students discussed in this research were found to have differing definitions of success most of which showed their belief that success is a result of employing task mastery orientation.

Summary of key outcomes of the study

A noteworthy outcome of the study was that the findings supported the literature reported in Chapter Two. Such a trend might suggest the salience of theory generated thus far being applicable to the achievement goals of West Australian students including upper secondary non-university bound students. Although the findings of the study are limited to four cases, the research provides rich descriptive information on the factors that influence students' motivation. Of particular relevance were findings indicating a strong mastery orientation for a sample of non-university bound students. The study indicates that students adopt more than one goal orientation at the same time and that students' goals are tied to their own personal goals and to particular conditions of the learning situation. A unique feature of the study is that it measured students' perceptions at two points in time thus supporting evidence that students' perceptions do change across the school year. In addition, the study begins to generate an understanding of a group of students who are at the latter end of post-compulsory schooling within the West Australian educational system and whose prospects and career opportunities are markedly different from those of their university bound peers.

Implications for teaching and learning

This research has a number of implications for secondary teachers who may be concerned about student motivation at Year 12 level particularly those within the West Australian education system and vocational teachers who may experience situations similar to this.

The findings suggest that teachers can influence the motivational orientations adopted by students by adapting classroom processes and curriculum. Teachers need to be aware of how task mastery orientation can be enhanced and work towards adapting classroom variables to encourage this. The result would have benefits for both teachers and students as students would find school more rewarding and teachers would experience less difficulties with students who are only motivated to pass and look good in the eyes of others.

The findings also suggest that to optimise student motivation teaching strategies used in the classroom should aim to be student centred allowing students valuable input into the teaching and learning process. Teachers should also make maximum use of practical activities and encourage students to be active learners in the classroom through strategies such as in-class discussion.

Teachers need to be conscious that their behaviour impacts on the students in their class. Where possible teachers should aim to adopt a style which increases their approachability and use genuine positive encouragement by acknowledging student effort and commenting on positive aspects of student work. Teachers should maximise opportunities to conference with individual students, help students achieve their best and ensure that set work is completed.

The research suggests that some of these students respond favourably to evaluative conditions where public comparison does not occur. Whilst the system in which the students operate is comparative at both a school and statewide level it appears that the use of comparison in the classroom has a negative effect on most students. Teachers should

aim to adopt assessment and evaluation techniques which reduce competition within the classroom. Subjects referred to in this thesis as ones evaluated by way of student outcome statements appear to reduce peer competition.

Where possible teachers should aim to make course content as relevant and as challenging as possible. The impact of content the students perceived as being valuable for motivation can be seen in this research. Content should also aim to maximise student interest. By allowing student input into curriculum and content this can be achieved.

Year 12 teachers could be forgiven for thinking that non-university bound and vocational students are not as motivated as university bound students. This study shows that Year 12 students in these courses do take their course of study seriously as is shown by the surprising degree of task mastery orientation adopted by the four students. As the orientations adopted by students are largely determined by teacher controllable variables this further increases the need for teachers to consciously aim at creating task mastery enhancing conditions within the classroom.

Recommendations for further research

Given the findings of this research a number of areas where further research would be beneficial emerge.

This study only collected data from four students who were part of the same school system. To fully explore the range of potential data and to confirm ideas suggested in this study a wider study using other students from other schools should be conducted.

The richness of data flowing from the students and the important implications for classroom teachers drives the need for additional research about these students and how to optimise the learning situation for them in order that they have success and meaningful preparation for adult life.

Given the findings that task mastery orientation can be enhanced through removal of traditional assessment structures more research into the motivational orientations adopted by students when being assessed according to student outcome statements is needed.

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Appendices

The following interview schedules are the schedules used for student interviews.

