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Learning disabilities, home background, and beliefs: their impact on school, learning and achievement

Mary Elizabeth Pryce
University of Wollongong

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Learning Disabilities, Home Background, and Beliefs: Their Impact on School, Learning and Achievement

by

Mary Elizabeth Pryce, BA, MScEd

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree Doctor of Philosophy from the

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I especially want to express my appreciation and thanks to the parents and the students who participated in the study. They were all so kind and enthusiastic.
Dedication

This work is dedicated to my immediate family,
Milton, my Mother, Sam, Michael and Andrew.

Although my father is deceased, I wish to acknowledge with gratitude
the influence he had in creating in me a desire for knowledge.

I also dedicate this thesis to my extended family,
my grandchildren, their mothers, my brothers, their wives,
my nieces and nephews, my aunts and cousins
and Doris and Larry.

and to my friends of many years
Ann and Sam, Carola and Ernst and Gail and Keith
who have always been there.

I would like also to dedicate this study to Reverend, Dr. Daniel O'Leary
whose encouragement has left me with an enduring desire
to become the most competent teacher I can.
Abstract

Twenty-nine students from three State High Schools within the New South Wales Department of School Education’s South Coast Region were identified by teachers and school administrators as being ‘learning disabled’. The major defining criteria used were that the students were:

- functioning academically at least two years behind their peers,
- of normal intelligence
- free of any other emotional and/or physical disadvantages.

The study explored the nature of the relationship between home background, prior experiences of these students, their beliefs about their own learning and schooling, and the beliefs that other major stakeholders such as parents and teachers held about their educational potential.

The main data collection technique used in the study was the ‘in-depth interview’ in the paradigm of naturalistic inquiry. The interviews were conducted with the 29 students, their parents, and teachers. Using a questionnaire as an instrument, the interviews explored the memories and beliefs which the different stakeholders held.

The results of the analysis revealed several factors which are related to and impact on the ‘condition’ known as Learning Disabilities (LD). For example Grade 2 emerged as a critical year in the LD student’s academic life because this was primarily the grade level in which the students first encountered difficulties academically and with teachers.

The belief that learning disabilities are mainly due to neurological damage, genetic programming or a diet problem is not supported by the data in this study.

The learning disabilities of the kind manifested by the students who participated in this study are best explained in terms of a mismatch between the home culture and the school culture. The factors that are included in the assessment of both cultures are the values, beliefs, attitudes, habits and practices that are associated with school, education, learning and literacy and numeracy. The mismatch occurs when the values and attitudes of the home culture do not tend to lend themselves to high academic achievement and when the school culture contains beliefs and attitudes that do not lend support to those students who are without coping skills for academic achievement.

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CHAPTER 1

1. Introduction

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- The Study Setting
- Selection of Schools and Grades
  - Criteria Used for the Selection of Students in this Study
  - Relationship Between Learning Disabilities, Beliefs and Literacy
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1.2 Purpose
The broad purpose of this study was to illuminate the relationship between learning disabilities, academic achievement, aspects of home background and beliefs about learning and schooling held by different stakeholders in the academic welfare of learning disabled students.

1.3 Objective and Focus
The principal objective and focus of this study was to investigate underlying commonalties in the lives of a group of students who had been identified as learning disabled. In particular, this investigation aimed to explore, clarify and understand the nature of the relationship between the beliefs about learning and schooling which major stakeholders in learning disabled (LD) students' lives hold about school success and academic achievement, especially with respect to literacy and numeracy areas.

1.4 Rationale
There exists a group of children, nearly two million in the United States (Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991), and over 75,000 in New South Wales, (Dept of School Education - Special Education) who have been identified as LD. While the aetiology of this condition is yet to be identified in its entirety, a fact that is supported by the lack of a communally accepted definition (Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991; Myklebust 1983; Algozzine and Ysseldyke 1986; Ysseldyke and Algozzine 1983; Sabatino 1983; McLeod 1983; Mercer et al. 1996), the numbers of LD students have been increasing at an alarming rate (Abrams 1987; Coles 1987; Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991; Algozzine and Korinek 1985; Frankenberger and Harper 1987).

Investigations directed towards identifying the aetiology of learning disabilities have a long history (Coles 1987; Poplin 1988a). Learning disability/difficulty is essentially linked to reading difficulties and although some contend these are distinct 'conditions' (Fisk and Rourke 1983, and Rourke 1985 both cited in Rourke 1989), without a firm definition it is difficult to evaluate the veracity of this statement.
Numerous studies have been undertaken by educationalists, psychologists, medical personnel and other concerned organisations over the last fifty years with the prospect of discovering some concrete evidence for the occurrence of learning disabilities. In each case, these investigations were undertaken without a consensus on definition (Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991; Mann et al. 1983; Ysseldyke and Algozzine 1983; Adelman and Taylor 1986; Hammill et al. 1987) or even an agreement on symptoms (Adelman and Taylor 1986; Coles 1987).

Since there is a paucity of agreement on a definition or symptoms, it is therefore of primary importance that research into all aspects continues if an explanation for this puzzling 'condition' is to be ascertained.

Regardless of the determinants of the learning disability which results primarily in a lack of literacy skills and frequently numeracy incompetence, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the learning disability body of knowledge and that the information collected from the research will help bring the investigative community closer to an understanding.

In 1968, Rosenthal and Jacobson concluded from their research into students' reactions in relation to teacher beliefs, that students responded as the teachers' expectations dictated. It was, therefore, of interest to investigate the influence of the beliefs held by the students themselves along with those opinions adhered to by the major adult stakeholders in the academic performances of these students.

It is important to understand the relationship between the beliefs held by these students and their caregivers when we consider the impact that these beliefs may have on the actual learning of students and thus the subsequent association with literacy and numeracy. In addition, if a possible relationship is found, it has implications for parent education and counselling of students.

1.5 The Study Setting

The area in which this study took place was the South Coast Region of New South Wales, Australia. Three normal State-operated high schools were chosen for the inquiry and they catered to populations of between 900 and 1000 students each.
The High Schools' staffs consisted of approximately 60 to 70 teachers each, plus support staff. Courses in general studies for Years 7 to 12 were provided and at the end of Year 12, students take High School Certificate exams. None of the selected schools had a Special Education Unit for students with special needs.

The schools are located in an area where several major primary and secondary industries are located and the most of the population are employees in these industries themselves or the associated support services.

1.6 Selection of Schools and Grades

The High Schools were chosen because of their similarity in population and location. The Years 7 and 8 were identified as the target grades primarily because of the educational system in New South Wales. The primary schools cater to Years Kindergarten to Year 6 and then high school starts in Year 7 which is somewhat different to the systems of North America wherein the students either stay in the primary/public school until the end of Grade 8 or attend junior high school for Grades 8 to 10 and then progress on to high school/college.

My initial impetus was to investigate students in Years 6 and 7 but due to the structure of the system in Australia, this would have meant negotiating with two separate organisations. To reduce both the complexity of the design as well as unnecessary sources of possible bias communication moving between different educational contexts, it was decided to focus on the first two years of high school. This decision was further reinforced by observations made during initial work within the NSW school culture. It was noticed that in these two years of high school, students become consciously aware that they are having difficulty in school and further, have gained sufficient maturity to be able to offer a constructive assessment of the situation, compared with a child in Year 4 for example.

On the other hand, my experiences when teaching LD children both in North America and Australia have convinced me that some 16-year old students continue to deny they have a learning problem, or they adopt a 'Who cares' attitude.
1.7 **Criteria Used for the Selection of Students in This Study**

The LD children who participated in this study were carefully chosen on the basis of three broad criteria:

- normal daily functioning e.g. no known brain injury/damage; no hearing or visual impairments,
- at least two academic years behind their peers; and
- normal intelligence as measured by an intelligence quotient (WISC-R ratings) with the results taken from the student records, and in the absence of these test results, the opinion of the counsellor and responsible Special Education teacher.

These criteria emerged from two sources of data: firstly, they emerged from the propositional knowledge that a careful and analytic reading of the literature into LD revealed. This propositional knowledge is further explicated in Chapter 2. Secondly, they are part of the tacit knowledge that develops from sustained and prolonged engagement with such children in classroom settings. During the last decade, I have worked closely with children who have been classified as LD as part of my professional duties in both North America and Australia. Furthermore, I have also taught mainstream and gifted and talented children. Given ten years of observation, reflection and experience in the field, I believe that this tacit knowledge needs to be taken into account with the propositional knowledge gleaned from careful reading of the 'experts'.

1.8 **Relationship Between Learning Disabilities, Beliefs and Literacy**

As will be seen in the review of literature in Chapter Two, there are good reasons to suspect relationships exists between the beliefs of the students with learning disabilities, their parents and their teachers which impacts on the acquisition of literacy. Currently little is known about the nature of this possible relationship.

In the literature, e.g. Glock (1972) there is much to support the assertion that if one believes that one cannot do something then chances are excellent that one will not be successful in accomplishing that task. However, the antithesis is that if one believes
that a positive result is possible, then it will manifest as such. Bandura (1986) proposed his self-efficacy theory wherein the ability of an individual to possess skills is a measure of that individual’s belief in his or her own ability to perform the behaviour.

This research attempted to explore the nature of the relationship and the influence of the student/parent beliefs with and on the learning difficulty.

1.9 Choice of Paradigm of Inquiry

This study has been carried out within the axiomatic boundaries of the naturalistic paradigm of inquiry. This paradigm of inquiry is significantly different from the more popular ‘rationalistic’ paradigm of inquiry which is oft-times referred to as ‘the scientific method’.

The decision to employ a naturalistic paradigm and its contingent methodology was made for the following reasons:

- The nature of the research questions which motivated the study. This is not a study that sets out to prove cause-effect hypothesis or to establish immutable, time-and-context-independent ‘truths’ about LD, school achievement, and stakeholders’ belief systems.
- There are no a priori hypothesis to be tested or rejected. Rather this is a study which sets out to describe, explore, and ultimately understand the nature of the relationships between LD, school achievement and stakeholder beliefs.
- Studies whose objectives are to understand rather than prove, demand constructivist rather than objectivist assumptions about the nature of ‘truth’, ‘knowledge’ and ‘knowing’. Such assumptions in turn demand a ‘human-as-instrument’ methodology.

The intent of this study was to explore, in an open-ended, non-intrusive way, the nature of LD, school achievement and stakeholder beliefs as experienced and interpreted by those who are most closely associated with the phenomenon of LD; namely the LD students themselves, their parents and teachers. Paraphrased, I was interested in the ‘truth’ as perceived through the recollections, ideas understandings and experiences of those who have lived closely with the condition known as LD. This ‘truth’ emerges through the unfolding of ‘idiographic knowledge’. The multiplicity of
the components cannot be isolated or segregated because the interrelationship makes up the whole (Guba 1981). Time and context cannot be removed or ignored since these elements impact profoundly on the phenomena (Lincoln and Guba 1985).

When the Naturalistic Paradigm is implemented then certain criteria must be met (Lincoln and Guba 1985). The theory of a naturalistic inquiry, lends itself to the absence of an *a priori* hypothesis. Through exploratory research the theory will emerge from the data. Therefore the selected method of investigation, which will be more explicitly described in Chapter 3, allows the researcher a broader base from which to gather any data that is not based in any preconceived theory or plan and that the emergent design could lead to a transferable theory on learning disabilities.

The Naturalistic Paradigm was selected as the preferred investigative method because the focus of inquiry was to understand the various aspects of the learning disabilities dilemma. The inherent philosophy of the paradigm supports the heterogeneity of the environment and allows the researcher to make use of the techniques that permit the investigation of the complex human aspect.

1.10 *Boundaries of the Study*

This study confines the large global arenas of literacy, beliefs and learning disabilities to the extent of the impact that these areas impose on the relevant aspects in the study. The study attempts globally to delve into the LD problem intertwining with it, the literacy aspect and the disparate beliefs of the parents, teachers and students.

1.11 *Limitations*

Only those areas that pertained to the learning disability problem have been investigated. Detailed explorations into such factors as learning, motivation, reading and self-concept for example are not included.

In order to facilitate the reading of this study, I have confined the third person singular pronoun usage to ‘he’ or ‘him’. There is no intent of gender discrimination and it should be noted that learning disabilities can affect both genders with equal severity.
1.12 An Overview of the Organisation of the Study

The study follows the format of the chapter headings. In Chapter Two, the relevant literature is discussed and assessed in relation to the study. Chapter Three relates in detail the paradigm and research methodology that were used in the study. Chapter Four contains the analysis of the data collected with minimal discussion, while Chapter Five considers the results and possible inferences that could be drawn from the data. Included also are suggestions and recommendations spanning several possible areas for future research.
CHAPTER 2

2. Literature Review

Figure 2-1 Flowchart for Literature Review Chapter

Purpose and Organisation, Introduction and Learning Disabilities

Historical Background of LD

Definitions Dispute

Theories That Circumscribe

Belief Systems

Other Factors & LD

Future Implications

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2.2 Chapter Purpose and Organisation

The purpose of this chapter is to review and analyse research and theory which is not only related to the research questions motivating this study but which will also illuminate the parameters its questions.

In order to do this, the chapter is organised as follows: first, I shall give a brief historical overview of the growth in awareness of learning disabilities and comment on the various polemics that have been generated by this condition. The diversity of the theories and concepts pertaining to learning disabilities have been extensive and as a consequence, in order to understand the thinking of the LD community, its development and the ensuing affects of this evolvement, it is necessary to review the evolution of the field in the areas of definition and the subsequent theories. Without this understanding, this research would have little direction or purpose since to date there continues the quest in the LD community for some substantial unifying consolidation on the concept of learning disabilities.

Following the overview of the historical aspects, I shall then, in greater depth than that covered in the overview, review some of the controversies on the definition of LD and the theories that encompass those disputes. These theories are based on the beliefs of the field's contenders. As a result, these beliefs have had an impact on literacy and numeracy through the influence that these theories of the LD experts effect on the strategies used by teachers and hence influence the beliefs held by the teachers.

I shall then review some of the literature pertaining to the beliefs of parents and of the students themselves who also respond to the literacy and numeracy milieu. This study has investigated some of those beliefs with a view to the influence these beliefs may have had on the literacy skills of the LD students.

Finally this chapter reviews investigations that have been made into the peripheral aspects that could affect the students encountering difficulties. Some of these areas of investigation that I believe could have an impact on the acquisition of literacy are those environs of socialisation, head and birth injuries and the use of psychoactive drugs. Included in this section is a review of the LD community’s reactions to one of
the most influential influences in the LD debate and that is the use of psychological assessment. All of these factors are essential to the understanding of the outcomes of this study and have influenced the direction of the study’s methodology.

### 2.3 Overview

In order to provide some background to research in general, an overview of the variety of perspectives used by the scientific community may be useful. One of the oldest approaches is that based on the methodology of experimental measurement. The scientific community generally uses experimental measurement-based methodology in their search for ‘truth’. This method was first promulgated by such persons as Newton, Descartes and Bacon.

Scholars and researchers from different disciplines use assorted approaches. The legal profession, for example, employs the adversarial, evidential approach which is based on the assumption that ‘truth’ can be reconstructed from evidence given by witnesses while the religious thinkers accept the concept of ‘revealed truth’ which implies that divine inspiration, usually as exposed in written words, provides proof of the ‘truth’. The naturalistic or ‘ethnographic’ or ‘anthropological’ researcher, however, believes that ‘truth’ is both affected by time and culture. Another research method, the ‘connoisseur model’ searches for ‘truth’ based on expertise and subjective judgement and encompasses many of the art and sport aspects of a culture.

The LD research community has employed many of the above noted methodologies in their search for enlightenment into the learning disabilities conundrum and it is through their search that the information accumulated on the subject has been extensive.

The organisation of this literature review chapter has been designed to portray the growth in awareness of learning disabilities/difficulties and the subsequent theories that have developed. In the search for the cause of the increasing prevalence in learning disabilities, as it came to be labelled, a number of different avenues were investigated.

Since this study attempted to explore a wide range of possible influential factors that may affect the learning of students, this chapter endeavours to follow a similar format
and to provide some insight into the history of learning disabilities through the review of some of the literature of the field.

2.4 Learning Disabilities

Most educators have familiarity with the term learning disabilities/difficulties, dyslexia. Parents of school children have encountered the term and some students have become aware of the difficulty either from their friends or through their own experience. Certainly in the last few decades the impact that it has had on the field of education has been extraordinary insofar as the numbers of children identified with LD have increased at an escalating rate, a phenomenon possibly due to a variety of factors: a) the increase in the number of children actually attending school because of population expansion; b) perhaps because more sophisticated testing measures increase the sensitivity of detecting the difficulty; or, conversely, c) the lack of guidelines which specifically define the problem and therefore eliminate other similar situations that could be mistakenly aligned with learning disabilities.

2.5 The Historical Background of Learning Disabilities

2.5.1 Early Work in the Field of LD

One of the first published discussions based on observations of the problem occurred in the late nineteenth century. A school teacher in Scotland had in his class four brothers who had difficulty learning to read. The older siblings of the boys, who had learned to read from the same teacher had not encountered any difficulty. The school teacher was perplexed, for the boys were intelligent and functioned normally. The teacher spoke to the school Health Officer who, without assessing the boys, declared them to have ‘congenital word-blindness’ (Coles 1987).

This Health Officer had been a student of James Hinshelwood, an ophthalmologist (Eden et al. 1995) who had been the first of many who became known as researchers in learning disabilities. Hinshelwood had been attempting to define the symptoms of LD and developed a method of teaching that would help students with reading problems learn to read. He concluded that since the boys came from the same family, had at least average intelligence, functioned normally physically and mentally with the exception of their inability to remember letters and words, then this malfunction was
brought about by a faulty gene, hence the terminology 'congenital word-blindness' and the neurologically-based concept that placed the cause of the problem within the child (Coles 1987). This provided the substructure for subsequent investigation.

The basic tenets offered by Hinshelwood were further developed by Samuel Orton, a neurologist who, in 1937, proposed a theory on how the brain functioned and concluded that the reading and learning problem which he referred to as 'strephosymbolia' was brought about by a malfunction of the brain (Torgesen 1986; Coles 1987). In the ensuing years Orton's theory was seized as an exegesis on why some students were not learning to read and generally not successful in school. Included in his 'strephosymbolia' term was the concept of reversals which was later to become known among other appellations as 'dyslexia'.

2.5.2 The Variety of Labels Used for Learning Disabilities

In the search for appropriate terminology which would accurately describe the LD student and the learning difficulties dilemma, some specific terms have been used: 'perceptual and communication disorders'; 'brain injured'; 'neurological impairment'; 'minimal brain dysfunction'; 'psychoneurological learning disorder'; 'perceptual handicap'; 'perceptual/attention deficit' and 'developmental aphasia' (Coles 1987; Hammill, Leigh, McNutt and Larsen 1987; Epps, Yesseldyke and Algozzine 1985; Adelman and Taylor 1986a). Many of these labels are no longer in use since the introduction of the term learning disabilities; however, the basic proposal that a dysfunction in the central nervous system as the aetiology of LD has not been completely abandoned (Obrzut and Hynd 1987; Rourke 1989).

The label 'learning disabilities' is one aspect upon which there is now some degree of agreement in the field. According to Sabatino (1983) the term was created to isolate the problem into a separate category of dysfunction and to remove the stigma of the label 'brain damaged', the connotation of which had crept into the general understanding of the problem. Algozzine and Yesseldyke (1986) suggest that the term LD is considerably more acceptable than mental retardation (MR) or emotionally disturbed (ED) and elicits more sympathy than 'low-achieving'. The term learning disabilities was adopted by the Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) in 1963 and eventually replaced the other designations that had been used in the past. Thus began a search for a definition acceptable to the learning disabilities community.
which has stretched over four decades from the 1950s to the 1990s without the LD community reaching an accord.

2.5.3 The Search for an Accurate Definition of Learning Disabilities

Once the LD label was commonly accepted, the difficulty that followed was one of definition, *vis-à-vis* the term's precise meaning and its framework's confines; the assessment and diagnosis of those affected also remained unaddressed.

By the 1950s most of those concerned with learning disabilities were still focused on an organic cause and, building on Orton's notion, it was suggested by the professionals of the era that children who were encountering difficulties were perhaps brain damaged or mentally retarded (Poplin 1988a). Many students were medicated to control the disruptive behaviour which seemed to be frequently associated with the learning problem. During this era, a medical profession's recommendations prevailed presumably because of the status accorded to medical practitioners and as a result, medication was accepted with enthusiasm. This occurred despite its somewhat less than impressive response rate which was later investigated (Barkley and Cunningham 1978, cited in Coles 1987; Aman 1980).

2.5.3.1 The 1960s

The decade following the 1950s heralded a different approach where the emphasis on the aetiology of learning disabilities shifted from the physical/medical perspective to one which Poplin (1988a) referred to as the Psychological Process Model which implied minimal neurological dysfunction with a psychological base and one in which the focus moved from medical to educational. Torgesen (1986) uses as slightly different terminology when he refers to the neuropsychological model as one which

*attempts to understand intellectual behavior in terms of the specific brain systems that support it.* (p401)

During this period, the focus changed to a less rigidly defined clinical entity, with educationalists becoming more involved; as a consequence, labels such as 'brain damaged' 'neurological impairment' and 'perceptual and communication disorder' (Epps, Yesseldyke and Algozzine 1985) among the 40 labels used by English speaking groups (Cruickshank 1972, cited in Epps, Yesseldyke and Algozzine 1985) came under
the encompassing term ‘learning disabilities’ which was first coined by Samuel Kirk in his book *Educating Exceptional Children* (Kirk 1962).

### 2.5.3.2 The 1970s

In the 1970s, the field then changed direction and began to adopt the idea that LD reflected a lack of learned behaviour or learned nonadaptive behaviours. This was referred to as the Behavioural Model by Poplin (1988a) and the Behavioural Approach (Adelman and Taylor 1986). Torgesen (1986) uses yet another label ‘applied behavior analysis’ and stating that

*applied behavior analysis eschews the use of hypothetical constructs concerning deficient psychological processes or disrupted neural systems to explain behavior.*

(p401)

The essential idea underlying this concept was that problems usually accompanying learning difficulties manifested in disruptive behaviour and teachers found they were without the necessary disciplinary techniques with which to respond (Adelman and Taylor 1986). The behavioural theory proposed in the early 1970s by Lovitt (1967, 1975a, 1975b) and referred to in Poplin (1988a) suggested that the undesirable behaviour presented by the student was learned and not a reflection of neurological dysfunction. The behavioural model recognised some of the basic identifiers used in the present definitions such as difficulty with reading and/or writing, difficulty with logical thought, inconstant attention, et cetera.

### 2.5.3.3 The 1980s

The 1980s brought yet another shift in explanatory theory, one based on an information processing model involving cognitive/learning strategies (Vellutino 1979). Correspondingly, Torgesen (1986) defines the paradigm by declaring:

*The information processing approach assumes that the mind may profitably be viewed as a limited capacity symbol manipulator roughly analagous, to modern computers.* (p401)

Swanson (1987) also links metaphorically the learning disabled child with a computer when he discusses three different articles on information processing and its relationship with learning disabilities. The learning disabilities field in the 1990s
continues to encounter the same frustrations with the label, the definition and the paradigmatic approach to theory and learning.

Over the years there have been many changes in the terminology used to describe the child who encounters difficulty in learning. Part of the problem in finding an acceptable 'label' is the lack of cohesiveness of thought that provides the framework in which the learning disabilities field can function constructively. The historical overview of the theory and paradigm argument will provide the background from an historical perspective and which will be explored in detail below.

2.5.4 Paradigms and Theories

The concepts of paradigm and theory in relation to learning disabilities create for the leaders of the field an arena in which to postulate a variety of abstractions which lay the groundwork for the development of a different approach to the learning disabilities problem and hence an advance towards a solution. In addition to Coles' Interactivity Theory (1987) Heshusius (1989) refers to the prevailing model as the 'Newtonian Mechanistic Paradigm' and fundamentally supports the holistic/constructivist paradigm proposed by Poplin (1988b). Heshiusius, according to Licht and Torgesen (1989)

...provides an interesting discussion of several weaknesses in special education research and practice. (p418)

Adelman (1989) agrees with Heshusius in her proposal that the

...paradigm dominating the field is inappropriate in nature and scope. (p420)

Poplin (1988b, 1988a) also criticises the reductionistic theory; however, ironically, she does tend to break into sections the history of the learning disabilities field.

Little in the way of advancement has been made towards either a consensus on the definition or on the distinguishing components of learning disabilities. Sabatino (1983) states and Algozzine and Yesseldyke (1986) agree that contentment breeds stagnation. Sabatino reports that:
There is no real call for a change in the ambiguity of the learning disability movement. The larger society is satisfied that it has an excuse, an expression to explain why somebody’s kids don’t learn. Similarly, many teachers are delighted with the rubric as an excuse for not teaching. Schools and homes, thus, have a catch-all, with no pressure to change. (p23)

A wide variety of disciplines is involved in the LD field, the primary ones being Education, Medicine, Language Specialities, e.g. Speech Pathologists, Psychology and the more removed but still connected professions such as Optometry, Occupational Therapy, Social Service et hoc genus omne (Lerner 1993) and it is perhaps because of this heterogeneity of interests that there has been little agreement on the fundamental philosophy and hence on the definition and theory of LD.