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
First interview

1. What subjects did you choose last year? Why?

2. What memorable school experiences did you have last year?

3. What do you consider to be your best subject last year? Why?

4. What subject do you feel you were able to achieve most in? Why?

5. Which subject did you work the hardest in? Why?

6. Which subject do you feel you succeeded most at? Why?

7. How would you define success?

8. What subjects have you chosen this year? Why?

9. Did you choose INSTEP? Why/Why not?

10. What goals have you set for yourself this year?

11. Do you feel under pressure to achieve these goals? How? Who does the pressure come from?

12. What expectations do you have for yourself this year?

13. What will you do to achieve your goals? (strategies etc..)

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
Second Interview

1 How is the term going for you so far?

2 What important things have happened to you since our last interview?

3 What class are you having the most success in at the moment?
> Why is it successful for you?
> Do you find the class interesting? Why?
> What kinds of in class activities do you do? How do you feel about these?
> How do you approach work in this subject?
> Does this subject have relevance for you career wise?
> How is your work in this subject marked?
> Tell me about your last assessment in this subject
> Do you compare your marks/work with other students?
> Does the teacher compare work/marks?
> What ability do you have in this subject? Do you think you're able to improve your ability? How?
> Do you think the teacher of this subject expects you to achieve at a certain level? Does he/she encourage you to do this? Do the expectations the teacher holds affect your performance in any way?

4. What class are you finding most difficult at the moment?
> What makes it difficult?
> What kinds of activities do you do in this subject? How do you feel about them?
> How do you approach work in this subject?
> Does this subject have relevance for you career wise?
> How is your work in this subject marked?
> Tell me about your last assessment in this subject
> Do you compare your marks/work with other students?
> Does the teacher compare work/marks?
> What ability do you have in this subject? Do you think you're able to improve your ability? How?
> Do you think the teacher of this subject expects you to achieve at a certain level? Does he/she encourage you to do this? Do the expectations the teacher holds affect your performance in any way?

5. Are you bored in any class? Why?

6. In our last interview you said that success was ...

> Do you still agree with this definition?
> In your opinion what things can happen in the classroom to help students succeed?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
Third interview

1 Are you still enrolled in the same subjects as you were at our previous interview?

2 Would you like to alter your definition of success in any way?

3 Describe some of your classes in terms of what you think about the following
> - curriculum
> - teaching methods used
> - attitude of peers to subjects
> - attitude of teachers toward students
> - level of control you feel you have over your success
> - extra work required
> - predictability of subject
> - level of challenge presented

4 What do you expect school to provide you with at Year 12 level?

5 If you were able to change anything(s) about the system what would it be?

6 What value does the school system offer for Year 12s?

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
Final interview

1 How do you feel you've gone this semester?

2 What subject have you had most success in? Why?

3 What subject did you succeed the least in? Why?

4 How do you feel about next semester?

5 What types of teaching strategies (classroom activities) do you think teachers should use to enthuse Year 12 students? (Group work, student centred learning, degree of participation in class discussions)

6 What types of things can teachers do to motivate students?

7 Describe the teacher who motivates you most What is it that he/she does to motivate you?

8 At Year 12 do you expect teachers to be "at" you to get work done, or should they just let you go your own way?

9. Do you believe that teachers have control over how well the students in their class achieve? Why? What power do you think students have over their destiny at school?

10. The most satisfying thing in school for you is

11. Do you think students strive to keep up with the expectations of certain teachers? Is this a positive or a negative thing? How do you know what a teacher expects from you?

12. Do teachers give marks or do students earn them?

13. Do other students judge you according to the subjects you study?

The following guidelines were used for journal entries written by the students

throughout the first semester

Journal entries

Entry A

Create a student profile of yourself. Include factual information as well as information about your interests and hobbies, hopes and aspirations for the year, aims for 1998, philosophy of life and other information you wish to share

Entry B

Reflection on first assessment - How do you feel about the first assessment for this course? How do you think you went? What factors contribute to your feelings about your mark? How do you think you could improve - if at all?

Entry C

Reflection on My Place by Sally Morgan (novel studied). In this novel Sally Morgan embarks on a journey of self-discovery. Throughout life we are constantly discovering new things about ourselves. What have you discovered about yourself this term?

Entry D

What outstanding features has the year held for you so far? What makes this year so different from the others? How do you feel differently about this year?

Entry E

As Term 2 begins and exams approach what thoughts and expectations do you have about the term? What hopes do you hold for the semester? Explain your ideas.

Entry F

The final year of school can be both the most turbulent and the most exhilarating year of you life so far. Reflect on the most difficult and most rewarding aspects of being a Year 12 student

Entry G

1998 will see each of you go in different directions as you begin establishing careers for yourselves. What types of skills will you need in the future? What do you expect from your final year at school? What particular subject/activities provide you with the skills you think you will need? What skills would you like the opportunity to develop further?

Entry H

Imagine this...

We have decided you dramatically change Year 12 for students at this school. Everything students experience will be evaluated. You have been elected to a student committee which will make recommendations to the school administration. What will you advise we keep? (Why?) What will you advise we get rid of? (Why?) Should we add any extras?

Entry I

Choose any 7 consecutive days between 5/5 and 26/5 and write an entry every day recording what happens to you and how you are feeling about school. Include any other events that also affect you during this time.

Following are the questionnaires used as part of this study Both the "Motivational Orientation Questionnaire" and "The Purposes of School" are based on those used by Nicholls, Patashnick and Nolen (1985).

THE PURPOSES OF SCHOOL

In your opinion, what are the main things schools should do?

(Answer : SA = strongly agree   A = agree   N = neutral   D = disagree)

A very important thing school should do is ..

1. prepare us for jobs that will give us money for luxuries	SA	A	N	D
2. prepare us to reach the top in our jobs	SA	A	N	D
3. recognize the talents of able students to ensure they move toward the top jobs	SA	A	N	D
4. prepare us to be useful to others	SA	A	N	D
5. teach us to do our duty to our country	SA	A	N	D
6. prepare us to do things we have to do, even if we don't want to	SA	A	N	D
7. prepare us for jobs that will make the world better for everyone	SA	A	N	D
8. help us understand the effect of new inventions	SA	A	N	D
9. help us think clearly (critically) about what we read and see on TV	SA	A	N	D
10. help us to think clearly about what politicians say	SA	A	N	D
11. prepare us for jobs where we can keep learning new things	SA	A	N	D
12. help us to keep working in spite of obstacles	SA	A	N	D
13. prepare us for jobs that will give us plenty of free time	SA	A	N	D

A very important thing a school should do is ...

14. help us get into the best tertiary courses SA A N D

15. make sure that the smartest students are prepared to
     be leaders and get top jobs SA A N D

16. prepare us to be active in the community SA A N D

17. make us responsible law-abiding citizens SA A N D

18. teach us to respect authority SA A N D

19. prepare us for jobs making or doing things that are
     useful to others SA A N D

20. prepare us to understand the importance of new
     scientific discoveries SA A N D

21. prepare us to evaluate critically what experts say SA A N D

22. help us understand how what our country does affects
     the world SA A N D

23. prepare us for jobs where we can be imaginative SA A N D

24. help us to always work hard to do our best SA A N D

25. prepare us for jobs that will give us enough money to
     buy the best of everything SA A N D

26. teach us to compete with others so we can compete
     for the top jobs SA A N D

27. find out who is smart enough for top jobs SA A N D

28. teach us to work cooperatively with others SA A N D

29. make us loyal to our country SA A N D

30. teach us to sacrifice pleasures and work to do the
     right thing SA A N D

31. teach us things that will help society SA A N D

A very important thing a school should do is ...