One of the outcomes from the maze of the variety of disciplines interested in learning disabilities has been the creation of some ‘far-fetched’ notions of substantiating and legitimising the learning disabilities problem, as well as to give hope to concerned parents, is the idea that it is not socially deleterious to be learning disabled since many eminent persons have had LD.

2.5.4.1 The Misconceived ‘Famous People’ Belief

Several incidences exist in the literature where celebrities have been reputed to have had learning disabilities (Thompson 1971, cited in Adelman, Adelman 1987; Minner 1990; Lerner 1993). However, since these people have been identified posthumously, there is very little concrete evidence of the learning disabilities problem ever existing and Adelman and Adelman (1987) have cautioned that since the field cannot agree on a given set of criteria which constitutes learning disabilities in the present, it is better to not delve into the past in an effort to establish connections with celebrities as there is little irrefutable evidence available which would support a firm diagnosis of learning disabilities (Coles 1989; Adelman and Taylor 1986).

2.5.5 Learning Disabilities: A Cultural Perspective

The learning disabilities problem is not confined to any one nationality but is present in many cultures (Lerner 1993). Some support for this statement is found in the multicultural aspects in most schools in the United States of America (Lerner 1993). However, Cummins (1984) indicates that many errors are made in the identification of
children emanating from different cultures and he suggests that attention should be
directed to the educational programmes to which they are subjected and alerts us to
the fact that care should be taken to apply appropriate pedagogy; Elkind (1983),( cited
in Kraayenoord and Elkins 1994) shares the same sentiment. Wiener and Seigel (1992)
state that care is being taken in Canada to avoid labelling allophone children, i.e.
children whose mother tongue is a language other than English or French, as LD.

Kraayenoord and Elkins (1994) suggest that children with non-English speaking
backgrounds having learning difficulties may not have a cultural or linguistic
aetiology, but rather these learning problems may be manifestations of other
problems. Reference is made to the Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders as well as
children with Samoan or Maori backgrounds. Kraayenoord and Elkins further propose
that there is a lack of research into the multicultural implications including the ethnic
and linguistic aspects and their impact on learning disabilities.

Lerner (1993) states

...that research reports about learning disabilities come from many parts of the
world – among them Denmark, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, New
Zealand, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Chile, Canada, and Israel. (p6)

In order to have a broad view of the learning disabilities field, it is necessary to
understand that this ‘condition’ is not one that is isolated in any one area or
community and that it appears to present in any culture.

2.5.6 The Prevalence of Learning Disabilities

The prevalence of the problem was not acute when Hinshelwood or Orton were
conducting their investigations but by the 1960s, the number of children with learning
problems in reading, writing and arithmetic was becoming a serious issue equally for
the educationalists and the concerned parents.

Until the early seventies the number of children labelled LD was virtually unknown.
In 1965-1966, Canada had recorded 1081 with LD, a figure that rose to 196,678 in 1981-
82 (Kirk and Gallagher 1983). When the United States Government passed, in 1975, the
Education of All Handicapped Children Act, Public Law 94-142, formal recognition of
learning disabilities was for the first time official and the actual number of affected
children could be tabulated; this had been difficult to accomplish previously because
the number of children diagnosed with learning disabilities had not been separated
from those with mental retardation. In the 1976-1977 academic year, 797,212 children
were identified as learning disabled. Only 13 years later in 1989-1990, the number had
nearly tripled to 2,064,892 students who were receiving special education services for

In NSW, Australia, 75,000 high school students are currently classified as having
learning difficulties and 1000 Resource teachers are allocated to provide remedial
service for these students (personal communication, L. Davis, NSW Department of
School Education, Special Education Directorate 1993 in reference to the Scott Report
1989).

There are differing estimates about the rate of increase of LD children. Forness (1988)
using the U.S. Department of Education 1987 statistics, states that the numbers have
increased steadily over the years. Lerner (1993) also using as reference the U.S.
Department of Education 1991 statistics, suggests that the reasons for this is that
public awareness has increased, that the assessment process is more sensitive in
detection, and the problem has become more socially acceptable. The number of
children identified as intellectually disabled has decreased since the passing of the Act
in the U.S., which would suggest that some of those children had been reclassified to
learning disabled.

In the USA, almost 50% of the total population receiving special education services has
in whole or in part, a learning disability (Lerner 1993) the remainder of the population
consists of those children who have some physical, emotional, intellectual or speech
affliction (Lerner 1993).

The reason for the rapidly rising increase in the number of students who are identified
as learning disabled is unknown. Currently, not enough is known about the nature of
LD to address its origins. Until more is known about these students it remains likely
that either remediation strategies or the development of new and concrete theories on
the problem will be delayed.
2.5.7 Learning Disabilities: A Gender Perspective

A large segment of LD research has shown that more boys than girls encounter difficulties in learning (Coles, 1987; Shaywitz and Shaywitz 1988, and data from the U.S. Department of Education both cited in Lerner 1993). Male preponderance of LD may be explained by a variety of hypotheses. For example, boys seem, to be more disruptive than girls and therefore demand more attention, or, perhaps there could be more pressure on boys to perform academically than there is for girls, or, possibly it is because girls seem to have a higher aptitude for language acquisition than do boys who tend to display superior ability in the manual subjects like woodworking and metal work (Coles 1987; Lerner 1993). Howe (1993) suggests that when the basics of reading and arithmetic are first introduced, approximately Year 2, the male child is extremely physically active, his attention span is more limited and his behaviour more aggressive and disruptive as he searches for a place in society. He claims that girls on the other hand assume a more passive role and follow the teachers instructions with more diligence than their male compers.

Education as a formal institution dates back to at least the time of Socrates and from which instruction and schooling have developed. However, up to 1880 compulsory education was not in existence and those who attended school were generally those students who were able to deal effectively with the learning process. Those students who encountered difficulty simply did not continue. Education was not considered a vital attribute when one was required to plough a field or tend to industrial tasks. The major thrust into the field of learning difficulties grew from the post World War II era when technology was growing while manual work was diminishing, and education was becoming an essential element for the whole populace in general.

Within the social context of the changing environment, the field of learning disabilities began to make an impact on the community. If we are to understand the learning disabilities scenario, it is important to be aware of its history. For this study the background to the LD 'condition' was essential to the framework in which the study's questionnaire was created and from which the study was organised.

Having an overview of the LD environment, the following section provides a more comprehensive examination of the various components that have had an impact on the LD field and will add to our understanding of the whole.
Having an overview of the LD environment, the following section provides a more comprehensive examination of the various components that have had an impact on the LD field and will add to our understanding of the whole.

### 2.6 The ‘Definitions’ Dispute

Having reviewed the various aspects surrounding the learning disabilities history and peripheral known facts, it is now possible to delve into the literature that pertains to the definitions dispute in a more thorough manner.

McLeod (1983) states two reasons for establishing a definition, one being

...to channel the flow of dollars that have been voted for Learning Disabilities programs, (p23)

and the other

...to establish a valid basis for replicable research. (p23)

He further suggests that

A definition, ... ought to be succinct and focused.... (p23)

The above is a challenge impressive enough to render all efforts to date fruitless of agreement on either content or composition. This was troublesome for teachers especially who did not have a definition under which they could work effectively (Anderson and Coleman 1985; Wong 1986). Numerous concerned organisations and researchers have attempted to provide a definition of learning disabilities (Trent 1989) but with each case an approval by the larger community has not been forthcoming.

However, the conundrum that appears unresolvable is that of the definition and the theory that underpins the concept of learning disabilities. Disagreement occurs when the elementary philosophy encompassing the theory is either too diffuse or defined. This is reflected in Bartoli’s (1990) consideration that

...without a full definition of what learning actually involves, it is difficult to talk about problems or disabilities in learning. (p61)

Without a consensus on what the term means, what its confines are and thus, how it is identified, then the research into the source of the problem has been fundamentally
thwarted and the ensuing frustration endured by the LD community has continued to grow. This is poignantly obvious in Swanson (1988) and his discussion on metatheory of learning disabilities and Torgesen (1986) in his discussion of learning disabilities theory wherein these authors discuss the lack of theoretical cohesiveness and suggest that the existing theories should be integrated with practice in the field.

Kirk (1962) included with the label ‘learning disabilities’ the parametric boundaries of the problem. This was the first attempt at a definition:

A learning disability refers to a retardation disorder, or delayed development in one or more of the processes of speech, language, reading, spelling, writing, or arithmetic resulting from a possible cerebral dysfunction and/or emotional or behavioural disturbance and not from mental retardation, sensory deprivation, or cultural or instructional factors. (p263)

This provided a base, be it however vague, on which to build. The definition furnished the areas wherein the problems seem to occur, i.e. reading, spelling et cetera, and it did suggest exclusionary factors in an attempt to delineate and confine the problems as much as possible, considering the elusive identifying aspects of the learning disabilities problem itself.

According to Poplin (1988a) the basic premise of the learning disabilities paradigm has changed every ten years. These frequent shifts in the basic philosophies have likely impeded the progress of reaching a concord; nevertheless, the fact remains that no universally accepted definition of LD exists (Hammill 1990; Kavale et al 1991; Coles 1987).

Although there is not one definition, a large number of involved individuals, a variety of associated disciplines, e.g. neurology, psychology, speech pathology, and parental and governmental organisations have tried to contribute to the extent that there are now many definitions that attempt to describe the idiosyncrasies associated with learning disabilities (Moats and Lyon 1993; Hammill 1990). However, disagreement is universal concerning the specificity of the term and the framework within which the problem is identified (Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991; Cummins 1984; Hammill, Leigh, McNutt and Larsen 1987).
Classification of the extant multifarious symptoms of LD must be devised in order to differentiate the actual from the imagined characteristics and to provide adequate educational services, in addition to offering concrete conclusions regarding the framework of the problem, need to be formulated (Hammill 1993; Keogh, 1983). Adelman and Taylor (1986b) state that

\[\text{...little attention has been paid to the fundamentals of classification. (p517)}\]

According to Kirk and Kirk (1983) there have been a number of attempts to redefine the term and multitudinous studies conducted in search of a definition.

Hammill (1990) states that there are two different steps in the formulation of a definition. One step is the conceptual phase wherein the idea of learning disabilities is based on a theoretical premise which delineates the various aspects of the problem. The second phase is the requirement for an operational definition which can be used as a means of identification in everyday life. In this same vein, Wong (1986) states that teachers need an operational definition in order to function effectively in their work and further, that conceptual definitions are of no real value to them.

When the US Government established Child Service Demonstration Centres, the criteria used in LD definitions proved extensive and generous: For example, low academic achievement, behavioural problems, cognitive problems with process disorders, perceptual deficits, language difficulties and developmental delay, all came under the learning disabilities umbrella. The evolved model was based on the 1977 National Joint Council on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) definition wherein Mann et al. (1983) declared that most of the centres did not adhere to the essential criteria and conflict arose over what students would be admitted to the centres and what criteria were to be used for diagnosis.

Subsequently, many of the states in the United States have decided on their own definition of LD (Mercer et al. 1996); the following example comes from Texas Education Agency, Texas, 1983:

\[\text{(A) Students who demonstrate a significant (1 standard deviation) discrepancy between academic achievement and intellectual abilities in one or more areas of oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills,}\]

reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, mathematics reasoning, or spelling;

(B) for whom it is determined that the discrepancy is not primarily the result of visual handicap, hearing impairment, mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantages; and

(C) for whom the inherent disability exists to a degree such that they cannot be adequately served in the regular classes of the public schools without the provision of special services. (cited in Cardell and Parmar 1988, p498)

As has been acknowledged by the above definition, mathematics as well as reading plays a part in the learning disabilities field. Myklebust (1983) offers an example.

...deficits in mathematics (dyscalculia) are closely associated with deficits in social perception; when math learning deficient, but other academic achievement is not then nonverbal learning disabilities should be expected. (p18)

A variety of delineating features of learning disabilities are put forth by many of the those in the field but Vellutino (1979) sums up the various aspects with his statement that these characteristics are displayed in

...children who have average or above average intelligence, intact (or corrected) sensory acuity, no severe neurological damage or other debilitating physical disabilities, and who have not been hampered by serious emotional or social problems, socio-economic disadvantage, or inadequate opportunity for learning. (p7)

Algozzine and Yesseldyke (1986) state that in the field there is

The consistent tendency for LD definitions to include reference to neurological dysfunction inherent to the individual (in spite of findings of an absence of this abnormality in most LD students) absolves many (including the student) of blame and guilt. (p397)

2.6.1 The LD Community Organises

A major dilemma among those involved with the LD field was being created, especially amidst the educationalists. McLeod (1983) stated that a definition should be
grounded in the educational arena as most of the front-line personnel are educationalists and further, that those involved should not pretend to be amateur neurologists. This stemmed from the fact that the majority believed that there was a dysfunction in that portion of the brain that processed reading and writing skills.

Increased pressure was being applied by the LD community at large for a solution to the growing numbers of students who were arbitrarily being assessed as LD without universally accepted guidelines, thereby incorporating large degrees of bias to the child’s diagnosis. Due to the lack of definite guidelines for identification, combined with the belief that dysfunctional aspects of the central nervous system and the brain were the causes of the learning disabilities problem, the number of children who were identified was increasing at a considerable pace. Obrzut and Boliek (1986) state that those studies which attempted to substantiate Orton’s basic theory

...contained serious methodological flaws such as inadequate sampling procedures and improper use of statistical design, lack of sophisticated research techniques and equipment, and inadequate or unreliable operational definitions of the learning disability syndrome. (p308)

Coles (1987, 1989) and Adelman (1989) also agree on this point.

Various groups of parents in the United States organised into large influential bodies which further raised awareness of the problem to the authorities. The majority of these parents were middle class Caucasians who believed that the association with mental retardation was unacceptable in their lifestyle and sought alternative solutions (Coles 1987).

The Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (ACLD) which later became The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), The International Reading Association (IRA), the Orton Dyslexia Society (ODS), and The Council for Learning Disabilities (CLD) to name a few of the organised groups which amalgamated with other disability organisations, such as the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and the Division for Children with Communication Disorders (DCCD) to form eventually in 1980, the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (Abrams 1987; Hammill 1990). This has become the authoritative body on learning disabilities in esse, since the United States seems to lead the world in
the learning disabilities field. The fundamental beliefs of these aforementioned groups are based on Orton's initial proposal.

Similarly in Australia, parents of children with learning difficulties grouped together to form an organisation called SPELD (Specific Learning Difficulties) which first started in New South Wales. During the latter part of the 1960s, groups from across Australia amalgamated to form a national organisation called AUSPELD, a special bipartisan committee formed from the Australian House of Representatives. This committee decided to exclude reference to a 'disability' in their label and chose instead the word 'difficulty' which resulted in the label 'Learning Difficulties'. This decision was made on the basis that most of the children who presented with a learning problem were not in reality disabled (Cadman 1976). The fact that this observation is sometimes the case, the ulterior benefit was with the avoidance of the term 'disability'; the Government was released of the responsibilities that may be incurred for financial or other aid. Nevertheless, a need for assistance for these children was recognised (Kraayenoord, Elkins 1994) and support teachers and other personnel were placed in the schools.

The definition provided by the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities further supports the premise that learning disabilities are the result of a deficit in the neurological functioning of the child (Position Paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 1987). As a number of these interested parties was either directly connected to the medical domain or supported the neurological based theory because they were in some way linked to that discipline, strength and support for the upholding of this premise was added by their affiliation.

In the United States, the Federal LD definition stipulates that:

> The term 'children with specific learning disabilities' means those children who have a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which disorder may manifest itself in imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations. Such disorders include such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. Such a term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, of mental
retardation, of emotional disturbance, or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage. (Cited in Kirk & Gallagher 1985, p368)

Sigmon (1989) reduces the official rendition to state that a learning disability is

...a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes...which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to... read, write, spell, or to do mathematical calculations (Education of Handicapped Children Act 1977, p42478) (p299)

This continues to support an aetiology which places the cause intrinsic to the child despite the definition being vague in its constituents.

Kavale and Reese (1991) state that

Either implicitly or explicitly, definitions of LD also make some presumptions about etiology. (p146)

Hammill et al. (1987) believe that the wording used in the Act is the issue about which a large number of people are in disagreement. They purport that the terminology of a

...disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language... (p109)

has divided the community’s beliefs into a dichotomy which are founded upon two distinct philosophies about learning. One group believes that direct instruction of reading and writing is the most effective teaching strategy while the other group believes in the approach of training psychocognitive abilities which underlie the reading and writing process; it is this latter group which has dominated the LD field for the last two decades. The psychocognitive aspects involve memory, perception, sequencing et cetera. Hammill further suggests that the majority of the two groups would agree

...that the cause of the learning problem is intrinsic to the affected person. (p110)

Many in the field would not agree with this assumption; for example Coles (1987, 1989) Hynd et al. (1991); and Sigmon (1989).
2.6.2 The Continued Search

Hammill (1990) investigated the various definitions in an attempt to consolidate the field and found there were at least eleven definitions that were widely known and accepted, of which three are accredited to individuals while the rest have been formulated by organisations. Using fourteen different approaches, Epps, Yesseldyke and Algozzine (1985) investigated the definitions of learning disabilities with the intent of determining the classification practices used by the various American States. The Position Paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (1981) declares that

*The federal law states that an individual may have a learning disability when a severe discrepancy exists between achievement and intellectual ability in one or more of the following areas: oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, listening comprehension, mathematical calculation, and mathematical reasoning.* (p136)

The problem fundamentally is grounded in the lack of acquiescence on the defining concepts (Hynd et al. 1991; Yesseldyke and Algozzine 1983; McLeod 1983; Adelman and Taylor 1986; Anderson and Coleman 1985). Gerald Coles in his book *The Learning Mystique* proposes that

*...the very existence of this “condition” has been virtually unproven,* (pxii)

which takes the argument full circle.

It is obvious that each sector of the learning disabilities field perceives the student and learning from different perspectives. In the continuum search for the ‘truth’, Yesseldyke and Algozzine (1983) suggest the lack of agreement on a definition of LD is due to the fact that

*We have failed to identify the characteristic(s) which is universal and specific to LD.* (p30)

They propose that one characteristic common to all students identified as LD is low achievement. Some of the authorities in the field refer to this aspect as underachievement and stated that there was considerable evidence which supports the theory that there is no difference between learning disabilities and
underachievement (Coles 1987; Sigmon 1989; Yesseldyke et al. 1982; Epps et al. 1985; McLoughlin and Netick 1983).

Rimm (1986) and Horn and O’Donnell (1984) however, do not necessarily agree. Rimm views the ‘symptoms’ between a disability and dependent manipulations as different problems whereas Horn and O’Donnell believe that:

\[
\text{...low achievement is consistent with the notion that low achievers are a more heterogeneous group of children in terms of etiology than are LD children. (p1116)}
\]

but Sigmon (1989) states that

\[
\text{Problem students of all types are easily labelled LD. (p299)}
\]

Adelman and Taylor (1986) state that

\[
\text{...any definition that attempts to differentiate learning disabilities from underachievement runs into very basic difficulties related to operationalizing, and assessing specific criteria. (p514)}
\]

Frankenberger and Fronzaglio (1991) suggest that:

\[
\text{...a trend is emerging to limit the LD label to those children who demonstrate normal intelligence and significant discrepancies between ability and achievement. In addition, there seems to be a trend to omit the neurological component of the federal definition from state definitions of LD. (p500)}
\]

Clearly some form of definition that is relative to LD is emerging.

2.6.3 Commonalities of Definition Components

The following criteria are the major and most common identifiers of learning disabilities:

a) there is a substantial discrepancy, which can be between one and three years, between the level of academic achievement and intellectual aptitude;

b) intellectual aptitude should fall within the normal range on an intelligence test (Torgesen 1977) and

c) the student functions normally in other areas.
In summary, efforts that have been applied to the search for a definition have been thwarted, by the diverse beliefs of the wide variety of participants, by the lack of a clear understanding of the specific identifiers of the problem which would prevent confusion with another similar but unrelated problem and by the expectations held by the community at large of what the term 'achievement' really means (McLeod 1983). It is also possible that we do not know enough about the disorder yet to be able to define it.

2.6.4 Impact of the Definition Dispute on This Study

It is obvious that much energy and thought has been involved in the LD community's search for a suitable definition. In order to provide some guidelines for the identification of the subjects of this study, consideration of all aspects of the definitions dispute and search was necessary. Based on the literature, the classification criteria for identification were derived so that the teachers had some standard to use in their selection of students for this study. The criteria used are found in Chapter 3.

2.7 Theories That Circumscribe Learning Disabilities

In the preceding sections the definition problem has been reviewed. The major difficulty in defining LD lies in the lack of consensus on its manifestations, themselves consequences of the underlying aetiology of LD, any one theory of which is lacking in universal support. Aetiology has become grounded in a variety of theories. Having perused the overview of the history of theories and paradigms that represent a substantial amount of the learning disabilities literature, it is necessary to review in more detail theory and paradigm proponents in the LD community.

The Research to date has primarily been based on the premise that the learning disabilities problem is intrinsically founded in the student (Cruickshank 1983, 1981; McLoughlin & Netick 1983; Torgesen 1986; Rourke 1989; Adelman & Taylor 1986; Galaburda 1989; A Position Paper of the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities 1987). This concept founded in the initial theories of Orton (Coles 1987; Torgesen 1986; Wong 1979a; Obrzut and Boliek 1986; Vellutino 1987) has for four decades directed research. Some argue that the results have been inconclusive due
primarily to methodological imperfections (Coles 1987; Obrzut Boliek, 1986; Hall and Humphreys 1982).

The question remains as to what theory is formulating the analysis of the components constituting the definition. This brings to the fore a problem which forms the very basis of the community’s beliefs.

Wong (1979a) presented a review of theory dominating the 1960s. Included in this review were criticisms of these theories from conceptual and methodological viewpoints. Part II of Wong’s (1979b) paper presents a variety of alternative concepts to the learning and reading disabilities arenas. She reviews the following models: Adelman’s Interactional Model; Senf’s Information-Integration Theory; Satz and Van Nostrand’s (1973) Theory; Ross’s Theory of Developmental Delay in Selective Attention; Vellutino’s Verbal Deficit Hypothesis of Reading Disability; Torgesen’s Inactive Learner Theory and Weiner and Cromer’s (1967) Hierarchical Model. Since these theories were in vogue approximately 20 to 25 years ago and have since fallen out of favour, their interest is primarily historical.

In 1983, Tucker, Stevens, and Yesseldyke surveyed the ‘leaders’ in the LD field, and concluded that these experts, although they do not have direct contact with the children with learning disabilities, do, ipso facto, provide guidance to those who do. Further, they have a direct input into government policy and therefore are likely to be provided with funds.

There appears to be three major camps into which the theorists fit; those who propose that LD is a consequence of neurological dysfunction, those who believe factors in the environment such as social, economic and cultural conditions are responsible for LD (Coles 1989), and those who support a combination of the two manifest in LD McLoughlin and Netick (1983).

Those who have adopted the neurological approach believe that the learning problems of the child are intrinsically based (Kirk and Gallagher 1985; Cruickshank 1981) permitting the responsibility to be placed directly on the child and relieving the educational authorities and parents of responsibility. Until recently, the impetus for this philosophy has been primarily derived from the medical profession or theorists who, for a variety of reasons, have chosen to support this philosophy.
Cruickshank (1983) states that

*No learning can take place without the nervous system being involved,* (p28)

Cruickshank also proposes that emotions, memory, sensations and perceptions have a neurological base. He states that *'learning is conditioning'* necessarily involving the nervous system; further, that without an adequate definition of the problem, diagnosis is useless. Seigel (1988) however, disagrees with Cruickshank in his belief that all learning is connected to the nervous system. She declares that the procedures for associating certain cognitive processes with *'brain functioning'* are basically extemporaneous.

Learning disabilities/difficulties are inextricably linked to reading difficulties. Although some (Fisk and Rourke 1983; Rourke 1985, both cited in Rourke 1989) propose they are different entities, without a firm definition, it is difficult to evaluate the veracity of this statement. The child who has been identified as LD has for the most part encountered difficulties and failures in academic endeavours from an early stage in school and the *'Matthew Effect'* described by Stanovich (1986) seems to come into effect. This theory proposes that when students start encountering difficulties in reading for example, then they will begin to fall further and further behind as those who are experiencing success in reading improve rapidly.

However, the problem of developing theory without first agreeing on definitions has seriously impeded directed progressive thought in LD. This has resulted in mounting frustration by the LD community.

The direction of research has not followed the interactivity theory proposed by Coles (1987) in *The Learning Mystique,* which supports the extrinsic philosophy. It could be argued that if the child responds in an adverse manner to conditions in the environment, then he has internalised the external impact and thus the problem presents as an emotional/ psychologically intrinsic cause to the learning disabilities condition. Coles defines the interactivity theory by stating that:

*An interactivity theory of LD combines the concepts interaction and activity.*

*Interaction emphasizes process, relationships, and transformations, but insufficiently denotes activity. Activity emphasizes events and active persons,*

*including the makeup of person (such as neurology, language and reading*
abilities, motivation) but insufficiently denotes interaction. Interactivity, in combining the concepts, denotes the numerous and complex activities and interactions that comprise the creation, sustenance, remediation, and prevention of learning disabilities. (Coles 1987 p140)

He summarises declaring:

...a basic assumption of the theory is that broad social, economic, political, and cultural influences, which are not always immediately apparent, are fundamental to the creation or prevention of LD. (p140)

This new concept was slow to be accepted by some researchers. Mann (1989) criticised this idea by suggesting that 'rate of maturation' and 'genetic endowment' as well as 'left hemisphere pathologies' are really the essence of the language deficiency problem.

Rourke (1989) chose to respond to the new concept emotionally by declaring that:

At worst, [the concept proposed by Coles] it is an example of everything that is wrong with allowing faith in a particular monolithic world-view to encourage sweeping, insulting generalizations regarding the work of serious devoted women and men who take on the arduous task of systematic hypothesis-testing in this difficult area. (p275)

Miller (1990) however, states that Coles has shown

...that almost never is the LD diagnosis scientifically justified. (p86)

Miller suggests that if Coles is correct, then the scientific diagnosis would likely occur in only less than one per cent of the total school population. Miller points out that if Coles is proven correct in his hypothesis, then the funding now being granted for research into the neurological explanation of learning disabilities would no longer be awarded and that the funds allocated for present research would likely be withdrawn. Further, Miller suggests that

There would also be greater interest in intervention and less interest in diagnosis.

(p86)

Stanovich (1989) supports Coles who stresses that neurological differences do not necessarily indicate neurological dysfunction. He declares that the field of learning
disabilities is inundated with ‘fads and pseudoscientific beliefs’ and that Coles has eliminated some of the confusion.

Stanovich declares that

...a child with LD must have a type of problem (however it is caused) that leads him or her to read poorly, but to do relatively well on most of the tasks that are on an omnibus IQ test such as the Wechsler. (p288)

Moreover, Stanovich states that a clear delineation between cognitive development and LD must be made, citing also that there are multiple causes for learning disabilities and that there is not just one cause as is proposed by many theorists.

2.7.1 Literacy/Numeracy: The Relationship with Learning Disabilities

While the interest in the paradigms and the theories of literacy are intellectually challenging and of interest, apart from those of the students with difficulties in learning due to intellectual delay or other condition, the most important aspect in the learning disabilities field is the fact that the LD students all encounter trouble with reading and occasionally with mathematics.

According to Hartley, Australian Institute of Family Studies, Department of Employment, Education and Training (1989) the National Consultative Council for International Literacy Year’s, 1990 definition states that:

Literacy involves the integration of listening, speaking, reading, writing and critical thinking; it incorporates numeracy. It includes the cultural knowledge which enables a speaker, writer or reader to recognise and use language appropriate to different situations. (p4)

Many in the learning disabilities field and some whose expertise lies in the literacy arena, suggest that there is little difference between LD and reading disability (Johnson et al. 1983). As previously noted, there are some researchers who believe that underachiever syndrome is also grouped in with learning disabilities and reading disability. Ysseldyke et al. (1982) found that there was no psychometric differences in the performance of the two groups. This confusion seems to arise through the lack of explicit definitions within each concept. Johnson et al. (1983) related that there was not
a clear dichotomy between reading and learning disabilities and from the findings of Yesseldyke et al. (1982) this seems to apply to the underachievers as well.

2.7.2 Two Fundamental Theories on Teaching and Learning

There are two fundamental theories regarding the approach to teaching and learning as they basically affect reading. The constructivist theory (Poplin 1988b; Cummins 1984; Reid 1988) supports the holistic/whole language approach (Holdaway 1979; Grobecker 1996; Cambourne 1979, 1980, 1984) whereas the reductionist viewpoint (Kimball and Heron 1988) proposes the behaviourist theory which advocates direct instruction (Fields 1986; Moore 1986; Carnine et al. 1990) for the acquisition of reading skills. By the term constructivist, the implications that

...there are many possible plausible explanations which can be constructed to explain phenomena and that often we have to construct our own tools for doing this. (Cambourne 1996 p26)

However,

‘An objectivist assumes that instruction is fundamentally a process of giving students plans, principles and strategies and insisting that they practice applying them until they are mastered.’ (Cambourne 1996 p26)

Without embarking on the various arguments that are presented by the supporters of each theory suffice it to say that this area is complex and that like the conundrum of a learning disabilities definition, there does not appear to be a commonality in which all can agree. There is even less consensus regarding LD teaching and learning strategies. Frequently the difficulties are exacerbated by the educational and political views of the times.

Vogel (1990) concludes from her review of the literature that those children identified as learning disabled or reading disabled or other common categorisations, are thus labelled by a ‘system’ which hence identifies the population for the LD research. Although unclear how a generalisation should be limited to a sub population, she does stipulate that generalisations drawn from research should be considered for only that specific portion of the population because the findings may reflect bias. It is
possible that she holds this opinion from the tenuous identification methods used by the various systems.

In conclusion, it is possible that this controversy is an extension of the lack of agreement throughout education on the definition of LD, the LD theories and the strategies used in the acquisition of literacy processes.

2.7.3 Implications and Reflections of Theory Dispute on This Study

When the fundamental beliefs of the major contributors to a philosophy cannot reach a consensus, the impact reflects on every facet of the discipline. This study set out to add to the body of knowledge upon which the learning disability community depends. It is vital for a complete understanding of learning disabilities to review the literature and the research that is concerned with the subject. The influence that each contribution has made is essential for the whole and affects each piece of work that pertains to the field. Teachers and parents alike are influenced by the various outcomes as they too search for answers and knowledge.

2.8 Beliefs, Expectations, Family Interactions & Academic Results

Having investigated some of the problems that have occurred in the development of the learning disabilities milieu, other areas that appear to have some influence on the situation are a person's belief system and family interaction and relationships in conjunction with their impact on academic achievement. It has been found that held beliefs influence the actions and reactions of the individual and can have a major impact on the reactions of others.

Gaddes (1983) states

...a belief is a personal preference based on intellectual recognition and emotional satisfactions.... (p513)

Cambourne (1991) states that

Expectations are subtle and powerful coercers of behaviour. (p24)

He also declares that the expectations of significant others can have a major influence on the behaviour of the child and that the child usually conforms to those expectations whether they be in support of positive or non-positive results. The expectations held
by teachers are based on their beliefs and in the following section some research into the effects these beliefs have on the student will be explored.

**2.8.1 Teacher Beliefs**

Mercer and Mercer (1993) explain that teachers form opinions about students which evolve into the teachers’ expectations. These expectations then influence the performance of the student and could have adverse effects on the academic and social development of that student. This concept was disclosed in the book of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) *Pygmalion in the Classroom*. In their longitudinal study, those children to whom the teacher showed positive reactions and expected high academic performance responded in a like manner on examinations. Mercer and Mercer (1993) also found that if the teacher expects poor academic performance and disruptive behaviour, then the student will likely comply.

Rosenthal (1973) showed both with rats and intellectually disabled children, that the results of the tests were influenced by the experimenter’s expectations. When a child was expected to do well at any task then those expectations were generally validated. In a series of carefully implemented double-blind experiments, Rosenthal showed that if the rats were expected to behave in a certain way then there were indications that these expectancies were met. Rosenthal concluded that:

> If a child is to show intellectual gain it seems to be better for his real or perceived intellectual vitality and for his real or perceived mental health if his teacher has been expecting him to grow intellectually. (p115)

Research conducted by Rosenthal showed that the length of time for the improvement using positive teacher expectations was as short as two months. Palardy (1973) confirmed Rosenthal’s results in his research into teacher’s beliefs on boys’ achievement in reading.

Brophy and Good (1970) state that the Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) study displayed limited substantiation in the methodological process preventing the total acceptance of their findings. The Brophy and Good study did substantiate the fact that teachers impart, albeit subconsciously, through words and actions, their expectations of students’ performance, Rolison and Medway (1985) found that
and Grolnick and Ryan (1990) suggested that teachers regarded students who were labelled LD as problematic.

Minner (1990) states that teachers hold biases (Kavale 1991) obtained from their training and their experience amongst other sources and thus stereotype children. Kavel (1991) found through his survey of LD teachers in Iowa, USA, that these teachers seemed to hold some very strong ingrained beliefs which were not subsequently upheld in the rest of the data. Through the survey responses, the teachers assessed that the primary cause of learning disabilities was neurological in its source, however, that belief was not reflected in the remediation and teaching strategies employed.

2.8.1.1 A Shift in the Source of the Problem

Conway (1989) also found that teachers tend to attribute academic difficulties to the child’s home life. When required to focus on school life, the teachers indicated that the problems stemmed from either a previous school or the child’s experience with another teacher. She concluded that teachers ascribed the child’s academic difficulties to an intrinsic source rather than investigating possible curriculum inadequacies or other such deficits in the system. She also indicated that the various documents such as the Rampton Report (1981) are based on theories that are fundamentally flawed and unsubstantiated. These writings encourage teachers to think of the deficits in and around the child rather than viewing the problem from a considered academic responsibility viewpoint. Smith (1991) also supports this finding indicating that teachers are familiar with the terminology used in the literature but established their own theories and beliefs regarding teaching and child development.

Thurlow and Yesseldyke (1982) in their survey of, 127 LD teachers from 36 states as well as The District of Columbia and Canada, also found that teachers attributed the source of the learning disabilities problem to intrinsic factors within the child. However, 18% of their population considered that at least part of the problem could be attributed to the
Cohon (1971) suggests that the major problem with a student not acquiring the reading skill is due to the fact that they suffer from dyspedagogia or in other words poor teaching. He states that most children will learn to read regardless of the methodology used by the teacher but there exists students who really need to have in-depth exposure to letters and words. However, most teachers only provide the superficial presentations.

2.8.1.2 Teachers' Reactions

Teachers, having once formed their beliefs and established their expectations for the learning disabled students, proceed to externalise these views. Boersma and Chapman (1982) concluded that teachers interact less frequently, and exhibit more negative reactions to the student labelled LD than they do non-labelled students (Gottlieb et al. 1983). They further propose that if teachers had higher expectations for these students then there would be a noticeable improvement in the students' achievements supporting the findings of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968).

Similarly, Siperstein and Goding (1985) also found that teachers behaved differently towards learning disabled students than they did to non-learning disabled students. They concluded from their study that teachers paid more attention to LD students but that attention was usually negative and non-supportive, that the teachers acted on negative expectations and perceptions and further, that teachers' responses were elicited more by the label of LD than by the children's actual behaviour.

Siperstein and Goding (1985) also found that the teachers expected LD students to exhibit a wide range of negative behaviour and attempted to prevent this behaviour through negative non-supportive attention even though the students did not display any behaviour different from others in class as ascertained by the research observations. However, teachers were seen by the non-labelled students in the class as treating the low achievers differently from those who experienced success.

These reactions could be the result of the underlying confusion that teachers generally sustain as part of their beliefs in their interactions with learning disabled students. Anderson and Coleman (1985) found that there were well defined deficiencies in the
surveyed teachers conception of the basic fundamental properties that are used in identification of LD. It is these same teachers who are asked to identify and provide service for the LD students and the results strongly indicated that these teachers were ignorant of what constituted a learning disability, yet it was their perceptions and beliefs about the student that can have more influence than an objective test result at the time of referral.

2.8.1.3 Students’ Reactions to Teachers

Conversely, Larking and Hunter (1985) found that students learned to respond to their teachers relative to their perceived expectations. These authors suggest that teachers make a difference in the manner in which children function in different reading processes. This dedication of the students to respond to the teacher appears to have a detrimental impact. Horne (1982) found, in her review of the literature, that the LD students are rated as low status (Siperstein and Goding 1985) by the child’s parents, teacher and peers and, as a consequence, this attitude affects the development and emotional growth of the student. Horne’s review suggests that LD children are rated lower than mentally retarded and physically handicapped even by teachers who were specialising in the field.

Horne’s findings (1982) suggest that peers tended to exclude the LD students unless they held other qualities such as physical attractiveness or were adept at sports, and this illusion was supported by Siperstein and Goding (1985) who found that LD labelled students were either rejected or isolated by their peers.

2.8.1.4 Variety of Teachers’ Beliefs

Pajares (1992) investigated the literature on teacher beliefs and determined that all teachers hold a mixture of beliefs on a wide variety of topics from their work, students, subject matter and their responsibilities. These topics he grouped under the heading of teacher beliefs which influence how the teacher acts and perceives events which in turn reflect and support those beliefs. He suggests that these beliefs once established do not usually change and thus serve to perpetuate the problem.

Upon investigating the differences between learning disabilities and hyperactive behaviour, Margalit and Almougy (1991) found that those students who were labelled learning disabled were rated by their teachers as
They propose that this dependence could be attributable to anxiety, their accumulated failures and their subsequent dependence on assistance.

Lubinski (1994) in her study of mathematics teaching in school, claims that teachers teach according to their beliefs and knowledge and from these aspects decisions are made as to what and how lessons are taught. She found that whatever a teacher believed about a student's capabilities affects the decisions that the teacher makes about the learning environment. She states that if the teacher knows how the child learns and what strategies he is likely to use in solving problems, then the instructional aspects will be geared to the student's skills. Lubinski purports that the teacher beliefs are about teaching and not about learning and it is that factor which affects the environment of the classroom.

Rist (1970) reported an observational study of classes of ghetto children from Kindergarten through to Year 2. In Kindergarten, the teacher separated the children into groups which she assessed to be their social class placement. It was observed that the impact of this grouping was two-fold. The teacher, through various acts and attitudes, actively paid more attention to those children whom she had selected and who met the criteria she expected: clean clothes, not living in a welfare supported home, not having older siblings who had been disruptive, and generally coming from a well structured family. These students received the major portion of her attention and were placed in positions in the classroom in close proximity to her. The other students realised that they were given a lower status as did the students who were selected by the teacher as high status. By the end of Year 2, the students who had been placed in the lower status groups in the Kindergarten class were well established as lower status by their peers and teachers.

This was an important area in which to investigate the literature because of the teachers' input in this study. They evaluated and made judgements on the subjects involved and the beliefs held by these teachers are supported by the literature.
2.8.2 Parent Beliefs

Parents’ values and the family environment play an influential role in the overall development, values and ultimate success/non-success of the child. Research has investigated various beliefs held by parents of learning disabled students that illuminates certain hidden influences underlying the learning disabilities problem.

Some studies investigated aspects of parent and family functioning that portray the ultimate beliefs of the parents, who are not necessarily conscious of these beliefs and hence are unaware of the driving forces that perpetuate actions that influence the functioning of the child. Pollack (1985) found that in his research,

...the parents in the study were resistant to any explanations regarding their child’s difficulties that were not couched in terms of a diagnostic impression of learning disability and special educational remediation. (p489)

Further, he discovered that these parents were intent on having a diagnosis and hence the labelling, of learning disabilities placed on their child.

This would appear to enable the parents to provide to themselves and to others an excuse for their child’s academic inadequacies or perhaps to supply an avenue of non-blame for their inapt parenting skills.

Miletic (1986) surveyed, using Gordon’s Survey of Interpersonal Values (1960) 136 parents of learning disabled students and non-learning disabled students. This survey determined the personality and social aspects of a person from which conclusions were drawn on six sub-scales: Support, Conformity, Recognition, Independence, Benevolence and Leadership.

The results indicated that both mothers and fathers of LD students lacked self-confidence and self-esteem which the authors declared that problems with identification difficulties if interpreted on a psychoanalytical basis were strong indications of ‘childish dependency on parental figures’. These parents avoided social and relational demands but they were concerned with the reactions of others especially for approval. The fathers particularly displayed tendencies toward non-conformity approaches, yet both parents sought ‘strong valorisation of authority’.
Lyytinen et al. (1994) found that children with LD in their study did not co-operate with their mothers during a teaching session as much as the non-learning disabled students.

2.8.2.1 Influence of Dysfunctional Families

In an investigation relating to the impact these views have on a child, Michaels and Lewandowski (1990) found that, when compared between families of LD boys and families of non-LD boys, there was greater dysfunction in families of the LD boys than in the control group.

Green (1990) suggests that the greater dysfunction is due to a lack of well organised communication within the family and that the family's methods of communication are such that the family environment influences the mental and emotional development of the child. He proposes that since

\[ \ldots \text{"reality" frequently is ambiguous and the nature of language ofttimes, imprecise - there is much room for blurred meaning.} \] (p145)

Therefore students may become confused to such an extent that they develop an incapacity to function adequately in required cognitive exercises. In a previous study, Green indicated that he and his colleagues discovered that 87 per cent of the parents who had learning disabled children were lacking in adequate communication skills.

Amerikaner and Omizo (1984) concluded from their study that the family with a learning disabled child interacts similarly to those with emotionally disturbed children and significantly differently from families with non-learning disabled children. Their findings were based on a questionnaire which assessed

\[ \ldots \text{perceptions of family system functioning by the parents.} \] (p541)

This primarily evaluated on an individual basis, the adaptability and cohesion of the family unit.

2.8.2.2 The Social-Emotional Connection

Margalit and Almougy (1991) concluded that there is a connection between social-emotional and familial aspects in the learning disabled child which may represent a link between the emotional and cognitive aspects of these students. These authors
state that families in which there is a learning disabled child display higher levels of conflict between family members. However, they note that the family climate is interactive and thus the views and beliefs of the family are challenged and members are continuously required to change in response to the child’s reactions and behaviour to this conflict. These families, it was found, place less emphasis on intellectual pursuits or recreational activities, stress the importance of attainment and maintain a religious and moralistic direction.

It has been found that the responsibility for the cognitive development of the child lies with the mother (Coles 1987) where the mother plays a significant role in the family interactions and in the development of her children. Margalit and Almougy (1991) in their investigation of learning disabled students and hyperactive behaviour suggest that the mothers of the students with LD indicated that there was more conflict in their families and provided fewer opportunities for their children in intellectual and recreational activities.

2.8.2.3 Level of Education of Family

It was found that mothers of the learning disabled students had lower educational levels than did the mothers of the non-learning disabled students who were labelled as having behaviour problems.

A paediatrician in Paris, Melekian (1990) conducted a retrospective study of 249 children who had been classified as severe dyslexics. The study reviewed previous research from which he extracted data on parent’s age, sibship size, birth order and socio-economic status (SES). The data indicated that the parental age, marital status and parental age at the birth of the child were not significant in their affect on dyslexia. He does state, however, that,

> On clinical grounds, parental discord remains a major cause of insecurity and emotional disturbance, and may add to the already existing difficulties of those with dyslexia. (p388)

Data are provided on birth order which indicated that a large proportion of the students came from those later born into large sibships (Margalit, Almougy, 1991).

Of significance to Melekian was the educational level of the mothers and the type of occupation in which they worked. It was noted that these occupations held by the
mothers fell within the lower echelons of the workforce with a prevalence for unskilled and domestic work. The study indicated that the SES of the family can be an influencing factor for children predisposed to learning problems. This, he says, reflects the low educational levels held by both mothers working outside the home as well as those solely in the home and thus, may have a major impact on the child’s achievements. (Michaels and Lewandowski 1990). Their hypothesis presented suggests that the low levels of education and thus the lack of motivation and ambition for academic success prevent the mothers providing scholastic help and support to their child.

Hewison and Tizard (1980) indicated that the most important factor associated with the acquisition of reading was the coaching and encouragement from the mother by listening to her child read. Keshian (1973) states that another major influence in the acquisition of reading skills is the formal education of the parents relating a defined correlation between the two factors.

2.8.2.4 Responsibility for Literacy

Having interviewed parents with LD children, Waggoner and Wilgosh (1990) reported that some parents stated that the responsibility for the education of their children should be left to the teachers and that they as parents should not be expected to suggest educational strategies to the teachers and other educators. Parents did not enjoy helping their child with their homework and described some of the teachers as supportive and flexible while others were uncooperative, inflexible and ignorant about LD problems.

Many parents are ignorant of their child’s ability to read. This is partially due in some cases where the parents themselves are lacking in literacy skills. O’Sullivan (1992) found that parents from low income families believed that their children were relatively successful in school and the children’s beliefs of their skill and ability were consistent with those of their parents. The parents were basing their beliefs on teacher awarded reading levels and these assigned grades influenced the parents optimistically. O’Sullivan (1992) found that the students did not become aware of their true reading ability until Year 9 when their achievement levels actually influenced their beliefs.
2.8.2.5 Impact of Beliefs

Feagans, Merriwether and Haldane (1991) postulated that if children did not fit the expectations and demands of the parents then they would not achieve at school and further that they would display unacceptable behaviour. It was found that all children who met the expectations of their parents in accordance with fitting into the home environment did well in their academic work, especially reading comprehension. Mothers who held specific expectations and beliefs when their child was at the age of 6 or 7 had a long range input and these beliefs and expectations affected the child’s performance and achievement at age 12.

2.8.2.6 Positive and Negative Beliefs of Mothers

Pearl and Bryan (1982) chose for their study the mothers of students who had been selected by their child’s teacher who used the criteria that the child in the class was encountering difficulty in reading, verbal skills and following directions. The results of the study indicated that mothers view their child’s successes less positively, their failures more negatively and that these successes were linked to good fortune while their child’s failures were linked to ability. The mother’s evaluation of the child is mirrored by the child about him. The mothers of LD children appeared to lack confidence in their own ability to be successful in their role at home and these women tended to be sensitive to their children’s lack of self-confidence but were in fact unsure of either their own ability or that of their child. This may indicate that the parent perpetuates the lack of self-confidence in the child almost in order to make themselves feel better or perhaps they enjoy the dependence that the situation creates.

Humphries and Bauman (1980) found that mothers of LD students tended to be more strict than mothers of non-learning disabled students, they were not as hostile and they did not externalise their own animosity, anger and rejection on the children. They accepted their children as they were and appeared to accept their maternal role. These authors state that

A mother’s previous learning and temperament are powerful factors influencing her child-rearing attitudes, which shape the behaviour of her child. (p56)
They further state that this need for control and structure by the mothers of LD students is perceived to be necessary when they are coping with disorganisation, frustration and poor attention.

Tollison, Palmer and Stowe (1987) concluded that mothers of LD students had lower expectations for their child’s performance standards than did mothers of non-learning disabled students. The mothers of LD students demonstrated more negative non-verbal behaviour when trying to teach their child a concept than did the mother of non-LD children. This was interpreted by the researchers as disappointment with their LD child. In this study, the mothers of LD students were randomly informed of the child’s achievement ability which subsequently affected the perception held by the mother in determining the cause of the failure. However, the mothers of both the LD and non-LD students

...perceived the children’s success as due to the presence of effort while their children’s failure was not due to lack of effort. (p91)

2.8.2.7 Responsibility and Family Climate

The family environment and the responsibilities placed on the child in the home is an influential determinant of the child’s development especially from a social skills aspect. Freund and Elardo (1978) concluded from their study that children whose mothers have encouraged them to take on the responsibility for various chores in the house have developed exceptional social skills.

Anxiety plays a major role in the family climate and creates conflict within the family unit. Margalit and Heiman (1986) found that the parents of learning disabled children proclaimed to have higher levels of anxiety than did parents of non-learning disabled children. Further, the parents of LD children considered the climate within the family to be more regulated, inflexible and controlled compared to that of non-disabled families. Through this anxious and rigid atmosphere, the mothers perceive the disallowance of independent thinking, independence and the suppression of feelings for all family members. Both the control group and the experimental group of fathers were concerned with interpersonal conflicts but only the LD group connected this concern to the anxiety that prevailed in the family.
In his investigation into the impact that a learning disabled child has on the family, Falik (1995) interviewed a number of parents of children who had been identified with a learning disability. The paper outlines various types of family interactions and reactions that help the individual members cope with the problems that the child is experiencing. He found that in certain cases the family encourages a problem through the personal needs of the parent who has a propensity to feel needed, in others, the family denies the existence of the problem. The existence of the problem is perceived as a threat to the self-esteem of the family. Their sense of helplessness in the situation hence blocks the recognition of the problem (Pearl and Bryan 1982).

Harry (1992) interviewed a number of Puerto Rican parents whose children were identified as learning disabled and found the majority of these parents stated that

\[\ldots their\ children\ were\ fine\ until\ they\ started\ school. \] (p162)

This situation is primarily due to cultural and language differences where the children from non-English speaking backgrounds were either placed in special education classrooms necessitating removal from their home schools to another area or were held back in their grade. This, some of the parents declared, has been detrimental to their child’s advancement.

The disparate values held by different levels of society can produce reactions that are not conducive to learning. Lavine and Havighurst (1984) propose that the different social classes present tendencies to various types of food. They state that lower SES groups in the United States depend heavily on ‘junk food’ which they declare may play a major part in producing high levels of activity not conducive to learning in classrooms. Further, these authors propose that the absence of father, large size of family, and possibly malnutrition may contribute to the generally below average intellectual development of the child from a lower SES background which may produce a sub-optimal academic performance.