32. help us understand nature and how it works	SA	A	N	D
33. make us critical readers of the news	SA	A	N	D
34. help us understand enough to vote wisely in elections	SA	A	N	D
35. teach us to be creative problem solvers at work	SA	A	N	D
36. teach us not to give up when work gets hard	SA	A	N	D
37. prepare us for jobs that will give us long holidays and the money to travel	SA	A	N	D
38. give us a drive to get higher and higher jobs	SA	A	N	D
39. prepare us to do things that will help others	SA	A	N	D
40. teach us to work hard to support our business and government leaders	SA	A	N	D
41. prepare us for jobs that will make other peoples' lives more interesting or satisfying	SA	A	N	D
42. help us to understand technology and how it works	SA	A	N	D
43. help us to understand the issues facing our state and country (foreign relations, environment, etc.)	SA	A	N	D
44. prepare us for challenging jobs	SA	A	N	D
45. teach us to set high standards for our own work	SA	A	N	D
46. give us the skills that will help us get top jobs with high status	SA	A	N	D
47. teach us to follow orders even when we don't feel like it	SA	A	N	D
48. prepare us for jobs that improve other people's health or standard of living	SA	A	N	D

MOTIVATIONAL ORIENTATION QUESTIONNAIRE

When do you feel you have had a really successful day in school?

(Answer   SA = strongly agree   A = agree   N = neutral   D = disagree)

I feel most successful if

1. something I learn makes me want to find out more	SA	A	N	D
2. I keep busy	SA	A	N	D
3. I do the work better than other students	SA	A	N	D
4. I don't do anything stupid in class	SA	A	N	D
5. I score high on a test without studying	SA	A	N	D
6. I don't have to do any homework	SA	A	N	D
7. I get out of some work	SA	A	N	D
8. I get a new idea about how things work	SA	A	N	D
9. I work hard all day	SA	A	N	D
10. I show people I'm good at something	SA	A	N	D
11. people don't think I'm dumb	SA	A	N	D
12. I do well without trying	SA	A	N	D
13. I don't have to work too hard	SA	A	N	D
14. I do almost no work and get away with it	SA	A	N	D
15. I learn something interesting	SA	A	N	D
16. I show people I'm smart	SA	A	N	D
17. all the work is easy	SA	A	N	D
18. I put one over on a teacher	SA	A	N	D
19. I solve a tricky problem by working hard	SA	A	N	D

I feel most successful it ...

20. I score higher than other students	SA	A	N	D
21. the teacher doesn't ask any hard questions	SA	A	N	D
22. I fool around and get away with it	SA	A	N	D
23. I finally understand a really complicated idea	SA	A	N	D
24. I am the only one who can answer the teacher's questions	SA	A	N	D
25. I don't have any tough tests	SA	A	N	D
26. something I learn really makes sense to me	SA	A	N	D
27. a class makes me think about things	SA	A	N	D

Letter of consent

19 February 1997

Dear _____ (student)

I wish to invite you to be part of a study I am conducting about the attitudes of year 12 non-TEE students toward their academic programme

This study will form the research component of a Master of Education degree I am completing at Edith Cowan University. Your participation is voluntary and will not affect your marks or work in any of your subjects this year

I would particularly like you to participate as I'd love to know what you think about the experiences you have at school this semester and the progress you are making. If you are able to participate we would meet five times during the semester and chat about your feelings and opinions of school. During the semester you will be creating a journal in Senior English and we may use the journals as part of finding out what you think and feel about the experiences you have at school. Our discussions will be audio taped however any information which could identify you will be kept confidential. Confidentiality of identity also applies to information from your journal.

I hope you will choose to participate in this study as I feel it is important that teachers learn more about student experience at school so we can make improvements to the service we offer. If you are able to discuss your ideas about school the information may contribute to improved post-compulsory education. In addition I hope our discussions will help raise your self awareness of the value of schooling.

If you are able to assist me please complete the form below and return it to me by Monday 24th February. Because you are a student at a secondary school we also require a parent/guardian signature on the consent slip attached. If you have any further questions please don't hesitate to see me.

Thank you for your participation and co-operation.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Mansfield.

I wish to participate in this study

Signature (student) _____

Counter-Signature (parent/guardian) _____

Date   /   /1997