The placement of responsibility is difficult and the multifarious theories magnify the problem. Lewis and Lawrence-Patterson (1989) investigated the level of control LD individuals had over their lives. This concept refers to the manner in which a person controls or has influence over events in their lives. This control can be centralised in either internal or external control. Internal control refers to the beliefs of the individual
that their own behaviour is the controlling factor of the situation or circumstance. Conversely, the locus of external control consigns responsibility to forces outside the individual such as fate, luck, or actions of others (Chapman and Boersma 1979). They found that children with learning difficulties were more externally oriented especially regarding success than non-learning disabled children. They also found that teachers tended to credit these LD children with more internal responsibility for successes than did the child but there was not a significant difference between the parents' perceptions and that of their child.

2.8.2.8 Mothers' Expectations

Chapman and Boersma (1979) also investigated mothers' reactions to their children, with emphasis on the academic expectations the mothers held for their children. The researchers considered in their study the effect of internal and external control on academic achievement in investigating the relationship between locus of control and learning vis-à-vis achievement demands and effort furnished by the students. They concluded that there is an unlikelihood of success if the students do not associate the relationship between the two aspects of effort and learning. The results of this study indicated that learning disabled students give the responsibility for school success to external sources and not to their own efforts. This external locus of control viewpoint remained with the children to at least Year 6. However, when they view their failure, they respond as the non-learning disabled children by assuming the responsibility for their non-success.

Mothers of non-LD students gave more positive reactions than did mothers of LD students to the students' school behaviour and the LD mothers' expectations of their child's successes were less than those of the mothers of non LD students. The authors propose that this may reflect the mothers' disappointment in the child's progress thereby resulting in diminished encouragement, reinforcing the child's already low estimation of his ability and self esteem.

In a similar study to that of Chapman and Boersma (1979) Heibert, Wong and Hunter (1982) investigated academic self-concept and expectations. They were also interested in evaluating the teacher and parent expectations for the success of the learning disabled students. Involving students of high school level, teachers and their parents, these authors found that the students held low self-concepts and furthermore their
expectations for a successful academic future were negative. These students’ views were in close agreement to the opinions held by their teachers and parents. In addition, the teachers viewed the learning disabled students as displaying more socially unacceptable behaviour than their non-learning disabled peers.

2.8.2.9 The Effect on the Study

Since the families, primarily the mothers, were included in the study it is important to realise the relationships of the mothers’ education and attitudes towards the children. It is evident from the research that ample consideration should be given to the influence of teachers, family relationships, especially those of the mothers, and the general family expectations of the child. The impact of the caregivers’ beliefs and expectations appear to play a very important role in the student’s approach to literacy.

2.8.3 Students

The students themselves hold beliefs which can adversely affect their learning and these beliefs can be viably related to their self-concept. How students view their academic successes and failures and further how students perceive themselves forms the basis for their beliefs. As can be seen from the literature, parent and teacher beliefs impact on the student and can increase or curtail the LD problem and its attributes.

McLoughlin et al. (1987) explored, using a questionnaire to which 80 paired students and parents responded, both students’ and parents’ perception of the concept of learning disabilities, present performance, social skills and problem-solving ability. The results indicated that the LD students’ parents reported greater adverse effects on the academic achievements than did adolescents. The parents viewed the disability as having a greater affect on performance than the students. The research also considered aspects of occupational status and social status as well as problem solving skills. It was found that the survey students who had left school were employed in jobs that were skilled labour based but both the adolescent and the parent were dissatisfied with the jobs.

From a social status viewpoint, the students indicated that they had a number of friends but just a few close friends. The parents, however, stated that their children had only a few close friends. In the area of problem solving these authors, McLoughlin et al. (1987) report that again there was a discrepancy in the reports of the students.
their parents. The students indicated that they solved their own problems but the parents reported that the student depended on others for help in problem solving. Generally, students perceive themselves as being capable of making decisions for themselves and that they were not socially isolated but preferred to do things with just a few of their friends.

2.8.3.1 **Self-Concept/ Self-Image**

Raviv and Stone (1991) investigated the differences in self concept, parents perception and the time and severity of the diagnosis. Furthermore, they divided the population of learning disabled students into two separate groups; those that were diagnosed before Year 2 and those that were identified after that grade. They found the self-image of students with learning difficulties that were identified before Year 2 was more negative than that of those identified later.

The interspersion in the literature of various terms create a need for some explicitness in their meaning. When discussing that various factors of self impression, the explications provided by Marshall (1989)were that

> Self-concept is the perceptions, feeling, and attitudes that a person has about himself or herself. (p45)

She declares that terms 'self-concept' and 'self-image' are interchangeable, however, the latter tends to imply a global conception of self. The concept is broken down into a variety of parts. Self-esteem/self-worth represents the evaluations one has of one's self, i.e. the values we hold of our own worth. Notwithstanding, self-concept can also refer to the physical characteristics, gender and ethnic identity to which we adhere as well as the psychological inclinations to which we respond.

Marshall (1989) states that self-esteem is influenced by others and how they value our qualities. Further she proclaims that our perceived competence displays to ourselves our ability for success at task capabilities. As children perceive themselves as growing in competence, they tend to become aware of the fact that they may be the controlling agent of their environment. The level of the child's cognitive development influences the self-concept development and
Self-esteem develops when children possess culturally valued traits and feels competent. (p46)

Marshall further discusses the developmental characteristics of primary school children and states that young children are capable of making comparisons between themselves and their classmates in respect to ability and they are able to think *a posteriori* using comparison with others.

This leads to their growing awareness of what adults think of them and later what their peers think of them. She states that self-concept develops within a social context and that the environment that the caregivers provide impacts on the development of the self-concept. Teachers, depending on their teaching style, and parents, influence the development or lack thereof of the child’s self-confidence. Self-concept plays an important role in the performance of the child socially and academically. Burka (1983) states that

*Learning is such an important part of one’s self-esteem during the school-age years....* (p294)

Juhasz (1989) conducted a qualitative investigation on the impact of significant others on self-esteem. She declares that self-esteem is determined through feedback and the reactions of those significant others; significant others being people whose individual values are similar to their own.

Individual values form the basis for competence. How one perceives the reactions to another as well as self-evaluation gives one the basis on which to evaluate that

*Self-confidence is a by product of competence...* (p582)

and affects the self-esteem of the individual which in turn affects performance. She declares that power is

*... one’s ability to influence and control others’* (p582)

but those others have to show acceptance, attention and affection if the self is to perceive itself to be important.

Findings from the Juhasz study indicated that the rating the importance of significant others by Years 5 and 6 was as follows; 1. Mother, 2. Father, 3. Siblings, 4. Friend, 5.
other relative. This order changed in the university freshman group. They placed equal importance on friends and family.

Heyman (1990) also investigated self-concept in her study of 87 primary school children in New York City; the implications of

\[\text{...whether self-perception of a learning disability was related significantly to the child's academic self-concept and to general self-esteem. (p472)}\]

was the purpose of her research. The results of her study hypothesised that the self-perception held by LD children of the disability may affect their academic self-concept and their self-esteem.

2.8.3.2 Self-Esteem and Education

Educators and those connected with the field have frequently expressed concern that the academic experiences of learning disabled children would adversely affect their self-concept and hence have long-range effects on their ability to adjust both in school and in society. Kistner et al. (1987) states:

\[\text{Studies assessing self-concept not specific to the academic domain have been almost evenly divided between those showing LD children to be more negative about themselves than their peers. (p37)}\] (Rosenthal, 1973; Carroll, Friedrich and Hund 1984; Smith and Nagle 1995; Saracoglu et al. 1989; Morrison 1985) \[\text{...and those that did not (Winne et al. 1982; Grolnick and Ryan 1990). (p37)}\]

Parents and teachers also play an important role in the formulation of student self-concept. Morrison (1985) states that Morrison, Forness and MacMillan (1983) conducted a study the results of which

\[\text{...indicated that teacher perceptions were significant contributors to students' evaluations of each other. (p33)}\]

These authors propose that this teacher response would likely impact on the student's self-perception which is ultimately reflected in the student's view of the world. There was a marked difference between the evaluations of the teachers that participated in this study. Regular classroom teachers rated learning disabled students in their classrooms lower than either other students or special education teachers on the
academic and behaviour factors (Pullis 1985). This variance in attitude could be attributed to a lack of training or there could have been a minimal difference in student comparisons available. Morrison (1985) also found that students who had many teachers with whom to interact, had more negative perceptions of themselves.

This supports the findings of Weinstein et al. (1982). These researchers found by examining the perceptions of students on the dissimilarity of teachers’ treatment of students, in a variety of classroom environments, that students themselves are able to discern differential treatment administered to high and low achieving students. They noted that the teachers gave more negative responses to the low achievers than they did to those students who were considered high achievers. Furthermore, there were student perceptions that there were higher expectations of achievement and more choices offered to the high level students than there were to those students who were functioning at the other end of the academic spectrum.

Glock (1972) considered the importance of the pupil-teacher relationship and the importance of the child’s self-concept. He declares that it is not the method of teaching or the approach taken by the teachers but rather the teachers themselves that effect the difference. (Gillham 1973)

He states that...

...the way a child thinks about himself that is most important in determining whether or not he can learn to be a good reader. His learning capacities often reflect whether he has a positive or negative self-concept. (Glock 1972, p98)

What the child thinks of himself sets the framework and defines the perimeter for his basic approach to all his actions, proposing that changing these thoughts once they are established is difficult. Glock believes that the difficulty in changing this once established self-image is due to the protection of the self-image that the student has adopted. Glock further states that poor self images/concepts can be changed, albeit with difficulty and that it is necessary for the teachers to ensure that they instil confidence in their students and that they portray to the child their faith in the child’s ability to succeed. If they do not address this problem, the child is likely never to be a success in school.
Further, Glock states that it is difficult to conceal emotion from children as adults indicate their thoughts and feelings in subtle ways and that the child can discern the difference between truth and falsehood.

2.8.4 Relevance to the Study

The fact that the teachers, parents and students in the study were greatly influenced by their individual beliefs underscored the importance of the inclusions of some of the research in this area. The discipline of learning disabilities is large and all facets of the 'condition' need to be investigated and considered as vital parts to the whole.

2.9 Other Factors that Interact with Learning Disabilities

2.9.1 Socialisation and Friends

Apart from and adjunct to the learning disabilities problem, students who have been identified with LD also develop emotional stress and adopt behaviour that is unacceptable (McConaughty and Ritter 1985). These authors found that LD boys aged 6-11 displayed a greater number of problems with behaviour and social competence than would ordinarily be expected of boys not classified as LD. The researchers also found that the parents of these boys concurred with the problems encountered by the boys. According to the parents, the boys had fewer friends and participated less in group activities than would be expected of boys in this age range.

Delinquency can be a problem according to Phil and McLarnon (1984) who propose that learning disabled students possessing lower self-satisfaction, less flexibility and social skills results in a higher rate of delinquency.

Murik (1994) found that boys who experience low self esteem encounter academic difficulties and lack some of the essential social skills and self control tend to be drawn towards delinquency and further

...feel comfortable in delinquent company... (p87)

This is of concern in the overall treatment of the learning disabilities problem.

Vaughn et al. (1993) conducted a longitudinal study which investigated students who were identified as learning disabled, low achievers (LA) and average/high achievers.
The expected results anticipated that LD students would exhibit less appropriate social skills and present with more inappropriate behaviours than their non-LD peers. However, the results indicated that the LD students and the low achieving group exhibited similar levels of social skills and behavioural problems. When compared to their high achieving peers, the LD and LA students did in fact present with a higher level of difficulties in social and behavioural actions (Tu-Kaspa, Bryan, 1995). Vaughn et al., suggest that these patterns of difficulties may be part of the early identification of the learning problems.

Gresham and Elliott (1989) reaffirmed the problems with definitions in their discussion of the inclusion of social skills as an additional identification facet for learning disabilities. The Interagency Committee on Learning Disabilities (ICLD) is a group comprised of 13 Federal agencies. Public Law 99-158 required the ICLD to investigate a variety of areas that were associated with LD. One of these areas was social skills deficits. This inclusion, they suggest, would increase the number of students identified with LD and further that there is little evidence that there is a connection between the functioning of the central nervous system (CNS) and social skills. Nevertheless, Gresham and Elliott question the inclusion of social skill dysfunction in the definition of learning disabilities even though many of the students identified as such display deficits in social skills and peer acceptance (Gresham, Reschly, 1986). They question the validity of the inclusion in the definition since it has not been proven conclusively that this aspect is specific to the learning disabilities problem (Gresham, 1993) just as Fuchs et al. (1985) found that there was a paucity of support for the use of performance instability as a identifying characteristic of learning disabilities.

Perlmutter et al. (1983) concluded from their research that LD students are not as well liked as their non-LD peers (Conderman 1995; Stone and Greca 1990). They were rated as disruptive, aggressive, and were capable of exerting more influence on others than their non-LD peers. However, they were mainstreamed with the lower functioning classes which in itself would elicit negative responses to those perceived as even lower than themselves thus enabling the mainstream students to feel better about themselves. The study showed that a quarter of the LD students in the research population were the most popular friends of the non-LD students; this raised the
question as to what is missing in the others, or conversely of what these children have that the other learning disabled students do not.

2.9.1.1 Social Status

The Perlmutter et al. (1983) study results indicated that students with LD are less able to decode social communication than others (Conderman 1995) but that this does not explain why some LD students are liked by their peers but were generally rated lower socially by the non-LD students than the non-LD students rated each other.

Bryan (1974) stated that there was evidence from her study that the social status of LD children, especially those that are Caucasian and/or female, was low and the study shows that these students were rejected by their peers.

Some inconsistencies exist in the research results. An explanation for this occurrence is offered by Pearl et al. (1986)

...learning-disabled children may have acquired the social skills which nondisabled children demonstrate, but not yet be proficient in recognizing those situations where the use of these skills would be desirable. (p212)

They suggest that the learning disabled students are aware of their problems and short-comings and as found in the Chapman and Boersma (1979) study, they rate their own ability lower than do others (Hagborg 1996).

A number of studies (Bender 1985, 1986, 1987, Bender and Golden 1988, 1989) investigated various behaviours of learning disabled children. These behaviours are primarily delineated by Weller and Strawser (1981) into adaptive behaviours which are summarised by Bender and Golden (1989) as

...a set of behaviors including on-task behavior, use of language in social situation, participation in effective social relationships, and social coping in the learning environment... (p45)

The results of their study indicated that the LD students exhibited less adaptive behaviour than did the non-LD group on all scales and rated higher on the problem of behaviour. The LD students in the studies were compared to non-LD and many of the assessments were based on teacher perceptions. The cumulative results indicated that
students who are labelled LD adopt attitudes toward school tasks that are not conducive to achievement. These attitudes relate to lower self-perception and generally, these students performed lower in the adaptive behaviour assessments than did their non-LD peers; furthermore, these behaviours were ‘characterised by disturbed peer relations.’

Bender and Golden’s results provided no indication that there was a difference between the evaluations of the special education and regular teachers’ perceptions of the adaptive behaviour. Bender and Golden (1988) however, did indicate that

...mainstream teachers, as a group, have not been prepared to deal with the adaptive behavioural problems which characterize LD children. (p 60)

Further from the 1986 study Bender purports that

...teachability depends upon the LD child’s view of himself or herself. Teacher perceptions of LD children are thus directly tied to those children’s self-perceptions. (p8)

Coles and Goldstein (1985) claim that

Just as depression is known to impede thinking, the processing of a substantial emotional state in the right hemisphere impeded the shift of activation for cognition to the left hemisphere in our subjects. (p6)

Therefore, if the child has poor self-esteem then the lack of confidence or fear of rejection from peers or teachers could affect his learning ability.

In contrast, Rothman and Cosden (1995) and Hagborg (1996) have found that those students who believe that their disability is not serious display an attitude of greater confidence and acceptability which Hagborg states is derived from other areas of internal self-worth accredited primarily to out-of-school successes.

2.9.1.2 Effect on Study

The studies on self-esteem and the student beliefs have a major impact on the field of learning disabilities. They add to that body of knowledge another facet in the developing portrait of the LD student. The impact of the knowledge that the student has of himself and what teachers and parents relate in addition to information
obtained from formal testing requires the student to form the basis for his self confidence base.

2.9.2 Measurements for Psychological Assessment

The instrument used most commonly for the rating of intellectual ability and furthermore, in the identification of learning disabilities, is the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) and the recently revised to the WISC III (Aaron, 1991). The Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale, the Woodcock-Johnson Psycho-Educational Battery and the Peabody Individual Achievement Test are also used for the assessment of intellectual ability. The discrepancy between ability and achievement as can be determined by the WISC-R/ WISC III sub-tests has long been one of the major criteria used to identify learning disabilities. The debate in the learning disabilities community is over the use of an IQ test for the identification of these students.

It is perceived that a completely reliable test does not exist (Baldwin and Vaughn, 1989) but some measure of ability is helpful when dealing with and experiencing a wide range of aptitudes and discrepancies in expected abilities of students, however approximate in its reflection of ability it may be.

2.9.2.1 Criteria for Identification

One of the main criteria for the identification of LD is the discrepancy between ability and performance (Schuerholz et al. 1995). The discrepancy argument is yet another aspect of learning disabilities that causes the field some concern and hence creates one more issue on which many viewpoints can be argued.

Seigel (1989a) challenged the LD community with the proposal to abandon the IQ criterion as an essential element in the diagnosing and identifying factor of learning disabilities. She provides many examples wherein she states that the IQ tests have not necessarily provided evidence for a reading disability, a primary indicator of learning disabilities. Furthermore, she proposes that it is not necessary for a person to have a high or even normal IQ in order to possess good reading skills. Seigel discussed discrepancies in the use of IQ testing, an issue which has been debated many times throughout the LD community (Lyon 1989) and suggests that the time and money spent on analysis of the results of the IQ tests plus the time and money spent on the
training of the personnel to interpret the results could be better spent on remediation strategies. Her proposal referred principally to reading disabilities and little reference is made to the more global group of the learning disabled to whom she initially directed her argument.

Mann et al. (1983) commented that

*Normal IQ, whatever that means these days, is usually a criterion for LD classification.* (p15)

Hall and Humphreys (1982) proclaim that when investigators are reporting on students who are having difficulty, common practice seems to report only reading achievement information and IQ results.

Lyon (1989) suggests that many of those working in the LD field agree that

*...the use of an IQ-achievement discrepancy to identify LD students is problematic since discrepancy calculations are susceptible to measurement error.*

(p504)

Aaron (1991) stated that decisions made by authorities on eligibility, diagnosis of LD and recommended remediation are considered separate issues and the use of IQ information is frequently limited to the decisions made on eligibility.

Leong (1989) advocated that there be a minimum level of IQ as derived from formal testing in order to produce a successful reading performance. He suggested an IQ of 80 to 85 would be an acceptable level of intelligence for the procurement of successful reading and instruction.

### 2.9.2.2 The Pros and Cons of the WISC-R

Galvin (1981) examining the advantages and disadvantages reviewed the literature of the WISC-R and its use in the validation of learning disabilities. She concluded that

*It (WISC-R) is primarily an intelligence test, useful in predicting school achievement. Its validity and reliability used this way are among the best of any intellectual measures currently available. The paradox of its prediction of school achievement in the learning disabled, who in fact are not achieving remains an unsettled issue.* (p328)
She states further that the LD population is heterogeneous in composition and as such cannot be defined by such a singular criterion such as the WISC-R profile. Another issue that is raised by Galvin is the fact that the strengths and weaknesses of the WISC-R sub-tests are frequently used to substantiate various aspects of educational remediation. She believes that this provides a very simplistic solution since the WISC-R should not be used for such purposes but only as an predictor of school achievement.

Baldwin and Vaughn (1989) declare that if learning disabilities are based in the physical and

\[ \text{...not politically motivated social phenomenon or the consequence of bad teaching,} \]
\[ \text{then it is difficult for us to believe that intelligence has anything to do with such} \]
\[ \text{impairments. We do not know of any disease organisms, birth defects, or} \]
\[ \text{neurological disorders that selectively attack humans with above-average} \]
\[ \text{intelligence.} \] (p520)

2.9.2.3 Use of IQ Testing

There appear to be a great many perspectives on the use of IQ testing. Stanovich (1989) maintains that throughout the relevant literature, the intelligence aspect was accepted as part of the definition construct for reading disability. He asserts that the teaching community as well as the professional organisations and government agencies chose the IQ test performance to act as a measurement of achievement discrepancies. Why this was so readily acceptable he suggests, was because of the belief that IQ scores were a reasonable representation of intellectual potential.

Seigel (1989b) emphasises that IQ tests are used to classify students in quintessentially all of the research on learning disabilities. Furthermore, that the assumptions associated with the IQ testing and subsequent results are a basic part of the logic framework homologous with the discrepancy denotation.

In order to clarify the relationship IQ has to LD, Torgesen (1989) believes that IQ controls must be in place in research. He concludes that the differences between the students who have not encountered difficulties in learning and those that have are unrelated differences in general learning aptitude. Secondly, he states that the
differences between the two noted groups are not the products of intellectual
differences.

In support of Seigel's findings is Torgesen (1989) who primarily directs his tractate
toward the reading disability group rather than to the more controversial group of
learning disabled.

Meyen (1989) approaches the discrepancy problem from the viewpoint of Special
Education and its raison d'etre. He proclaims that the focus of Special Education is to
provide services for students who have extreme learning difficulties and hence do not
benefit from those regular services provided by regular classroom procedures. Under
these conditions then, the sustaining of the qualifier of 'normal' intelligence as an
eligibility identifier is not beyond reason.

Piotrowske and Seigel (1986) investigated the bivariate model which was used by
Burns (1984) from which they state:

Since IQ and achievement are positively but not perfectly correlated, the
achievement level predicted for students of both high and low ability regresses, or
moves somewhat toward the mean compared to their actual IQ scores. This
phenomenon has often been overlooked when predicting achievement. (p493)

Beck et al. (1981) found that when students were placed in self-contained classes the
IQ scores were lower after one year in special classes than when the students entered
the classes.

Rispens et al. (1991) realised from their research into the use and non-use of IQ testing,
that there were few differences in the results of the number of students identified as
reading disordered when IQ was and was not used. What they found however, was
that when they did not take IQ into account then the number of children identified
was greater in the lower IQ bracket and fewer children were identified in the higher IQ
levels. They also found that:

The number of children classified as reading disordered is a function of the IQ
cutoff. (p437)

They declare that the only reason for the cut-off level is to differentiate between
learning disabilities and mental retardation.
Since part of the learning disabilities definition is that it is outside the classification of mental retardation (Schuerholz et al. 1995) the necessity for a cut-off limit is essential for LD classification.

The debate will probably continue until such time as the LD community at large is able to agree on a acceptable process to assess and establish satisfactory remediation strategies to alleviate at least the reading aspect of learning disabilities.

The consideration of the IQ literature to the present study is of importance as one of the criteria for the identification of the students in the study was that they had 'normal' intelligence. This was verified by either the school records or the Department of School Education trained personnel.

### 2.9.3 Head Injuries and Birth Problems

Another area that could conceivably influence learning disabilities is physical damage which could influence the ability of the student to learn.

A number of investigations on head injuries (HI) have been conducted. A precise incidence rate of HI is unknown because a large proportion of mild HI are unreported (Segalowitz and Brown 1991). These researchers found that the highest gender difference in occurrences was at the 7 to 8 years age group with a ratio of 3:1 of boys to girls. They also found that the incidence of reported mild head injury is sufficiently high as to be considered an influential factor in developmental disabilities, especially those associated with stuttering and/or hyperactivity. These authors conclude that the majority of reported head injuries did not present any identifiable difficulties in academic performance.

In the extension study which reflected much of the same data results as in 1991, Segalwitz and Lawson (1995) found when surveying a large population, (3676 students in toto) of high school and university students, 30% to 37% reported head injuries with loss of consciousness. The results suggested that

> mild head injury is part of a fairly common matrix of developmental factors that predispose a large portion of our population to specific complaints and developmental difficulties. (p317)
Some of the developmental conditions involve sleep difficulty, social dysfunction as well as learning and speech disorders. Also reported is the fact that most childhood HI that do not involve loss of consciousness, or hospital admission and thus no permanent record for use in investigations exists.

Dikmen et al. (1986) investigated the effects of mild head injury. Their subjects were investigated for post HI impairment and it was found that after one year there were no significant differences between the control group and the mild head injury group in the neuropsychological test:

> The results presented generally indicate that the performances of the head injury group were not impaired in a clinical sense, but were slightly lower than those of the uninjured group. (p1229)

They also indicate that minor head injury in itself does have some negative after-effects which were shown by the difficulties encountered in the resumption of recreational activities but they qualified these reports by indicating that these results could easily be attributed to other injuries incurred at the same time as the mild head injury. Tupper (1990) found that memory reasoning and attention difficulties were also affected.

Obrzut and Hynd (1987) reviewed the literature in relation to learning and behavioural difficulties of children with acquired head injuries which resulted in brain damage and learning difficulties. They found that there were many similarities between the brain injured child and the learning disabled child notably in the areas of memory and verbal skills. However, Hynd et al. (1991) declared that learning disabilities are definitely not due to a central nervous system dysfunction.

Severe head injuries are reported in various papers (e.g., McGuire and Sylvester 1987; Mira and Tyler 1991); however, the implications of severe brain damage are manifold but they do indicate that there is potential for difficulties occurring in a number of psychosocial and other personality changes. Mira and Tyler (1991) explain that when the head hits an immovable solid object, the brain then impacts against the wall of the skull where the impact has occurred. The brain will then slam against the opposite wall from the impact. This action can continue depending on the strength of the impact which stretches and disrupts the cells (Bigler 1996). Mira and Tyler refer to all
head injuries as ‘traumatic’ and classify them from minor which connotes just common bumps on the head with no concussion and unlikely to be seen by a physician through to serious wherein there is a loss of consciousness of more than 30 minutes with probable skull fracture.

Another area in which brain damage can occur is during the birth process. Problems encountered at birth or during the birth process may suggest yet another area that influences the learning disabilities sector. Lievens (1974) investigated children who had endured difficult births. The involved children displayed poor muscle coordination and hyperactivity. Lievens states that obstetrical trauma is not necessarily related to these problems however

...when such problems do appear, they are generally associated with perinatal trauma. (p37)

2.9.4 Psychostimulant Drugs and their Use in LD and Attention Deficit Disorder

Like most other areas related to and involved in learning disabilities, the use of psychostimulant drugs for behavioural modification and academic improvement joins the same arena as the other controversies. Silver (1987) states that

It is important to note that the psychostimulants may improve the symptoms of ADD, that is, lessen the hyperactivity and/or decrease the distractibility. They do not directly treat the learning disability. (p498)

This implies that there are always learning disabilities attached to the intent of the label Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD).

Roberts (1988) states that

...stimulants will lengthen everyone's attention span. All children improve in their ability to sit still, focus on work and complete mechanical tasks. There is no proof, however, that this behavioural improvement aids thinking or increases the essential curious learning and active engagement in the learning process which seem most important for long term academic gains. (p3)

Pelham (1986) research concluded that
Because no study has been conducted that assessed stimulant effects under optimal conditions and used appropriate measures, previous negative findings should not be interpreted as evidence that stimulants have no beneficial effect on learning or academic achievement in ADD and LD children. (p285)

Pelham at the outset of his paper declared that he was biased toward the use of medication for ADD and LD children and that he would be thus supporting that approach.

Aman (1980) after conducting a major review of stimulant drug treatment, has concluded that stimulant medications do not improve academic performance in the long term. Further, that there is little evidence that the various medications used for treating learning problems produced positive results. These psychoactive drugs, he states, could be useful in cases where the behavioural deviancy sets up a barrier to receptive cognitive functioning.

Lerner and Lerner (1991) have traced some of the history of this condition and found that minimal brain dysfunction along with brain damage syndrome were two of the terms used before attention deficit disorder came into vogue. It is interesting to note that those same terms are used to describe learning disabilities. Lerner and Lerner (1991) state that there is a significant overlap between ADD and learning disabilities (LD) but Silver (1990) declares that

ADHD is not a learning disability but is a related neurologically based disorder.
It does not interfere with the necessary psychological processes needed to learn.
ADHD interferes with the individual's availability for learning. (p397)

He does not explain how this is established. His arguments that 'ADHD can cause hyperactivity, distractibility, and/or impulsivity' all of which are aspects of the identifiers of LD. Silver concludes with

...neither ADHD nor the secondary emotional, social, or family problems impact on the psychological processes necessary for learning. (p396)

This appears to be in discordance with some researchers who have found the secondary aspects mentioned above have proven to be detrimental to learning and the learning process.
Dykman and Ackerman (1991) chose to replace the term ‘learning disabilities’ with ‘developmental reading disorder’ which they refer to as RD or dyslexia. They also concluded that ADD children with emotional problems performed more poorly than did the those without in the verbal IQ tests and other skill-based tests in mathematics.

Krupski (1986) concluded from her review that there existed very little difference between LD children and those designated as having ADD/ADHD. She states that:

> ...both groups appear to exhibit similar performance patterns on measures traditionally thought to reflect attention processes. (p186)

Much work and research need to done before it is possible to reach any conclusions on whether or not ADHD and LD are perhaps synonyms varying only in a lack of discipline.

2.10 Future Implications for LD

Algozzine and Yesseldyke (1986) said that too much in the way of resources is spent on a problem that may exist only as an excuse for the students to not participate by choice.

The future of LD is controversial. Sabatino (1983) predicted that the learning disabilities concept will wane in proportion to diminished specialised educational budgets.

It could be that the learning disabilities terminology has been replaced with that of ADD. It will be interesting to note in the next five years if there has been a decrease in the number of students with learning disabilities and an increase in students with ADD or ADHD similar to that of the 1950s and 1960s where those students who had been classified as learning disabled later were removed from that classification and placed into more appropriate groups such as mentally retarded and emotionally disturbed.

2.11 Summary

The literature has strongly supported the need for investigation into learning difficulties. The learning difficulties community has contributed a large amount of
information and energetic research into the LD phenomenon. Although early work encountered difficulties with nomenclature, the current obstacle which most impedes investigation and treatment is the lack of a universally accepted LD definition.

It appears clear that LD children do not learn as non LD children, but they do possess the ability to do so. No geographical boundaries have been reported to the incidence of LD, and it appears that there are no known cultural boundaries. Ages at which the LD child is recognised appear to be ill defined, however, most studies pertain to school aged children who are learning their own language. Males encounter the learning difficulty more often than females and there are usually siblings in the family unit. Low maternal education and thus a lack of parental learning assistance outside of the classroom seems prevalent.

Little is known of a biological influence to the development of learning disabilities. It appears that birth trauma, minor head injuries and organic disease play a minor, if any, role. Medication, such as an Ritalin which may have beneficial effects on behaviour, has not been shown to improve learning.

Other controversial topics raised through the literature are on the use of the discrepancy demarcation between achievement and potential by way of IQ testing as a means of LD identification and secondly, in the use of the IQ test itself to measure potential.

The literature revealed various aspects of beliefs held by teachers, parents and students. Thus it is possible to state, as Sabatino (1983) points out, that due to the lack of agreement on the learning disabilities definition, theory and hence remediation, society can remove itself from the responsibility of this 'condition' because there is no finite definition. The literature shows that some teachers have an excuse for not teaching because they are unable to define the problem and therefore unable to plan beneficial programmes. The parents can place the burden of the child's failure to learn on the teachers. Therefore there appears to exist a situation wherein there is no real compelling thrust to bring about a change.

The literature reports that the LD students have very low self-esteem and a lack of confidence in themselves which in turn affects their academic progress. The
socialisation of the students and their self-esteem is reflected in the data and has played an influential part in the characterisation of the LD student.

A child who encounters academic difficulty is more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour than his peers, and he is less likely to pursue higher levels of education.

LD children universally have difficulty with literacy and sometimes numeracy. Furthermore, these problems usually result in the LD child functioning at an educational level greater than one year behind his peers.

In the research studies reviewed here, it became evident that the beliefs of the parents, teachers and students intermarry in influence on the academic achievements/failures of the students. These influences were therefore considered in the design of the questionnaire which was devised to investigate the beliefs of the parents and how these beliefs affected the child. Further, it was considered necessary to inquire how the teachers, through their beliefs, responded to the students who were not performing in the top category and how the teachers reactions to the students affected the students' academic and attitudinal outcomes.

The design of the sample described in the following chapters was conceived, established and supported by the literature. The LD students in the study were to have normal intelligence, function normally in every aspect and be working approximately two years behind their peers. These qualifying entrance requirements met with the widely but not totally accepted definition of LD.

The literature is reflected in the fundamental design of the methodology used in the study and supports the investigative mode through which the data was collected.
Figure 2-2 Flowchart of Literature Review That Led to Methodology
CHAPTER 3

3. Methodology

Figure 3-1 Flowchart of Methodology Chapter
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3.2 Research Model

The research model chosen for this study conforms to what Hill and Gerber (1967) describe as 'Descriptive Research' wherein

... a broad category of research which includes those efforts that describe and interpret certain facts concerned with situations, communities, individuals, groups of individuals, relationships, attitudes, objects, events, classes of events, systems, trends, conditions, processes, or phenomena as they exist at any given time...any research devoted to the gathering of information about prevailing conditions or situations for the purpose of description and interpretation can be classified as descriptive research. (p108)

3.3 Making Pre-Suppositions Explicit

Nowhere in science do we start from scratch.... We presuppose in every inquiry, not only a set of data, but also a set of generalisations, both about our materials and about the instruments by which they are to be transformed into the cognitive sciences, from everyday knowledge, from the experiences of conflict and frustration which motivated the inquiry, from habit and tradition, from who knows where.... When Freud became interested in the interpretation of dreams, he presupposed certain generalisations about the nature of sleep, consciousness, and related phenomena... (Kaplan 1964, p86-87).

After many years of observing and working with students who have been identified through the educational system as learning disabled, and from a wide and diversified exposure to the learning disabilities literature and research work, as well as extensive interaction with parents of these students, other teachers and colleagues from other disciplines such as social work and psychology, generalisations on learning disabilities of my own have developed. These beliefs are in some cases different from those of other LD workers but since we are all striving to provide some concrete information on these students, I can only add to that established body of knowledge, my beliefs and findings with the hope that the culmination of everyone's beliefs and discoveries will provide some useful insights into the problem.
3.3.1 Pre-Supposition Number One

I firmly believe that the students who have been identified as learning disabled can be taught to function as well academically as their non learning disabled peers providing that they are exposed to an adequate programme and environment. This process should begin as soon as possible so that the danger of acquiring low self-esteem is minimised.

3.3.2 Pre-Supposition Number Two

Having worked with many strategies and teaching techniques as well as within different philosophical frameworks, I have determined from observation and experimenting with different teaching strategies, that LD students require an environment which follows a strict routine within reason. They need to be shown how the language is formed and they need to know the basic aspects of phonics and grammar. This seems to help overcome the difficulties they encounter when learning to read and write.

3.3.3 Pre-Supposition Number Three

Parents and the family interaction play a very active role in the development and attitudinal outlook that the child adopts. Reactions to the home environment also play a vital and influential role in the ability of the child to learn. Ability in this case is not necessarily demonstrated by an intelligence test. The fact that the child should be able to perform at an acceptable level intellectually is unrelated to the child’s emotional state which affects his ability to perform academically. If the child is upset about a home situation then the child will be concentrating on that aspect of life and not necessarily on what is taking place in class.

3.3.4 Pre-Supposition Number Four

Another influential factor, I believe, is the amount of responsibility that the child is expected to carry and one of my related pre-suppositions is that responsibility is acquired in the home culture. By responsibility I mean that the child, as a member of the family, should contribute to the unit as a whole. This does not mean that the child should be asked to perform duties that are beyond his ability nor does it mean that the child should be asked to take on chores that are considerably time consuming. It does
mean that a child could be asked to make his bed or carry out the garbage or set the table for the evening meal. It is my belief that this small amount of contribution to the family unit is not expected of some children. Without being taught responsibility as a member of the family unit then it is unfair to expect children to accept the responsibility for their own learning. This further impacts on their attitude to their place in the community and eventually on their responsibility as parents.

### 3.4 Paradigm of Inquiry

As was shown in Chapter I, the basic methodological approach that was employed in this study was based on the constructivist/naturalistic paradigm which seeks to understand the intricacies and the complexities that shape human action and reaction. This paradigm does not attempt to prove any aspect of the investigation but simply to gain a deeper insight, and thus comprehension of, the human situation under inquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1985) constructed Figure 3-2 which depicts the various processes inherent in Naturalistic Inquiry.

The basic research methodology employed in this study was based on the model depicted in Figure 3-2. In what follows I shall elaborate on how this model was applied to my inquiry.
3.4.1 The Natural Setting

According to Guba and Lincoln (1985) one of the features of Naturalistic Inquiry is the necessity for conducting the research in 'a natural setting'. A frequent but conceptually superficial interpretation of this term defines a 'natural setting' as one that is
experimenter-free and which occurs naturally as opposed to being contrived for the purposes of research. Like Willems (1969) I prefer to define ‘natural setting' from the perspective of the degree of control which the experiment/researcher has over the input to and output from the research context.

Willems suggests that all research involves some form of input and some form of output to which both are subject to varying amounts of control by the researcher. In Figure 3-3, Willems argues that it is possible to place any given research study within a two dimensional space which demonstrates the degrees of control exerted over both the stimulus input and the response output ends of any research context.

Figure 3-3 Willem's Two Dimensional Space (1969)

The horizontal axis of the diagram indicates the extent of control that is placed by the researcher on the stimulus-input aspect of the study. If a high degree of control is desired then the researcher would establish at the commencement of the project exactly what, and in what order, the stimuli were to be presented. This pre-arranged approach would be rigidly followed.

If a low amount of control was desired then the researcher would have no predetermined control over the stimuli presented. An example of such a study would place the researcher in a position of an unobtrusive observer who observes and records
situations that are free of any artificial stimuli. For example, if I had decided to carry out this study with a very low degree of control over the input end of the project, I would have had to adopt the role of researcher in absentia from the scene, only gathering the data from a remote area through microphones or other electronic devices. However, if I had wanted a very high degree of control, I could have structured the questionnaire to provide 'yes' and 'no' answers thereby controlling the results.

The vertical axis in Figure 3-3 portrays the degree of control that is placed on the respondent in the study. If the researcher chose a high degree of control over the possible responses that the subject could make, then the study would be placed in the high category. Conversely, if the researcher had no pre-conceived idea of the possible response of the subject then the study could be said to fall in the low category of degree of control.

Given this interpretation of 'Natural Setting', in this study the questions were designed to elicit whatever answer the respondent wished to give in response to the question asked. Although the questions did not change greatly throughout the data collecting procedure, there were small changes in the established questionnaire as the interviews took place. Coupled with the open response to the questions, according to Willems, this study would be placed approximately in the middle of the two dimensional chart.

3.4.2 The Human-as-Instrument

As can be seen from Figure 3-2, a natural setting demands that the human mind be the major instrument of interpretation. Given where this study falls in Willems two dimensional space, it also requires that the human brain be the major instrument of data collection and analysis. As will be seen below, I designed some data collection procedures and instruments on the basis of my tacit knowledge, my reading in the field and the pre-suppositions I held. The result was not a standardised instrument administered according to a standardised set of procedures. On the contrary it was up to the researcher to provide the flexibility and responsiveness necessary to explain phenomena that exists in an environment that is complex and indeterminate (Guba and Lincoln 1982). The goal of the inquirer is to surface from the interaction with an
explicit idea of those phenomena. The adaptability and opportunities for verification of the data collected supports the selection of the investigative instrument.

3.4.3 The Beginnings of the Emergent Design

Guba (1981) states that the naturalistic inquirer who believes that when

...in the unfolding of multiple realities... (p8)

through which interaction with the environment and the participants takes place, a change will occur which will affect a change in both the investigator and that being investigated when allowed to continue over time. From this situation, he states that the design will emerge and would continue to emerge and develop until an arbitrary end to the investigation was declared.

These naturalistic investigations form not conclusions but look for patterns in the data that will lead to theory that emanates from the data and therefore is 'grounded' in that data (Guba, 1981).

In this study this process was implemented thus. As can be seen in Figure 3-4 Flowchart of Emergent Design, the data from various sources flows into the making of the patterns from which the grounded theory can be developed. The diagram portrays the various aspects of the study which changed throughout the field work and influenced the eventual output of the study.
This emerging design begins to take shape after purposive sampling, inductive data analysis which is iterated until redundancy as shown in the Guba and Lincoln Figure 3-2. These iterations build the grounded theory which is formed from the purposive sampling and inductive data analysis and becomes part of the emergent design.

### 3.4.4 Ethical Aspects of the Study

In order to conduct research, the proposal for the study was submitted to the Ethics Committee of the University of Wollongong. They reviewed the proposal, granted approval for the research and provided the Consent Form (Appendix B) to be used with the parents. This Consent Form provides the parents with an opportunity to
withdraw from the study at any time and further it grants written protection to the researcher.

Approval to conduct research in the selected schools was sought and obtained from the NSW Department of School Education. Permission from the Principals of each individual school was required by the Department. This protected all parties involved. Student, Teacher and School identification was protected through the assignment of numbers which were selected through the use of a random number generator.

3.4.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in naturalistic research is defined by Guba, (1981), as requiring four criteria that must be met in order to satisfy the essential trustworthy conditions. These standards are:

a) The truth value or credibility of the research project and data is the first criterion.

b) Applicability is the second criterion for trustworthiness and as such it denotes the quality of transferability. The possibility of transferability comes from the amount of 'thick data' that has been collected and the 'thick descriptions' that are contained in the analysis of the data. From these data the similarities and the potential for comparison between these data and those that may pertain to other similar situations could possibly be compared.

c) The third principle for trustworthiness is consistency. This is a difficult aspect of naturalistic research to maintain since the instruments used in this form of research are of a 'human-as-instrument' kind and thus reactions to various situations and scenarios over time will elicit different responses and interpretations to the field of the inquiry. These different reactions and thoughts lead to more proficient insights into the environment however, and the different responses can be explained though this form of dependability reporting.

d) The fourth and final requirement for trustworthiness, according to Guba, is neutrality. In naturalistic research there is no room for bias since the design and theory are the end results when the inquiry is arbitrarily ended. The data has
been reviewed and reflected upon over time which produced objective information from the study.

In this study the data collected have been tested for credibility and truthful reporting through the member checking with parents, students and teachers. Triangulation was built into both the parent and students questionnaires. Peer debriefing took place frequently throughout the entire data collection period.

In the questionnaires some questions were designed to provide triangulation especially those of the parents and students. The students’ questionnaire consisted of 91 questions with number 54 being removed because it was an exact repeat of another question. The parent questionnaire contained 41 questions, the last two being added after the initial data collection had commenced. The teachers were required to complete a form for each child which produced a summary of their opinions on the student’s emotional, behavioural and academic status.

All of the data that were collected was member-checked with the participants, except for the teacher reports, before being entered into the database. Each step in the data collecting process was discussed with colleagues and other researchers. Throughout the whole process of data collection, in terms of time spent in the schools and the homes of the parents, amounted to five days and most evenings per week for approximately three months. The methodology and progress were discussed with peers. On page 77, I made my pre-suppositions explicit. Such pre-suppositions certainly affect the mind set and expectations that any researcher brings to a research problem. As such, they are potential sources of bias. Naturalistic Inquiry demands that researchers control such sources of subjectivity by putting in place certain procedures. One of these is the process of making explicit one’s pre-suppositions, and being consciously aware of them at every stage of the research process. It is argued by advocates of Naturalistic Inquiry (Guba and Lincoln 1985, 1982) that when this conscious awareness is accompanied by triangulation, peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and thick description, the various opinions gathered throughout the process provide a strong grounding for triangulation which Cohon and Manion (1989) state is the
...attempt to map out, to explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint and, in so doing, by making use of both quantitative and qualitative data... (p269)

The credibility of the study is substantiated by Guba and Lincoln's (1989) description of the necessary aspects for credibility. They state that a prolonged engagement at the site, with persistent observation and peer debriefing are necessary requirements for credibility. These aspects have already been reported above as has member checking.

Transferability can be supported from the wide range of subject areas pertaining to the identified LD students' individual life and beliefs which were validated or supported by their parents and teachers.

Dependability has been detailed in the methodology reported in this chapter while the confirmability of the data and the analysis results have been thoroughly discussed with colleagues. The data have been maintained in hard copy and by computer driven electronic data storage. The details of the data results are reported in Chapter 4.

3.4.6 Grounded Theory

After the continuous manipulations of arranging and re-arranging the various responses from the contributors, the resultant information will be thoroughly grounded in the data. Only after the multifarious responses are collated, will the data begin to take on patterns and meaning and from which some theories on learning disabilities can be viewed. The grounded theory is described in Chapter 5.

3.5 Selection of Schools, Grades and Students

Three non-specialised State high schools were selected in the South Coast Region of New South Wales. It was thought that three schools would produce sufficient numbers of students with identified learning difficulties.

After receiving permission from the Department of School Education, letters requesting permission to conduct the research in the selected schools were sent to the respective principals. When permission had been granted by each school, the three Special Education teachers were then contacted by telephone. Meeting times were
negotiated to plan the timeframe for the research, and the activities and approach that would be followed.

In order to understand the role of the Special Education teacher in NSW, it is perhaps helpful to digress somewhat from the topic to explain the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties STLD responsibilities. Although the STLD role has just recently changed in direction, this post required, at the time the data were collected, that special help be given to students who are encountering difficulties in reading, mathematics or any other subject. Generally, the students would qualify for special help if they were found to be at least two years behind their peers in their reading and/or mathematical skills. This assessment is based on the Gapadol Reading Comprehension Test (McLeod and Anderson 1972) and the NSW Department of School Education Basic Skills Test in mathematics. These tests are frequently used in New South Wales for evaluating proficiency levels in English and Mathematics respectively. They are usually administered in Year 7. The results are accepted as an integral part of the identification methodology and they had been used by the STLD in all three schools as part of their assessment procedures. The results from these tests indicated that the student, who was functioning intellectually in the normal range, was performing academically at least two years behind their peers. A significant discrepancy between ability and achievements could be then be identified (Frankenberger and Fronzaglio 1991).

In addition to the formal testing, the opinion of the teacher responsible for the subject was taken into consideration as well as the students' previous school record when students were being considered for extra help.

The Special Education Teachers in two of the three schools provided help in all subjects through team teaching and small group withdrawal. The teacher in the third school was primarily involved in teaching English as a regular classroom teacher to the lower functioning students.

From these remedial classes the teachers recommended ten to twelve students as possible candidates for this study. These were students who met the selection criteria which are provided in Chapter 1, Section 1.6. The anticipated population for this study was thirty students, ten from each school. The selected students were primarily from Years/Grades 7 and 8 however, there was one student from Year/Grade 9.
The Special Education teacher invited me into each of the classes and asked me to explain to the students the concept of the study. The students were invited to volunteer as candidates for the research. This was later confirmed in writing as outlined in Section 3.6. In all of the schools, some hesitancy existed on the part of some of the students to participate in this study. The reason for this can only be conjecture. However, possibilities include the students' reluctance to have their parents involved because seemingly there were difficulties with drug/alcohol abuse or unpleasant living conditions and one student, who lived with his mother and brother did not have food in the house. Under these circumstances it is understandable why the students were reticent. Autonomous decisions to participate in this study were made by ten each from two schools and nine from the third totalling twenty-nine students and their parents who were co-operative and interested.

The Special Education teachers also established contact with the appropriate English and Mathematics teachers. They were requested to complete for each student an Educational Research Data Form, Appendix F, which was devised for this study and is explained in more detail in section 3.6.4 on page 92.
3.6 Preparation

Figure 3-5 Flowchart of Data Collection Instruments

3.6.1 Student Profile

After verbal parental consent was given, the family names, addresses and telephone numbers were obtained from the school records. Introductory letters (Appendix A) together with the Consent Form (Appendix B), were then sent to the parents for formal permission. On receiving the signed consent form, the student’s basic information was entered into the Student Profile database. Anonymity was assured by the assignment of a number for each student, their parents/guardians, schools and teachers.
The data requested in the Students Profile Form (Appendix C) provided the study with a broad information base on these identified students. At this stage of planning it was thought that the demographic data could be of some value if a pattern arose from it and it could provide any other researchers with a comparable outline profile of the students.

The Student Profile Form (Appendix C) contains the following:

- student’s code number
- student’s surname
- student’s first name
- age
- sex
- number of sisters
- number of brothers
- grade
- home teacher
- co-ordination assessment
- parent/family surname
- mother’s first name
- mother’s education
- mother’s job
- father’s first name
- father’s education
- father’s job
- socio-economic level
- address postal code
- phone number
- school attended
- school’s code number
- date consent form out
- date signed consent received

Most of these items were included for reasons of providing a profile for each student, however some were included to furnish a broader profile of the family environment. For example, the mother’s and father’s education and job are indicators of the possible socio-economic level.

The responses to this profile were entered onto a database and the original documents were stored for safe-keeping.

3.6.2 Student Questionnaire

As shown in the literature review, LD can include a wide range of contributing factors. The Student Questionnaire (Appendix D) consisted of 92 questions encompassing a wide variety of subject areas from nutrition and bedtimes to attitudes and experiences in the junior grades. It was designed for the investigative purpose that might lead to a
broader understanding of learning disabilities, of the interaction with literacy acquisition and to observe the role that the belief systems of the student, parent and teachers play in the acquisition of appropriate literacy and numeracy skills by the child. Peripheral areas were also included for exploration in order to understand as many facets of the learning disabilities phenomena as possible.

While some questions were inserted to put the students at ease, other questions were included to provide triangulation to similar answers during the analysis process.

3.6.3 Parent Questionnaire

The Parent Questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed in a similar manner to that of the Students'. Initially the Parent Questionnaire consisted of 39 questions pertaining to the parents' schooling as well as their attitudes concerning education, the child and family relationships. As part of the emerging design, after the first ten parents had been interviewed, two further questions were added to the questionnaire in order to include as much data as possible. These questions pertained to head injuries and birth details. The idea came from one of the mothers mentioning that their child had had a fall and had hurt his head but had not lost consciousness while the birth idea was an add on to the head injury question. The first ten parents were re-interviewed for their response to these questions.

3.6.4 Educational Research Data Form

The Educational Research Data Form (Appendix F) was designed to extract responses on teachers' beliefs and expectations of the students. The form requires the teachers to give in writing their assessment of the functioning level of a specific student in relationship to their peers. This assessment requires opinions on reading, writing, oral skills, comprehension and arithmetic. The teachers are asked for their opinion on whether or not the child will grow out of his learning difficulties and whether the teacher thinks that the student has emotional problems and/or behaviour problems.

The same form was used for the English, Mathematics and Special Education teachers. The Special Education teachers completed the entire form while the discipline teachers only responded to the questions pertaining to their area.
3.6.5 Questions for Special Education Teachers

This form was used for the Special Education teachers only (Appendix G). It consisted of five questions concerning general beliefs about learning disabilities, and what criteria were used in assessment.

3.7 Field

3.7.1.1 School

The three high schools portrayed markedly different environments. This was probably due to the difference in the administration style of each principal and support staff. All of the administration staff were co-operative, friendly and helpful.

Each school had as its main core at least one brick building. The configuration of the buildings was unique to each. The classrooms were of normal size capable of seating approximately 25 students. One school used portable classroom buildings for some of the classes because the population has increased considerably since the school was originally built. All of the schools were approximately the same size and were situated in working class neighbourhoods. This designation was concluded after personal communication with a senior university lecturer in Sociology at the University of Wollongong which supported the Collins Dictionary of Sociology (Jary and Jary, 1991) which states that working class is made up of people who are manual workers, i.e. those who labour primarily with their hands, rather than their brains (non-manual workers) . . . However, an issue exists as to whether, for some purposes, routine white-collar workers should also be included as part of the working class...

It was also based on the parents’ level of education, the occupations in which they were employed, the substantive position which they held and the general overall lifestyle that was observed by the researcher during the interviews.

In all three schools I was welcomed and made to feel as one of the staff. This acceptance by the staff expedited my acceptance by the students. During my time at the schools, I would occasionally meet some of the students on the street and they would greet me by name in a friendly manner which may reflect acceptance.
3.7.1.2 Home

The individual homes of the students were varied. Some students lived in family owned houses while others lived in council subsidised housing. None of the students lived in flats or apartments.

Naturally each home that I entered was unique. Each house presented a different atmosphere, however, to generalise, it is possible to say that in most, the environment was warm and secure. When I entered the other houses I felt that there was some underlying problem(s) that existed in the family. Of course it was difficult to identify the exact problem but there were many indications when one listened carefully and observed.

In the majority of cases the families lived in single family houses. Four lived in Council subsidised housing and three lived in townhouses in small developments. None of the families lived in caravans. Most of the houses were clean and in good repair as were the surroundings gardens. The houses, although comfortable, were not opulent.

3.8 Interviews

3.8.1 Student Profile

I used the information from this form (Appendix C) to phone the parent for an appointment for the interview and to address their letters. It was also used during the interview to verify the jobs that the parents held and the number of siblings in the family. It acted as the main source for the student’s basic data.

3.8.2 Student Interviews

The student interviews were arranged with the Special Education teacher who withdrew the student from class. They took place in areas with minimal distractions and lasted for approximately ninety minutes.

Students were told before the interview process began that their answers were confidential and that they would not be discussed on an individual basis with anyone.
The questions (see Appendix D) were posed to the student whose answers were recorded in writing and were verbalised aloud as they were written.

The responses were then entered into a word processing document in the computer where they were then earmarked for later data manipulation through a macro facility. Comments on my observations and thoughts regarding the student were entered at the end of the document but were not printed. The printed answers were reproduced in hard copy for member-checking as soon as practical after the interview.

Appointments were made through the STLD for the member-checking interview. At this time the questionnaire was reviewed with the student by either it being read to him or the student reading it himself. Two students chose to read the document themselves since reading was difficult for most LD students.

If there were any changes to be made by the participant, these were carried out at this time and then the student was asked to sign the document. Once the questionnaire was signed, the changes were made in the computer. Most of these changes were either to clarify a statement or to correct the sense of the response. There were very few corrections to meaning since what was written was checked in the first meeting.

3.8.3 Student Questionnaire

Signed copies of the student questionnaire were then stored in files under assigned number, thus minimising bias during analysis. The second session with the student took approximately twenty minutes.

3.8.4 Parent Interviews

Parents were contacted by telephone, where possible, and appointments were made for their interview. These appointment times were usually during the evening since most of the parents worked during the day.

The parent interviews were conducted in the family home at a time convenient to the parent and without the students being present. In ten cases both parents or parents' partners were present. In three cases the fathers participated as well as the mothers. After the first two interviews where the father was encouraged to participate, it was found that they were offering responses that were not supportive of the mother. In a number of families these fathers were not the biological fathers and were in a de facto
relationship with the mother. As another example of the emergent design of the study, it was then decided that the fathers would not be included in the study with two exceptions because these two were the prime caregivers.

These interviews took approximately forty to seventy minutes and followed the same procedure as that of the student. The longer periods of time were spent with the parents who wanted to talk about their child and about school in general. Frequently their comments would give clear indications about their attitudes and beliefs. For example, one parent wanted to share the entire history of the child, the parents’ divorce and the subsequent affects that it had had on the child. This seemed to indicate that the parent was concerned for the child, that the child may be confused from the discussions ensuing the divorce and further, perhaps the child was encountering difficulty in dealing with the pain involved in the parents’ separation. These were conclusions that were drawn from the conversation. This history would be helpful to teachers dealing with this child and others like him but of course this was told in confidence and could not therefore be released to the school. It does substantiate, however, the fact that emotional upset can affect students’ learning.

The parents were told that their responses were confidential and would not be discussed individually with anyone. The responses to the student’s questions were not shared with the parent. Observer’s notes of the house and environment were made immediately after the interview took place and entered at the end of the document (see Appendix E) but were not printed. These comments were incorporated for use during the data analysis stage.

3.8.5 Parent Questionnaire

The same verification procedure that was used with the students was followed with the parents using the Parents Questionnaire (Appendix E). After the parents had signed the final document, it was then filed away with that of the student.

3.8.6 Teacher Interviews

Only the Special Education teachers were to be personally interviewed. The task was not difficult with the Special Education teachers since they were in contact at least once everyday. A personal interview was carried out in the first school and the same procedure was followed as that for the students. Again another incidence of the
emerging design occurred when, in the other two schools, the teachers did not want to be interviewed but they offered to fill out the questionnaire (Appendix G) which they did. All of the comments were entered into the computer along with my observations.

3.8.7 Questions for Teachers Form

The results were entered into the computer and the completed forms were filed for future reference.

3.8.8 Educational Research Data Form

The English and mathematics teachers of the students in this study as well as the STLDs were asked to complete the Educational Research Data Form (Appendix F) in writing. These data were inserted into the spreadsheet for analysis at a later date. The information gathered consisted of the opinions of each teacher on the student’s academic standing in relation to his peers and whether or not they had observed or believed any emotional or behavioural problems existed in these specific students (Appendix F). Data from these forms resulted in Tables 4.2, 4.15, 4.16, 4.17 (see Appendix J), from which information on the teachers’ assessed academic achievement can be found. The beliefs of the teachers on emotional or behavioural problems can be located in Chapter 4 Sections 4.7.1 and 4.7.2.

3.8.9 Principals

As part of the emerging design, during the data gathering and initial analysis period, it became evident that the primary school principals should be interviewed. The data gathered from the students indicated that information on how teachers were placed in specific classes might lead to a better understanding of the factors affecting learning disabilities. Permission was sought and procured from the Department of School Education to proceed with the inquiry. Six Primary School principals of the high schools’ feeder schools were initially contacted by phone and arrangements were made for an informal interview.

In these sessions which took place in the principal’s office, data was collected on the principals’ views and opinions on staffing. There was no formal set of questions but they were asked how they assigned the teachers on their staff to the various grades, the length of time the teachers might stay with a grade and what years of experience
these teachers had. As this information was collected it was checked with the principals involved. There was no further member-checking of the data as the principals’ time constraints near the end of the school year. The information collected was entered into the database for future analysis. The Principals’ Questions (Appendix I) were used as the basis for the principal interviews.

3.9 Collection, Analysis and Coding of Data

The data collection was based on the debate that the literature illuminated. There was little agreement throughout the large body of investigators either on the definition or theory surrounding learning disabilities (e.g. Coles 1987; Adelman and Taylor 1986; Epps, Yesselduke and Algozzine 1985; Kirk and Kirk 1983). Therefore it was necessary to cover as much informational territory as possible.

To aid analysis the students questions were arranged as ‘Q’ plus the number of the question and the parent questions carry the designation of ‘PQ’ plus the question number. For procedure see Figure 3-6 Analysis Procedures.
From each of the students' responses that were stored in a database, individual questions were selected and produced into a separate document for analysis. For example, if Student Question # 77 and Student Question #78 were to be analysed together, the responses from all of the students to the above noted questions were selected using a specially written macro program. These responses were then collected...
into a new file, the information from which was then condensed onto the Topic Analysis Form (Appendix H). The form consists of four columns. In the left column of the form are recorded the assigned numbers to the individual student. Since the same number was assigned to the parent then these same forms could be used to record their answers as well. The columns were used to document the responses in abbreviated form which could be tabulated in some coherent manner especially when three or four question responses were viewed simultaneously. For example, when questions S12, S13, S14, S52 were grouped together to provide information on writing, the responses were recorded according to the assigned coding.

The data from all questions were coded in a similar manner and reviewed for major topic headings such as Beliefs, Nutrition and Learning. It was after several attempted grouping of questions that these headings emerged. The data were then tabulated under the different sub-headings. For example, when the students were asked about the good things about school and their answer was sport and physical education then that response was tabulated under 'S' for sport.

A Coding Manual for the combinations of the questions can be found in Appendix J.

3.9.1 Student Profile Database

The information taken from this form furnishes data on the educational levels of both parents, occupations of parents, number of siblings, and average age of students involved as well as the normal tombstone data of names and addresses. This form also provided a check on when the approval letters were sent out and when the approval form the parents was received as well as supplying information on siblings and parent education information.

3.9.2 Student and Parent Questionnaires - Assessment and Classification of Questions

After each interview with the student or the parent, the data collected was inserted into a computer document file and the observer's comments were added. After all of the data from the various interviews were entered, a specially designed macro program was used to collate the responses which were then categorised under the various topics (see Figure 3-6 Analysis Procedures). Data from the responses were condensed into the Topic Analysis Form (Appendix H). In order to make sense of this
data, the sifting and sorting through the various collations and topics took place. This task was repeated several times in order to search for patterns and any homogeneity in order to arrive at a sensible arrangement of the data.

Originally the questions were arranged under twelve topic headings for analysis. These headings were: Beliefs, Literacy, Family and Environment, School Reactions, Emotions, Future Plans, Problems, Nutrition, Health, Sports, Friends, Social Skills. These were the general categories that the questions when examined seemed to suggest. For example, Parent Question 1 (PQ1) asks 'Would you tell me something about your schooling?' The answers that were produced through the asking of this question were those of the feelings of the parents about school. This type of question was originally classified in Emotions but as the examination of all of the responses to this and other questions was reviewed several times, it became apparent that the responses that could be placed in this classification could also be grouped in School Reactions. This is another case where the emerging design takes place.

The questions were initially collated under the original topics; however, in some cases on further consideration, a better combination of questions was formulated. For example, originally only the student's answers to questions on bedtime were considered together but on the next time of grouping the parent's answers to bedtime questions were grouped with those of their child. This provided some checking on the validity of both the parent and students answers.

After the final re-sorting, the responses were then re-grouped into related areas for ease of analysis. For example, the questions pertaining to Skills, Future Plans, and Emotion could be considered in the Belief System category and that Family could be placed with questions in the Nutrition section. The groupings were then probed for similarities, differences or patterns. The allowance for in-depth analysis was facilitated by the combined grouping of the questions. This assemblage is found in Appendix H.

The final major headings under which the study was organised are: Beliefs, Literacy, School Reactions, Problem, Nutrition, Health, Sports, Friends, and Social. These topics formed the basis for the headings of Chapter 4.

After each review, notes were made on the outcome analysis and the emerged patterns. The notes were further condensed to furnish a comprehensible insight. The
results of these exercises were recorded in a variety of methods and the data were then analysed by first tabulating and assembling the results of each collation. Patterns were sought in each set of data and these patterns were assessed for substantial evidence.

Further, the data from the proformas were entered into the computer in a database. This was done after each was received. The information was arranged in some tentative formats which were discussed with peers, i.e., a peer debriefing procedure, and rearranged again so that some semblance of concrete information could be obtained and from which the first strand of the theory from the data emerged.

3.9.3 Educational Research Data Form

The data from this source were collated into a data spreadsheet which culminated in three tables providing data on the estimated ability and academic achievement according to the teachers' assessments. The information on teacher beliefs regarding emotional and behavioural problems can be found in Chapter 4.

3.9.4 Questions for Teacher Form

The teacher opinions and views were entered into a spreadsheet and they were then brought together for analysis.

3.9.5 Principal Interviews

Information gained from the interviews with the principals was stored in a document file and then analysed through the same process as were the other data collected.

3.10 Summary

This chapter has dealt with the methodological and philosophical paradigms involved with the study. In it is also explained the methods of data collection, data analysis and other procedures used in the study. The data were visited and revisited until identifiable patterns emerged. The following chapter reports the data after they were amalgamated into a variety of subject headings.
CHAPTER 4

4. Results

Figure 4-1 Flowchart of Results Chapter

Baseline Information on Students → General Information → Academic Functioning

Beliefs of Students, Parents and Teachers

Students and Parents Reaction to Literacy

School & Education → Learning → Problems

Teachers → Self-Esteem

Mathematics

Assessment Charts → Teacher Beliefs → Beliefs of STLDs

Teachers

Principals

Nutrition, Health, Sports, etc

Nutrition → Hours of Rest → Sports

Friends → TV → Spare Time → Computers

Medication → Birth & Head Injuries → Siblings → Student Problems

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4.2 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the data that were collected. This chapter is organised by grouping the various pieces of data first together and then again in groups under specific topics. This organisation of the data is shown in Figure 3-5 and Figure 3-6 in Chapter 3. The data are presented as much as possible in display charts, tables and figures, followed by a brief explanation of the graphics and how the data were put together.

4.3 Baseline Information

Table 4-1 Basic Information on Study Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHOOL AND POPULATION NUMBERS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students in Study</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number from Year 7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number from Year 8</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number from Year 9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Males</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Females</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Age</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Participating Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
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</table>

The population of the study consisted of twenty-nine students, their parents and teachers. One student from Year 9 has been included in Year 8 reports for the sake of anonymity.

As with other research in studies on learning disabled students, the number of male students is much greater than that of the female students male dominance was supported in this study wherein the male to female ratio was 21:8.
4.3.1 General Information

Nearly one-half of the students lived with both natural parents. Twenty-four per cent of the students lived with one natural parent and that parent's partner who may or may not be legally married to the natural parent. The single mothers were living in individual dwellings with their children. The guardians were either relatives or adopting parents. All of the students either lived in townhouses or individual houses and none lived in flats or apartments. All of the houses with two exceptions were clean and well cared for. The furniture and decoration along with the overall atmospheres were generally pleasant.

The majority of the fathers worked in occupations that for the most part required them to work alone; for example, truck drivers and small business owners. The tradesmen were fitters and turners, electricians, butchers and similar vocations. Those jobs that were included in the ‘Other’
section were mixed and ranged from a prison officer, computer analyst to a carpet layer and furniture mover.

The occupations held by the mothers of the students showed a slightly different profile. The majority of the mothers did not work outside the home. Those mothers who did hold jobs in the workplace, as can be seen by Chart 4-3, were working in occupations that required little formal training. Those mothers who were grouped in the 'Trade' section were representative of cleaners, dress cutters and other related positions.

The above information is provided in order to add to the study group's profile. The first section indicates the presence of siblings in the family. The next two sections relate to the average number of years the mothers and fathers attended school. The educational level of the main caregiver will be discussed in more detail further on in the chapter.
4.3.2 The Assessed Academic Functioning Levels of the Students

Although this facet of the study will be reviewed in more detail below, in order to provide an overview of the students’ functioning levels when compared to their non LD peers, the following chart and related narrative are set out to complete the profile of the major portion of the study’s population.

The average number of years the Year 7 LD students were behind their normal functioning peers in reading and writing as evaluated by their teachers, was 2.93 years while Years 8 and 9 averaged 2.63 years behind. This indicated that the teachers thought that these students had only acquired skills and knowledge to a Year 4.07 level for Year/Grade 7 and Year/Grade 5.34 for Years 8/9. These evaluations are presented in Table 4-3.

Table 4-3 Students’ Academic Status in Reading and Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year / Grade</th>
<th>Average Years Behind</th>
<th>Functional Year/Grade</th>
<th>Year / Grade</th>
<th>Average Years Behind</th>
<th>Functional Year/Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>-4.00</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>-5.25</td>
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4.4 Beliefs of Teachers, Students and Parents

The following Table 4-4 portrays the order in which the question responses from both the student and the parent questionnaires were organised and drawn together
for coding and analysis. After the questions were catalogued, each group was then arranged under a general heading or topic. For example, the answers to questions that pertained to teachers were assembled under that heading and analysed. Each set of responses was reviewed on a Topic Analysis Form from which the reported information was taken.

The reporting format follows this order; the questions that were asked either of the student, which are prefaced with S, or the parent, prefaced with a P, are stated at the beginning of each subtitle. Some of the questions are closely related. For example, student questions S61 and S91 are essentially the same question and therefore the answers have been reported together as there was little variation in the replies. In cases when the questions have asked for the same information, then the data that was collected from one question could be compared to that of the other.

The section 'Beliefs' concentrates on the various beliefs held by the students, parents and teachers involved in this study. In many cases the data categorised under the title 'Literacy' could have been included in the 'Belief' section and vice versa but an attempt was made to differentiate as much as possible between these two areas as it was felt that there are two different issues at stake which are school generally and, learning and literacy skills.

The titles under 'Topics' in Table 4-4 have been shortened for insertion into a table and the section reference can be found in the adjoining column.

The students' questions that were grouped together are found in column 3 and the parents' questions are found in column 4.
Table 4-4 Organisation of Question Responses on Beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Section Reference</th>
<th>Student Questions</th>
<th>Parent Questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Necessity of a Good Education</td>
<td>4.4.1.1</td>
<td>61,91</td>
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<td>Students' Feelings On School</td>
<td>4.4.1.2</td>
<td>1, 2</td>
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<td>No. of Primary Schools</td>
<td>4.4.1.3</td>
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<td>Parents' School Level &amp; Shyness</td>
<td>4.4.1.4</td>
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<td>4.4.1.5</td>
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<td>4.4.2.2</td>
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<td>Students on Problems</td>
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</tbody>
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4.4.1 School and Education from Student and Parent Perspective

4.4.1.1 Thoughts of Students and Parents on The Necessity of a Good Education

S61 Do you think that having an education is important?

S91 What are your thoughts on getting an education? Do you think that it is important to have a good education?

P11 Do you believe it is important to have a good education?
All of the students felt it important to obtain a good education primarily for the purpose of acquiring a job.

All of the parents except two believed that it was essential to have a good education.

There was basic agreement on the importance of a good education by the parents. Some of their comments in reply to parent question P11 indicated their feelings. The designation at the end of the quote denotes the specific parent for e.g. P71 is the parent of the student who was assigned number 71 for the sake of anonymity.

"Yes I do especially these days. They need that time at school. It's the best time of their lives. You grow up too fast when you start to work. ", P71.

"Yes I do. If you want to go further in life and if you want to set your goals at things.", P61.

"Yes. Well especially now you certainly can't go far without it these days.", P87.

These data strongly suggest that the parents support the idea of obtaining an education and recognise its value to their own and their children's future. It is also of note that these values are also held by the children as their answers to questions 61 and 91 equally reflected similar beliefs to those of the parent. This, moreover, encompasses the idea that both parents and students believe an education or lack thereof affects their future inasmuch as many of them referred to education's impact on job acquisition and everyday living.

4.4.1.2 Students' Feelings on School

S1. Do you like school?
S2. Have you always liked school?
Chart 4-4 displays the various student reactions to school in general in the upper left hand corner and then those responses are broken out to further define the makeup of each specific portion of that chart.

**Chart 4-4 Students' Feelings on School**

From the chart in the upper left hand corner of Chart 4-4, only 12 of the 29 students indicated that they liked school; 7 found it 'Just Acceptable' and 10 did not like it. If there is a relationship between the students who found school 'just acceptable' and those who 'did not like school' then this suggests that a negative attitude might influence the learning process for 58% of the students.

Of those students who indicated that they liked school (41%) the breakdown of which is found in the upper right hand corner of Chart 4-4, also stated that they
(83%) have not always liked school. The proportion of those students, that although they like school now, they have not always and only a small percentage of students have always liked school.

Chart 4-4 lower left hand corner, indicates the percentage of students (34%) who dislike school. Forty per cent of this group have not always disliked school. This suggests that something happened to change their outlook or perception. Sixty per cent have never liked school. These results could suggest that something or someone caused these children to reject education almost from school’s onset.

It can also be seen in the lower right hand corner, that there are students who find school just tolerable (24% of the total), but some of this group have not always felt this way. Fifty-seven per cent reported that they used to like school.

These results suggest that one of the major factors in helping children to learn is to make the school experience positive. Some of the school experiences are discussed in section 4.4.1.7

4.4.1.3 Number of Primary Schools Attended by Students

S81. Is this the only school that you have attended?
S82 Tell me about the others.

This information was checked against the school records and there was no variance in the information. Over half of the total number of students in the study attended more than one primary school. Taking into consideration the fact that this community is not highly mobile, some possible explanations of this finding are, that the number of changes in schools for these students could be attributed to separated families. This could be deduced from the fact that only 48 per cent of the students
are living with both natural parents. One third attended more than two primary schools. In my opinion, for students who are in the primary years, although they are flexible at this age, it is stressful for them to lack the continuity of the teaching and routine of one school. This could affect the child’s security which may manifest in non productive behaviour in the classroom.

Student question S82 about their former schools was difficult for the students to answer because they either did not remember or they just could not make an evaluation. Therefore there are no results reported for this question.

4.4.1.4 Parents’ Level of Schooling and Their Assessment of Their Shyness

P2. How far did you go in school?

P8. Would you say that you were a shy or nervous child?

These questions ascertained the approximate grade level the parents reached before leaving school and provides data on their perceptions of themselves. The question on shyness/nervousness was asked to see if there was a connection with a certain personality trait in the parents that could effect their attitudes and reactions to life in general. By the parents being nervous or shy could, perhaps, either cause a depletion in the ability to learn or be the cause of such emotional reactions which may interfere with learning.
The level of schooling of the parents final year could also influence their attitudes toward school and learning in general.

As can be seen in Chart 4-6, most of the primary caregivers, which are represented essentially by the mothers, completed Year/Grade 9 but 72% of these parents had left school by approximately 14 years of age while 93% had left by the end of Grade 10 at 15 years of age.

Seventy-six per cent of the parents felt that they were nervous or shy as children (Chart 4-7). This could indicate a lack of confidence and/or self-esteem in the personalities of the parents.

**4.4.1.5 Parent Responses to General Academic Achievement**

**P10. Generally did you do well at school?**

Most of the parents, 57%, felt that they were average or better and of that group,
Forty-three per cent thought that they were poor students. This indicates that almost half of the parents thought that they were poor at school.

4.4.1.6 Reactions of Parents to Their School Experiences

P1. Would you tell me something about your schooling?
P6. Did you enjoy your first days in school?
P3. Did you enjoy school?
P4. Why? Why not?

Question P1 was used as an introductory question in order to help the parents focus on their own school life. Some examples of their responses were:

- "I enjoyed it. I went from kindergarten to Year 6. I only had three years of high school." P14

- "Well they always had something I could learn but I wouldn't do it unless I was interested. I wasn't very good at school." P58

- "I wasn't all that crash hot with maths. I was good at English and reading." P26.

There were three mothers who came from families whose mother tongue was not English, however, they spoke the English language well and there was no trace of accent.

Their comments were;
"Went to T. Public and I come from an ethnic background of Italian and Yugoslav. I had trouble with spelling and math." P36.

"I went to **HS to Year 9. I come from a Greek Cypriot family. I was not bright at school. I was born in Australia but didn’t understand the language. I wasn’t in the high grades but I left in Year 9 and went into a glove factory.” P44.

"When I went to school I spoke Polish and a bit of Russian. I was born in England but I didn’t speak English.” P96.

Question P6 elicited the parents’ reactions to their first years at school, especially kindergarten. Some of their comments reflect a small child’s feelings on first attending school.

"I loved school. I used to have to have to go on the bus though the country.”

P16

"I can’t remember a lot about it. I was four and apparently for the first six months I stood there and cried and chewed my hankie.” P61

Chart 4-9 Parents’ Feelings About Early Years at School

![Pie chart showing parents' feelings about early years at school]

"I hated it when I first started ‘cause I saw my mother and sister walking away from me. The smell of bags was dreadful and everything was so different.” P69

It seems an important factor for all parents and teachers to be aware of how situations such as starting school affect the small child and, further, to view these situations from the child’s perspective.
In response to parent questions 3 and 4, 38% of parents stated that they did not like school because it was not interesting or it was boring or they were not good at it, while a further 38% liked school primarily because of friends and companionship that they found there. Generally, the parents were reflecting on their high school experience here as can be substantiated by the referrals to the high school subjects and the elevated importance given to friends and the socialisation process. Only 14% enjoyed the various subjects that they took, for example:

"...cooking and sewing..." P63

"...maths, science and metal work"; P93

"I did French, commerce and maths. I had a few problems with that but the teachers were really great." P90

These data were collected to see if the parent beliefs and feelings had any correlation to those of their children. There were only six families who agreed with their child on their feelings about school. The rest of the parents held opposing views to those of their child.
The majority of the parents enjoyed school but if those that found it 'Just OK' and those that 'Did Not Enjoy' school were combined, then 49% of the parents did not have positive memories of school.

4.4.1.7 Students' Thoughts About School

S3  Tell me about the good things about school.
S4  Why do you think that?
S5  Tell me about the bad things about school.
S6  Why do you think that?
S24  Can you remember any incident that made you feel uncomfortable about school?
S29  What aspects of school do you enjoy?
S38  What are your impressions of school?

The students' thoughts and beliefs about school are displayed in the figures that follow.

4.4.1.7.1 Best Things About School

Responses to questions S3 and S4 were multifarious and thus are reported in the percentage of answers rather than percentage of students. Furthermore, the School Subjects, (69%), that were referred to by the students were design and technology, woodworking, metal work, cooking and sewing and art. It is noteworthy that none
of the, Key Learning Areas, (KLAs) such as English, mathematics, history et cetera were mentioned.

*Figure 4-2 Best Things About School*

Getting out at the end of the day was very important as was participation in the sport activities. Only five students mentioned that they were at school to learn. This suggests that their perception of the purpose of formal education was not congruent with their beliefs that were in effect in their everyday lives when they all responded that a good education was very important (questions S61 and S91). Student question S4 provided the reasons for the choices. The most popular explanation was that whatever their choice was, it was chosen because it was fun. In response to S29 students usually named specific subjects that they enjoyed. Student question responses (S6), were primarily a repeat of the initial answer in S5 and thus there was little added information gained from this question.
4.4.1.7.2 Worst Things About School

Responses to this question are reported in the percentage of answers rather than the percentage of students. Interaction with teachers represented the reason why the majority (52%) did not like school. A large number had experienced negative encounters with the teachers. The remainder said that there was too much work whereas a few indicated that they had difficulties with other students.

“Getting in trouble in maths lessons ‘cause she yells. It just gets you all freaky. Her face goes all red.” S80

“…because teachers don’t pick on the smart people in the class, they always pick on the not so smart people.” S63
"I think that because sometimes the teachers don't listen to you cause they're always busy and that." S3

Homework and work in school that the students found difficult were other issues of dislike. The 17% in 'Other' represents answers such as:

"I can't think of any." S87

"With science I don't reckon you should have to do it 'cause some people don't want to be scientists," S16 and

"We think we have a free period then a relief teacher comes out, then the regular teacher comes and surprises you" S27.

4.4.1.7.3 Uncomfortable Incidences

Unpleasant incidences were cited by 16 of the 29 students and 11 of these experiences were teacher-related. The remaining students supplied a variety of responses from falling off playground equipment on the first day of school to the separation of parents. Teasing and having to read aloud in class were also reasons proffered. There were 13 students who reported that they did not have any unpleasant experiences.

4.4.1.7.4 Overall Impressions of School

In general the majority of students accepted school and its environment however, a substantial percentage, 41%, felt that school was boring overall.
4.4.2 Learning

In order to gain some insight into the student's self-esteem and their views on learning, they were asked to relate what tasks they thought they were good at doing.

4.4.2.1 Students' Thoughts on Learning

S39. Tell me what you think you are good at.
S40. When did you learn it?
S41. How did you learn it?
S42. Tell me more.
S43. Do you think that you learn things easily?
S44. Tell me more.

Chart 4-12 Areas Wherein Students Feel Successful

Their answers were primarily sport-based. Only six did not mention a sport of some kind. The period from which they learned an activity varied from kindergarten through to high school. They learned from watching, doing and practice or they were taught by friends, parents and teachers. Generally they did not feel that they learned easily when they answered question 43 but the manner in which question 39 was answered was usually confident.

Sport appeared to be the area wherein most of the students felt they were particularly proficient. They appeared confident and sure of their ability. Those
students who believed that they were good at specific school subjects also included a sport or craft.

When the students were answering Question 40, the answers they gave were mixed in with other information and it was difficult to determine with any precision exactly when they thought they learned. However, because they were in their early years at high school, it is reasonable to suggest that they probably learned most of the skills in and around Year 4 or 5 when they were searching for areas where they could feel important when their school work was not successful especially in view of their fears and worries of being good enough to be accepted by their peers (Howe, 1993).

Chart 4-13 How Students Learned a Skill

The students reported two learning approaches in response to Question S41. One was instruction and the other was emulation.

Fourteen of the students said that they learned from imitation and 13 students said that they learned through a formal mode of instruction.

For student questions S42 and S44 there was no additional information as the students felt that they had disclosed all they could about the subject.

The ease with which students believed they learned is displayed in Chart 4-14 which displays the responses to student question S43.
Most students felt that they did not learn the skills that they felt they were 'good at' easily. This could suggest that they lacked confidence even when they were learning something of interest to them. In speculation it could indicate also that they were without any knowledge of or exposure to the skill.

### 4.4.2.2 Parents on Skills and Ability of Child

- **P25.** Would you tell me what you think your child is good at?
- **P30.** Do you believe that your son/daughter has the ability to cope with the demands of school?
- **P37.** Does your child function normally in everyday life in spite of the reading/writing difficulties?
- **P38.** Is he/she good at crafts, art, music and/or working with his hands?
- **P39.** Is he/she helpful around the house?

In most cases the parents were able to report on some of the attributes that their child possessed including some personality traits such as a sense of humour and the ability to get along with others. Some reported that their child was good at sport or he was good at drawing, eating or just 'good company'.

### Table 4-5 Parent's Beliefs on Child's Ability to Cope With School

| 24 of the parents believed that their child had the ability to do well in school. | 4 believed that their child did not have the ability to cope with the demands of school. | 1 parent did not know whether or not the child could cope. |
Table 4-6 Parent's Beliefs on Child's Functioning in Everyday Life

|  |  
|---|---|
| 26 of the 29 parents believed that their child functioned normally in everyday life. | 3 parents believed that their child did not function normally in everyday life. |

All but one parent indicated that their child was good at crafts and many believed that their child worked well with his/her hands.

In response to question P39, 10 parents of the 29 reported that their child was helpful around the house. The other parents stated that if the children were asked to help they would do so.

The overall impression derived from the responses to question P39 was that the students did not have responsibilities in the home on a regular basis. They were not required to take the garbage out or to do the dishes, or other chores around the house on a regular basis. There was no indication here that the parents required the children to take some responsibility and to make a contribution to the welfare of the family.

4.4.3 Student Problems

S15. Tell me do you think that you have any problems in school?
S16. What do you think those problems are?
S17. How long have you been aware that you have had problems with school?
S18. Tell me about them.

In response to question S15, all but two students indicated that they had a problem with their lack of academic successes. Only three out of the large group mentioned as well as their academic problems other difficulties in the areas of fighting with
other students and/or they were getting into trouble with the teachers for their behaviour.

The prime difficulty areas were reading and mathematics and some of them indicated that they were encountering this trouble because they did not do enough work. When asked what he thought the problems were, one student expressed the conviction, as did some of the parents that it was

"Just that I don't often do them and at home I just muck around 'cause when I'm at school I get learned enough." S98

This suggests that not only the students but their parents seem to feel that school work is to be confined to school and during school times and that it does not have a place in the lives of students, or parents, after school hours. This attitude was not universal, however, it was expressed often enough to be notable.

The following chart indicates the years at which the students became aware of their academic problems.

It is apparent from the chart that although different students became aware of their difficulties at different times, the main school year which appears to have raised the most awareness is Year/Grade 5. The 'Always' column represents those students who indicated that they had always had a problem and the 'HS' column
displays the number of students who have just discovered their problem in high school.

The most prevalent reason offered for their academic problems was the students became aware that their peers could read faster and easier than they could and they realised that they were unable to read some of the material. This difficulty was exaggerated by their feelings of embarrassment and subsequent or accompanying lack of confidence which created the vicious circle.

### 4.4.3.1 Beliefs of Parents on Child’s Academic Standing

P13. Do you think that your child’s progress is average for their grade level?
P14. Do you think that they are capable of doing better in school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-7 Parents’ Beliefs on Academic Standing of Child</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below Average</td>
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</table>

Seventy-six per cent of the parents thought that their child was functioning at below average for their grade level and 14% thought that they were average while the others indicated either the child had improved, was above average or the parent did not know. When the school has rated these students as students with learning difficulties, it is surprising that only two thirds of the parents realise this.

The parents who believed that their child was functioning below average were those who were aware of the child’s performance at school. This information, as reported by parents, was gained through reports and interviews with teachers. The parents who believed that their child was average chose to support their child in the interview but also admitted that they were unaware of their child’s difficulties. The
parent who felt that the child was above average was likely to be informed about
the performance level of her child. This also applies to those parents who admitted
their ignorance.

Some of the replies made by this group were -

"I would like her to do better..." P1

"We'd like to think so" P80 or

"Yeah, there's some sort of a problem there...I used to read to him and he'd
look at the page for 25 minutes and only get through two lines. He just did
not know what he was reading. This was in 2nd class." P87

Answers such as these indicated that the parent was avoiding the question.

When the parents were asked if they thought that their child was capable of doing
better at school, question P14, all 29 parents believed that their child could improve
in their academic standing.

Some of the parents offered comments such as

"He wasn't ready for high school." P44

"She could do a lot better if she applied herself. N--- thinks school is for
putting in time." P1

"He doesn't use his ability. He doesn't work to his full potential." P78

4.4.3.2 Parent's Opinions on Child's Problems

P15. When did you become aware of any difficulties at school?
P16. What do you think is the cause of these difficulties?
P17. Are you aware of any incident or situations that might have been a
     negative experience for the child?
P19. Has your child had any unpleasant experiences in school?
P20. Has your child enjoyed school at any time - maybe the early years?
From Chart 4-16 it is apparent that most of the parents became aware of the learning problem of their child in Year 2 although Years 1 to 4 are also common years in which the learning problem became apparent. This varies considerably from the years that the students themselves became aware of their problems. (See Chart 4-15)

In response to question P16, the parents offered many reasons for this state of affairs. The most common was to blame the student for not listening or other similar reasons and secondly many parents felt that the problem was created by the school either through bad teachers or unfair treatment. One parent thought that it might be hereditary and another thought the cause was diet-related.

Question 17 elicited data on different family situations that were reported as being unpleasant. These situations included the breakdown of a marriage, abuse and the death of a family member.
School was indicated as another source from which the children had encountered unpleasant situations. Teachers were cited as the main source of the school problems. In most cases parents did not attribute blame to their children and in cases where the child was held to be responsible, parents made comments such as:

"Lack of confidence. I think he's frightened. He's had some run-ins with kids but not with teachers." P26

"Only growing up with a girlfriend who is top of the class and J- - can never beat her. They went to kindergarten together" P61

"He has his own mind - he never listens to an authority figure." P17

Other unpleasant school experiences were fights with other students. Most parents could not recall any school upsets.

The parents' comments on whether or not their child enjoyed school at any time were varied. Some of their comments were:

"She likes going to school. I think it's more friends than school work." P1

"Yes especially kindergarten and Grade 1 and the last of the Primary." P26

"Yeah, until fourth year in primary." P61
The negative remarks were:

"In his words he’s never liked school but he never complains about it." P94

"No not that I’m aware of.” P6

4.4.3.3 Student and Parent Beliefs on Overcoming Learning Disabilities

S28 Do you think you will grow out of it or do you think that this problem will be with you all your life?
P29 Do you believe that your son/daughter will grow out of this difficulty?
S30 How do you think the school can help?

Table 4-8 Beliefs of Students with Learning Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>17 students felt that they would grow out of problem.</th>
<th>4 believed that they would never be rid of the problem.</th>
<th>8 either hoped they would grow out of it or they did not know.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Table 4-9 Chances of Child Growing Out of Learning Problem as Viewed by Parent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>13 parents believed that their child would grow out of the problem.</th>
<th>8 believed that their child would never grow out of the problem.</th>
<th>8 parents hoped that the child would grow out of the problem or they did not know.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
When the responses from the students and the parents were compared on the Topic Analysis Form, it was found that 51% were in agreement on their beliefs that the student would grow out of the problem.

When asked how the school could help, the students offered many suggestions:

- Have special tutors
- Have special reading classes
- Have teachers teach them how to learn
- Teach them how to read

It is interesting to consider the two final suggestions. Apparently these are areas which the students felt had been seriously neglected, perhaps not because they had not been addressed, but because the students had not mastered the concepts. They had not learned how to learn or to read and they were aware of this fact.

4.4.3.4 Students' Beliefs on Parents' Views

S57 Do you think that your parents believe that you have a problem at school?

S58 Do they care?

When students were asked if their parents thought they had a problem, all but seven parents, as reported by the students, knew that they had a problem with their school work. However, unanimously students felt that their parents cared. During the interview process the parents gave this same impression.

4.4.4 Teachers

P18 Do you think that your child has always had good teachers?
Over half of the parents believed that their children had not always had good teachers and were able to name the teachers and the grades of those who they felt were not satisfactory.

“No. Miss R. who was his 2nd class teacher. He never wanted to stay at school with her.” P26

“No. Teachers can have favourites and they can pick on certain ones....” P58

“I think the teacher in second class really put him off. She didn’t have very good things to say about him. It was difficult to explain things to him - sometimes it took two or three times and then he would get it. He’s very shy and easily embarrassed. Both the Year 2 and 4 teachers were not good. His Year 6 teacher was one of my teachers. She was strict but if you did your best it was all right.” P96

4.4.4.1 Students’ Beliefs About School

S83 What was your best class?
S84 Why?
S85 What was your worst?
S86 Why?

4.4.4.1.1 Best Year at School

Chart 4-19 Best Year at School

Year 6 was the most popular class for these students, followed closely by Years 5 and 4. There was a sudden decrease in the choices for Years 3 and 2 and not one student chose Year 1. Only one selected Kindergarten as
Fifty-five per cent of the students thought that the teachers were the main reason that they had a good year. Some of their comments were:

"Because she was the best teacher around." S14

"Because we always used to have fun. We always made up games for figuring out reading and stuff like that" S4

"She was my favourite teacher" S58

"Because we had a choice teacher" S93

"She was really nice and if you didn’t get something you could go up to the teacher and she wouldn’t yell or anything." S80

It is difficult to establish the qualities by which teachers have been judged but the data suggests that a good teacher is someone who can relate to children and understands how they react to being shouted at or know that it is important to make learning fun.

The reasons with which the students justified their choice of the best year at school are displayed in Chart 4-20. The reasons represented in the ‘Other’ category were expressed only once by one student each. These reasons were ‘bludged’, (slang for they did not do any work) ‘learned a lot’, ‘soccer’, ‘friends’, ‘good year’ and ‘did a lot of things’.

Chart 4-20 Reasons for Students’ Choice of Best Year

![Chart showing reasons for choosing the best year at school]

136
4.4.4.1.2 Worst Year at School

The worst class as shown in Chart 4-21 presented as Year 2. Years 4 and 6 tied for second worst year. Everyone seemed happy with their year at Kindergarten and Year 1 since they were not mentioned; and Year 3 was the worst for only 14%.

Chart 4-21 Worst Year at School

As can be seen in Chart 4-22, twenty-five of the students did not like their classes because of the teacher. Either the teacher shouted at them or shouted at the class or the students believed that they were treated unfairly. Some comments include:

"Because of the teacher." S16, 26, 23, 83, 82, 44, 71, 93

"Cause I didn't like the teacher and she didn't like me." S3

"Cause the teacher at T. used to yell at you" S78

"The teacher Mr. H. embarrassed you all the time." S83

Chart 4-22 Reasons for Students' Choice of Worst Year

The remaining students either declined to give a reason or they said that they just did not like the year. Two of the students said that they did not have any bad years and therefore are not included in the total displayed in Chart 4-21.
4.4.4.2 Students' Perceptions of Good Teachers

S77 Have you had what you consider good teachers?
S78 Tell me about them.

The responses to students' question S77 produced the following data: 55% of the students indicated that they have had what they consider 'good teachers' and 24% said that they occasionally had this experience while 21% said that they had never had 'good teachers'.

The intent of these questions initially was to let the students recount what they wanted, however, after the first interview wherein the student related all of her grades separately, it was then decided to follow this format for the remaining students. Therefore, when question 77 was asked, the answers to 78 were included and if the students did not go through each grade then they were led to responding with 'Well tell me about Kindergarten, Year 1 et cetera'. The intent was to collect information on the teachers that the students felt were good teachers. The purpose of question 79 was to collect data on poor teachers. Chart 4-23 displays the information that was gathered from questions 77 and 78 which combined all of the primary years and the information covered the good and bad teachers.

The positive upper side represents teachers that were rated with positive comments. The lower side of the chart displays those years in which the students were not happy with their
teacher. There were a number of students who could not remember specific years and these are shown in Table 4-10 below. It is of noteworthy that the students could not remember their early teachers yet they were only four or five years away from that period. The students who could not remember are not included in Chart 4-23. The fact that some subjects could not remember some teachers raises the issue of - why? Perhaps they did not want to remember. Freud's notion of 'motivated forgetting' gives the basis of an interesting mini-hypothesis. A quick straw-poll (survey) of eight Year 12 students showed that all of these students could remember their early teachers. For comments on parents response to their remembering their teachers (see Section 4.4.4.4)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Year</th>
<th>K</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Recollection</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is evident that Years 2 and 5 were the most unpopular years in the opinion of the students. This appears to take place at a crucial time in the child's school career. It is in Year 2 that the students start to settle into a more quiet mode and begin to develop a dependent association with the teacher. This is also an important year for the development of self-esteem Howe, (1993).

During Grade/Year 5 the students move into the pre-adolescent stage and with it brings the concern of being embarrassed. Again, this is the year in which serious problems can occur (Howe 1993).

4.4.4.3 Students' Perceptions of Poor Teachers

S79  Tell me about the ones that you think weren't so good.
S80  What did they do that made you think that?
These questions asked for the same information after questions S77 and S78 had been asked and the results are reported below.

Chart 4-24 Worst Teachers as Reported by Students

It is apparent from the collected results that Year 2 is disproportionately remembered. One possible explanation for this is that this is the year in which reading becomes very important and another is that it is approximately at this age there are dynamic changes occurring in the whole child (Howe 1993).

Some of the comments that the students offered when they were asked what the teachers did to make them feel this were:

"Year 3 we just did stories then too. She yelled and said ‘How many times do I have to tell you?’ and she would put her head against the wall and bang it.” S80

"Yelled ‘Do it right now!’ When you’re yelled at you feel upset inside.” S83

"She just did things like if you wanted to go to the toilet she would give you one minute and if you didn’t make it back in time she would give you a detention for lunch.” S98

"The teacher used to -. Well say you’re in trouble once and you can never earn your way back into being good.” S82

A number of these comments which are represented by multiple answers reflect disillusionment and underlying anger at unfair treatment. I began to feel that there
was a misuse of power and a lack of respect that teachers sometimes have for students who are still in their formative years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yelled at by Teacher</th>
<th>Hit by Teachers</th>
<th>Unfair Treatment</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>No Poor Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**4.4.4.4 Parents' Recollection of Their Early Teachers**

**P7**  Can you remember your early teachers?

Most of the parents could remember their early teachers. Two of the parents could relate many details of their early years at school. There were others who could remember some:

"I can remember my kindergarten teacher Miss G. her name was. I remember my Year 3 teacher Mrs. D. and I can remember things we did in that class. First and 2nd classes I can't remember anything about that." P87

While others cannot remember any:

"Can't remember. High School are the first teachers I can remember." P44

It is interesting to note that some people have very vivid memories and others either do not want to remember or genuinely forget.

**4.4.5 Self-Esteem**

**S92**  Tell me do you think you are dumb or stupid?
S21  How do you feel about the fact that you have difficulty reading or doing maths?

Students were asked whether or not they felt that they were dumb or stupid. Ten of the group declared that they did indeed feel dumb but the remainder stated that they did not feel inadequate. Some of the comments were:

"About a little bit under average. I don't think I'm that dumb but I'm a little bit dumb." S96

"Yeah I suppose but that's my fault and no one else's" S98

"Sometimes 'cause sometimes I cry 'cause I say I'm stupid and I don't want to be." S23

"I'm OK really. No I don't think I'm dumb." S94

If one can assume that these students responded honestly, and my prolonged engagement with them convinces me they did, then this suggests that the self-esteem of the majority of the students was healthy and they felt generally satisfied with themselves. Although they indicated that they felt 'dumb' or 'stupid' when they were discussing their skills in reading and writing, this did not necessarily extend into their everyday life and their overall self-perception.

When asked how they felt about the fact that they had difficulty with reading or doing mathematics Chart 4-27 indicates in percentages the feelings of the students regarding this facet of self-esteem.
As can be seen by the chart, a large majority of the students felt inadequate when they found that they couldn’t read or write as well as their peers. Mathematics also created similar feelings of inadequacy. This belief can be expected to add to the perpetuation of failure.

4.4.5.1 Students' Views For Future

S26 Tell me what you are going to do when you leave school.
S90 When do you think that you will leave school?
P31. Do you have any idea what your child is likely to do when he/she grows up?
S27 Do you think you will have trouble getting a job because of your difficulties in reading and maths?
S31 What do you think you will use reading and writing for when you leave school?

Students were asked what they were going to do when they left school and when they thought that they would leave school. The majority indicated their desire to pursue a trade or an occupation that is skill-based. Some examples were: policewoman, butcher, carpenter, and truck driver. The occupations that were mentioned by the students fell primarily into the blue-collar category. Most of the students did not seem to be without ambition as 22 stated a definite interest in at least one occupation that interested them.

When parents were asked what they thought their child would like to work at after leaving school, only 12 parents knew what their child
wanted to do, the rest either guessed something different than what the student had indicated or they said that they did not know.

This should not be interpreted to mean that the parents did not care or that they were not interested rather it could indicate that there was little importance placed on the occupational future of the child at this point in the child’s life.

In response to student question S27, wherein the students were asked whether or not they thought that they would have trouble getting a job because of their learning difficulties in reading and maths, their beliefs are illustrated in Chart 4-29.

Most of the students felt that they would have difficulty getting a job but some did not.

Chart 4-29 Difficulty Obtaining a Job

- Difficult: 55%
- No Difficulty: 31%
- Don't Know: 14%

Chart 4-30 Use of Reading and Writing After Leaving School

- Work: 41%
- Personal: 28%
- Work & Personal: 31%

‘No not to be a butcher you don’t really need it’ S69

‘I don’t know. You don’t really need maths to be a park ranger that is if I get the job.’ S 71

Chart 4-30 depicts students' impressions of the usefulness of reading and writing.
The questions on what they thought they would use reading and writing for were coded to reflect either personal use or work related use. There is an overlap in the percentages because some of the students concluded that they would need them for both personal and work activities. Examples provided were writing letters, cheques, reading mortgage papers and letters.

Students were asked when they thought they would finish school. The results are found in Chart 4-31. Most of the students intended to stay in school until they had completed Year 12 but only 10% expected to continue on to the TAFE/Technical College or university. Considering the difficulty that they were encountering in school, it is interesting to note that their belief in education overrides the frustration of lower grades. Whether this belief is strong enough to counteract and turn around their success rate at learning is yet to be known.
4.5 Literacy

4.5.1 Reading

The following section reports on the literacy beliefs of the students, parents and teachers and although there may be argument to include these topics under the large umbrella of Beliefs, these topics address different attitudes and different areas of the learning disabled student's life.

Table 4-11 Organisation of Question Responses on Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Section Reference</th>
<th>Student Questions</th>
<th>Parent Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Beliefs on Reading and Writing</td>
<td>4.5.1.1</td>
<td>53, 33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents on Reading Problem</td>
<td>4.5.1.2</td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Learning How</td>
<td>4.5.1.3</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>27, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading and Books</td>
<td>4.5.1.4</td>
<td>35, 36, 37</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and Books</td>
<td>4.5.1.5</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading When Young</td>
<td>4.5.1.6</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning to Read</td>
<td>4.5.1.7</td>
<td>7, 8, 9, 10, 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs on Teaching of Reading</td>
<td>4.5.1.8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Readers</td>
<td>4.5.1.9</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Reading</td>
<td>4.5.1.10</td>
<td>22a, 22b, 23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences with Reading</td>
<td>4.5.1.11</td>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading &amp; Spelling</td>
<td>4.5.1.12</td>
<td>50, 51</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing and Learning How</td>
<td>4.5.2.1</td>
<td>12, 13, 14, 52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Writers</td>
<td>4.5.2.1</td>
<td>45, 46, 47</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
<td>4.5.3</td>
<td>19, 20</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers' Assessments</td>
<td>4.6.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioural Assessments</td>
<td>4.6.2.1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Assessments</td>
<td>4.6.2.2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Disappearance of LD</td>
<td>4.6.2.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>STLD Beliefs</td>
<td>4.6.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
This section’s purpose is to focus on the students’ and parents’ responses to reading, writing and mathematics. Included also, are the assessments made by the teachers of the students in this study. These assessments include academic functioning levels as well as the assessments on the behavioural and emotional states of the students.

The results of the interviews with the principals of the feeder schools can be found at the end of the section.

### 4.5.1.1 Student Beliefs on the Importance of Reading and Writing

S53. *Do you believe that learning to read and write well is important?*

S33. *Do you think reading and writing are important?*

All of the students with one exception believed that learning to read and write well was important. They indicated that the acquisition of these skills aided them in their personal lives and provided them with marketable skills for job procurement.

### 4.5.1.2 Parent Beliefs on Their Child’s Reading Problems

P12. *Do you think that your son/daughter really has a reading problem?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4-12 Parents Beliefs on Students’ Reading Problem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>66% of the parents believed that their child had a reading problem</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two-thirds of the parents were aware that their child was encountering difficulties with reading. The rest of the parents chose to either ignore the question, were unable to respond or felt that there was not a problem.
4.5.1.3 Reading and Learning How

S56. Tell me, do you think that reading is important to your parents?
P27. Do you like to read?
P5. When did you learn to read?

It appeared from the responses that 24 of the students thought that reading was important to their parents and the remaining five either did not know or were not sure. The parents, however, did not concur with some of the answers given by their children. In only 52% of the cases was there agreement with the child. The remainder indicated that they either did not like to read or they liked to read but did not have the time.

Some parents said they enjoyed reading, however it is possible that they thought that that was the appropriate answer to give. Further, of the 20 parents who indicated that they liked to read, their replies were, on the whole, very short and non-elaborative. A large number replied in limited sentences if not in monosyllables. For example, "Yes" "Yeah"

"Yes I love it." P16

"Yes I like to read but I cannot find the time to read" P58.

It is possible that many of these parents in reality, do not read perhaps because they find it difficult. One parent’s response provided a clear indication of this speculation.
"Yes - not really - sometimes spelling is hard." P4

These comments, their body language and tone of voice alerted me to the possibility they were avoiding the question. However, nine parents said that they did not like to read at all.

Parents estimated the Years/Grades in which they learned to read in response to P5. The following Chart 4-33 relates the outcome.

Chart 4-33 Year in Which Parents Learned to Read

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yr 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yr 2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yr 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr 6</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
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<tr>
<td>DNR</td>
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</table>

Nearly one-third of the parents did not remember (DNR), when they learned to read. As can be seen from Chart 4-33 some of the parents thought that they learned to read as late as Year 5.

It is possible that this is an indication that they, like their children, did not fully grasp the reading concept in any depth in the early years of primary school and therefore are unsure of when the whole process started or perhaps they all had different views about what we mean by reading.

4.5.1.4 Reading and Books

S35. Do your parents read books or newspapers?
S36. How many books do you have in your house?
S37. What kind of books are they?
P28. What do you read - books? newspapers?
From the child's point of view, their parents read 'fat' books, newspapers and magazines. The students reported that 38% of the parents read novels but the majority did not. When novels were selected they were frequently those that could be categorised as those of a romance series. Fifty-nine per cent of the parents admitted that they did not read anything but newspapers and magazines.

However, all but one of the students thought the family owned a large number of books and a few emphasised that they owned encyclopaedias and dictionaries. Yet on investigation the majority of the books about which they were referring were primarily children's books, magazines or information books on animals and nature. Very little was mentioned about the family owning novels even though some of the students related that their parents read novels and owned many books. On my visits to the homes I did not see any sign of books however there were newspapers and magazines.

There appears to be an inconsistency in the responses to the reading questions regarding the quantity and quality of the material the parents read. There were some who ventured into novels,

"Romances.", P78

"Newspapers and books - non-fiction but mostly newspapers." P82

"Books, newspapers and Catherine Cookston, she's my favourite." P61

If some parents report that the majority of their reading is "Newspapers and light books.", "Newspapers and magazines.", "Nothing really only magazines.", then they could be sending the message that other types of reading are not an important part of everyday life.
4.5.1.4.1 Beliefs and Books

S32. What do you consider to be a good book?

Over a third of the students were able to name an actual book or authors with which they were familiar when asked for books they deemed 'good'. Another third knew the different genres but the remaining third indicated that magazines or books that were easy to read were favourites.

4.5.1.5 Reading When Young

S55. Did they (the Parents) read to you when you were younger?
P26. Did you ever read to him/her when s/he was little?

There was discrepancy between the answers from the parents and children. Fifty-one per cent of the parent responses did not agree with those of their child. Most of the students replied "yes" to the question but their parents did not always agree. This query seems to elicit a large degree of confusion in memories of both child and parent. One possible explanation could be that the child, having heard somewhere in his/her school career that it was important for parents to read to their children and thus they did not want to let the parent appear neglectful or perhaps the students just wanted/wished that their parent had in fact done this. On the other hand the parents may have forgotten the times that they did or did not read to their children. This is possible if reading was undertaken infrequently. Hence neither child or parent may have provided a reliable response.

4.5.1.6 Learning to Read

S7. Tell me when did you learn to read.
S8. What do you remember about learning to read?
S9. How did you learn to read?
S10. Was it easy?
S11. Do you like to read?

Most of the students felt that they had learned to read in Kindergarten and Year 1. There were some students who said they could not remember learning to read and those students were ones who had experienced some family disruption during those early years. One parent whose initial marriage was dissolved during the time when the student was about four or five indicated this was when he was difficult to handle.

“His father may have put things in his mind when he was about five.” P 71

“J’s dad left when he was three or four and J used to see him regularly but now his dad got married and doesn’t come by anymore.” P 84

“In Year 1 this was when my marriage split up. I had him in pre-school five days a week since he was three and one-half. It took him about two months to settle in there. He used to scream and cry when I left and he always did that after holidays. After a break in school and he would go back he would be unsettled for a week or so. This was in Year 1 and part of Year 2.” P87

Another family experienced a similar disruption, with an initial marital separation followed by the male defacto’s death. These situations are brought forth here to introduce factors that could have influenced the acquisition of reading skills.

In response to students S8 and S9, the students remembered a variety of aspects about learning to read but one of the most common was the use of books sometimes
with 'pictures and words'. The students reported that they were required to repeat the words after a demonstration by the teacher. They also related that they tried to read the words which many indicated that they didn’t know and therefore the task was made difficult. They said that they remembered learning to read from cards with letters or words on them, and then they would repeat the words after the teacher. In a few cases the students mentioned that they had to learn the words by breaking them into sounds. Here are some of their comments:

“When I can read I can read long words but not short ones. When I was in Year 6, I had this reading course with a teacher when she taught us about vowels.” S23

“It was hard cause you didn’t know the words” S26

“We used to get little books with a picture and its name and writing next to it. Then we tried to read it.” S27

“The teacher sitting next to you then you have to say the words and when you get them wrong then the teacher corrects and you have to try and sound it out.” S35

“I just remember sitting down on the floor and the Big Book was on the stand and the teacher used to say the word and then we had to say the word.” S94

“The teacher pointed with a ruler and she said the words slowly and we had to say it after her.” S94

In response to question S10, when the students were asked if they thought that learning to read was easy, 48% of the students felt that learning to read was difficult while 24% thought that it was easy and a further 24% thought that it was 'sort of' easy and 3% said that they didn’t know.
Whether the students liked to read or not was indicated in their responses to students question S11, (Chart 4-35). Thirty-eight per cent said that they did not like to read, 28% said that they liked to read and 34% declared that they only liked to read sometimes.

4.5.1.7 Beliefs on Teaching Reading

S34. How do you think that it could be taught better?

Two thirds of the students provided many suggestions on how they thought the school could teach reading and writing better. The proffered suggestions seemed to deal with the mechanisms with which the material is taught rather than the material itself. For example:

"Going step by step." S61

"If they explain it a bit more." S69

"Only some of the teachers - some teachers yell. Miss P. yells - they need to be calm." S83

"By going slower and more period time." S26

"By giving us spelling work to do. Maybe take us out of the classroom one by one to read part of the book." S3

"Write more stories." S80

"Do more of it - we don't really do much of it in school." S94
Other suggestions were that tutoring could be provided either by the teachers or some other qualified person.

4.5.1.8 Qualities of a Good Reader From LD Students' Perspective

S48 Do you know anyone who is a good reader?
S49 What do they do when they are reading that makes you think they are good?

All of the students knew someone whom they considered a good reader. They listed three constituent aspects in their opinion that made someone a good reader. The most common was that the person was able to read 'fast'. Secondly, the good reader does not make any mistakes and on a smaller percentage the reader reads a great deal which is considered in the chart as 'Experience'.

4.5.1.9 Students on Reading

S22 Can you tell me something of how you feel when you are asked to read
a. aloud
b. silently?
S23 Do you have any idea what caused you to feel this way?

Chart 4-36 Students' Beliefs on What Makes a Good Reader

Students when asked how they felt when they were asked to read aloud related the following:
Table 4-13 Students on Reading

<table>
<thead>
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<th>14 were nervous and/or embarrassed when asked to read out loud</th>
<th>2 said they refused to read aloud</th>
<th>6 do as they are asked</th>
<th>3 like to read aloud</th>
<th>4 were afraid when asked to read aloud</th>
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</thead>
</table>

The reactions regarding how they felt when they read silently were unanimously positive.

“When I read by myself I do a lot better and I’m not nervous.” S15

“I’m all right ‘cause if I make a mistake I can go back and fix it up.” S23

“Not so bad then, no one can hear me reading.” S93

Most of these students could not explain what caused them to feel the way that they did. There were a few who offered some ideas on the matter. For example,

“’Cause people might laugh at me or laugh at my mistakes” S15

“’Cause you’re scared if you can’t read any further and everybody teases you” S23

“’Cause people could read before me and I felt left out” S61

4.5.1.10 Experiences Connected to Reading

S25. Can you remember anything that happened to you that made you feel uncomfortable about reading?

The majority (69%) of students did not have any recollection of any unpleasant experience that they related to reading. The remaining students had had experiences where they were laughed at or they just couldn’t read the passage and
therefore felt embarrassed. One student had been shouted at by a teacher. Here are two comments made by students:

"In the front of class if I couldn't get a word then I would worry about what the others were thinking." S83

"Yeah, I was reading and I read a long word wrong and everybody laughed at me. I felt embarrassed and then I just didn't want to read any more in case I made a mistake." S94

4.5.1.11 Reading and Spelling

S50. When you come to a word in reading that you don't know, what do you do?
S51. How do you spell a word that you may not know?

When the students came to a word in reading that they didn't know, 80% said they would sound it out.

On spelling a word, 62% said that they sounded out a word if they didn't know how to spell it. One said,

"Take the first three letters and then the next three letters." S27

Another said

"Write it out and if it doesn't look right then I try again." S3

4.5.2 Writing

4.5.2.1 Writing and Learning How

S12. When did you learn to write?
S13. What do you remember about learning to write?
S14. Do you write other than at school?
S52. How would you go about writing something?
The majority of the students felt that they had learned to write in Kindergarten; in all cases but one they were referring to penmanship.

The primary methods by which they learned penmanship was by copying from the board, a book/card or tracing over letters or text.

"I can remember writing sentences and doing guideline/tracing. I had writing like that in third grade. - everybody did." S15

"I remember that I did writing in a book. It was a writing book and she used to write it on the board and you had to try to write it down." S1

"They'd give you a card that had lines on it and the teacher would write on the board and you had to copy it. When you got into 2nd class you would write sentences." S69

"Writing in big letters. Have to look at pictures and copy off them." S78

The majority indicated that they wrote to friends or had a penpal to whom they wrote but did not write other than what was required at school or homework.
If they were required to write a story most of the students said that they just started writing although there were a significant number that would think before beginning to write. As can be seen in Chart 4-38 those that chose to just start writing nearly equals the group who maintained that they would think first and then begin to write. The students in the 'Other' section declared various alternative methods.

"Get someone else to do it." S1

"Think of a story and copy bits out of stories that you've read or just think of stuff and write it down as a story." S44

4.5.2.2 Good Writers

S45.  Do you think that you are a good writer?

S46.  Do you know anyone who is a good writer?

S47.  Why do you think they are a good writer?

The majority (59%) of students do not think that they were good writers. From the responses made by the students the interpretation on the word 'write' was used to infer the writing of stories by 41% and penmanship in 38% of the
cases. Twenty-one per cent did not provide answers that could be definitely understood one way or another.

Chart 4-40 Those who Knew a Good Writer

Chart 4-40 portrays the proportion of students who knew someone whom they thought was a good writer.

All but one student knew someone whom they thought was a good writer. Occasionally this meant the writer of stories whereas other times it meant good penmanship. The proportions are shown above in the preceding paragraph.

There were a number of reasons offered for their choice and decision on who was a good writer and who was not. The three main reasons were: individuals could write neatly, wrote often and large amounts and writing good stories. This does not support the previous findings that indicated 41% of the students took the meaning as writing used for story writing.
There were a number that stated that the people they considered better writers were those who learned the skill faster than they did. Those that fell within the ‘Other’ category included such statements as;

"...they enter competitions and they always win them and I think they are a good writer." S69

"'Cause she’s a teacher." S93

4.5.3 Mathematics

Since literacy and numeracy are frequently connected with learning disabilities a small investigation into the numeracy aspect was conducted.

P9. Did you do well at Maths?
S19. Do you have trouble with mathematics?
S20 Why do you think you have difficulty?

Table 4-14 Parents' Opinion of Their Own Mathematical Ability

| 10 felt that they were 'good' at math | 13 felt that they did not have mathematical ability | 5 indicated that they were not bad at maths | 1 avoided answering the question |

These results clearly indicate that 52% of the parents believed that they were able to cope with mathematics as they knew it to an approximate average of Year 9 which
was the mean school leaving year for them. Some of their comments demonstrate their views.

"Yes I did actually. I was really good at math." P4

"I was not in the higher class. I was in the average class." P82

"From about 5th Class when I had a good teacher. She explained things." P98

The other group however who felt they were not as successful as they would have liked to be had these comments.

"No. I can tell you that distinctly. I think I scraped through for a mark for neatness to get 50%." P87

"No. Never had - only enough to get an intermediate certificate (Year/Grade 9/10) in maths." P78

"No not at all. I'm still pretty hopeless now unless I have a calculator with me. Sometimes I think I'm lazy. Why should I do it when I can ask someone else?" P36

Figure 4-6 Student Views on Mathematics

![Diagram showing student views on mathematics]

The student questions pertained to their ideas of their math skills.

Of the 29 students, 19 thought they had problems with mathematics, 10 did not. Of those who thought they had difficulty, the most frequently stated reason provided by the students was that they did not learn easily or quickly. There were others who
just did not know why they had difficulty. A few reported that they did not know the basics such as adding or the times tables (multiplication tables).

"Times tables - I only know my times tables up to 4, 10, 11 and 12 but the ones in between I get confused." S36

"When you move around a bit then you do some things in some schools that you don’t do in others and you don’t know the work." S6

"Cause I can’t add up properly.” S14

"I don’t know my times tables. I can only do 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 but I can’t do 6, 7, 8, 9. I can do 10 but not 11 or 12.” S23

Some of the problems regarding their difficulties with maths are shown in Figure 4-6. Those students who indicated that they had difficulty learning had these comments.

"It depends on what we do. If we do fractions I can do some but others I can’t.” S84

"Probably because I don’t pay that much attention.” S93

"Long division, I don’t go too good but I’m OK at the rest of the stuff.” S94

4.6 Teachers’ Beliefs and Assessments of LD Students

In this section there are three tables that reflect the assessments that the teachers provided on each student in the study. The data were arranged so that the reader has all of the academic information gathered from each school on each student as assessed by the teachers of the study.

An explanation of the columns and the computations follows after the tables.
## Table 4-15 Teachers' Assessment of Students School 30

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<td>26</td>
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<tr>
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<td>59</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>-2</td>
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<tr>
<td>61</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In school 59 the Special Education teacher was also the English teacher and therefore there is no separate evaluation. Also this teacher did not display knowledge about the Learning Disability problem. She informed me that these students she had identified were of low functioning ability and her programming reflected this belief. Her expectations for their success and advancement were
placed at a basic level. Her evaluations are closer to the guidelines that were
provided to her at the beginning of the study. Probably due to her lack of
knowledge of the LD problem, she made her evaluations close to the requirements,
i.e., the students were functioning at least two years behind, had normal
intelligence, and were without any other obvious impairment. As a consequence the
assessment taken from School 59 cannot be considered as informed and
knowledgeable as those from the other two schools where the teachers were more
aware of Learning Disabilities.

Kraayenoord and Elkins (1994) explain that there has always been a shortage of
trained special education teachers which forced the schools to place untrained
teachers in these remedial positions. It is therefore, understandable that this teacher
was unable to fully understand what was asked of her.

4.6.1 Chart Explanation

Main Heading - Codes

- Under this section there are three columns. Each column displays the code
  number for the student, the school and the teacher.

Main Heading - Assessed Years Behind

- Under this heading there are five columns each of which contain the
  individual teacher's assessment on the specific student. The teachers
  estimated the number of years that the student was functioning behind his
  chronologically expected level. The headings of each column are: Reading, Writing, Oral, Comprehension and Mathematics.
Main Heading - Averages

- There are three columns under this heading. The first is the average assessed years behind and this value was calculated by adding the first four columns across under Assessed Years Behind for both evaluating teachers and dividing the total by eight.

- The second column displays the Average of the Reading, Writing and Comprehension score. This figure was calculated by adding the three assessed values by each teacher and dividing the total by three.

- The Average Mathematics score was calculated by adding the two assessed values and dividing the total by two.

Main Heading - Functioning Grade

- There are two columns under this heading. The value displayed in the first column was calculated by subtracting the actual grade level from the Average Reading, Writing and Comprehension value. This allows us to realise at what level these students are actually functioning.

- The Mathematics functioning grade was calculated by taking the actual grade level and subtracting the mathematics average value.

4.6.2 Teacher Beliefs on Behavioural and Emotional Aspects

4.6.2.1 Teachers’ Beliefs on the Existence of Behavioural Problems

The results from this section of the Educational Research Data Form (Appendix F) showed that five of the students were unanimously assessed by their teachers as
having a behavioural problem. Twelve students received mixed assessments. To explain further, there was disagreement between the three teachers on the behavioural assessment.

However, when the comments from those teachers who indicated that there was a behavioural problem are taken into consideration, such as:

"short attention span; needs prompts to remind her about task" T10
"very quiet" T97
"becomes restless because he cannot do work;" T 85 or
"very defeatist does not try and gives up" T29.

these are not indications that these students present as major behavioural problems.

Ten of the students received comments that gave clear indications they exhibited a lack of control over their behaviour in class. Comments such as:

"bully and disruptive in class" T85,
"difficult to stay on task - show-off and tries to impress others" T42
"very unsettled student whose loudness always gets him into trouble" T66

support the opinions of the teachers that there exists a perceived lack of self-discipline and a scarcity of reasonable judgement on the part of the students.

4.6.2.2 Teachers' Beliefs on Students' Emotional Problems

The results from this section of the form indicated the teachers reported unanimously that three of the students had emotional problems. The term 'emotional problems' was not defined and the interpretation was left to the teachers. Twenty of the students were assessed and again there were mixed responses, that is not all three teachers agreed on a specific student. This may suggest that the
teachers guessed on the emotional stability of the students without any concrete basis for their opinion.

The comments by the assessing teachers however, were not always supportive of their emotional problem assessments. The fact that a thirteen year old student acts 'immaturely' (T49, T42, T10, T38, T66), surely cannot be a strong indicator of emotional problems. On the other hand, comments such as

"suffers persecution complex" T29,

"low self-esteem, nervous" T42, and

"at times withdrawn, bit of a loner, low self-esteem" T97

provides an indication that there may be an emotional problem.

In summary, in order to look at the evaluations of the different teachers from different disciplines, the evaluations made by the Support Teacher Learning Difficulties showed that 17 students were assessed with emotional problems. The English teachers on the other hand evaluated 12 students as having emotional problems while the mathematics teachers comments as reported 9 emotional problems.

4.6.2.3 Teachers on the Eventual Disappearance of LD for These Students

From the teachers who completed the Educational Research Data Form (Appendix F), there were only 8 unanimous responses to the question on whether or not the teachers thought that the students would grow out of the learning difficulties problem. The remaining answers were not in agreement which indicated that perhaps the teachers really did not know and were perhaps their guess was the best answer that they could provide.
4.6.3 The Beliefs of the Support Teachers Learning Difficulties

1. **What criteria are used to identify the students who are withdrawn for the purposes of remedial lessons?**

2. **In relationship to the students that are given this help, what are your views on the causes of their Learning Difficulties.**

3. **To what degree do you believe that you can help these children?**

4. **What criteria did you use to select the students for this study?**

The three STLDs were asked to respond to the Questions for Teachers form, (Appendix G). The four questions were initially to be answered through the interview process in the same manner as the students and the parents. However, only the first teacher was able to be interviewed; the other two teachers preferred to answer the questions in writing. Unfortunately their written responses were short and succinct and were not nearly as thoroughly answered as those of the first teacher.

The teachers used referrals from other teachers, school records, parent requests, students requests, and recommendations from the primary school support teachers or counsellors to identify the needy students. All of the teachers used the Gapadol Reading Comprehension Test (McLeod and Anderson 1972) as the major initial assessment since it can be administered at one time to a whole class. The results are reasonably accurate and the divisions allow the STLD to put in place strategies to help the students at a level wherein they are functioning.

All of the teachers provided a wide range of reasons that they believed were the primary causes of learning difficulties. Some of these were:

- frequent change of school during the primary years;
- traumatic home life;
- health problems;
• substance abuse;
• school phobia;
• lack of early identification of problems in literacy and numeracy which lead to failure;
• bad primary school experiences.

One teacher suggested that a poor socio-economic background plays a major role in the problems and further she suggested that these students are afraid to take risks.

The responses to question 3, were varied. One teacher was non-committal as to whether or not she could help the students, one teacher felt that there was really not much hope that she could help and the third teacher indicated that if they were motivated then they could learn provided they were given a specialised programme.

4.7 Principals

The principals interviews were conducted in an open and unstructured manner.

The basic preliminary questions used to introduce the areas of concern were:

1. What is the average age of the teaching staff?

2. How would you decide what grades/years the teachers would teach? or How do you place teachers in specific classes?

The principals informed me that all of the teachers in this region have experience of ten years or more. The implication here is that there are few new and inexperienced teachers in this area.
Three of the six principals proposed that they would assign Year 1 to inexperienced, young teachers. Two suggested that Year 4, one of these principals also included Year 3 the other said not Year 3.

Four principals indicated that an inexperienced teacher should never be put in Kindergarten or Year 6, the final year before high school.

It was apparent during the interview process that all of the principals were apprehensive and slightly guarded with their responses. There seemed to be some political issue at stake which prevented them from being totally open. One principal spoke voluminously but never did answer the questions. It is difficult to be totally sure of the reasons for this behaviour but I have been informed by a member of the Department that politics is very important and it is necessary to participate in the political arena if one is to further their career. As this information was gathered at a time when there was a change in the Government, then perhaps these principals felt that they had to be careful of what they said. This would explain why one principal in particular did not answer the questions which thus affected the results of the survey.

After speaking to a retired superintendent, I became aware that it is the practice of the Departments of School Education to place the inexperienced teachers in Years 2 and 3 as these classes are considered ‘soft’ years.
4.8 Nutrition, Health, Sports, et cetera

This section addresses aspects of nutrition, health, sports, friends, social, family and the environment.

Table 4-18 Organisation of Question Responses Under Nutrition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Section Reference</th>
<th>Student Questions</th>
<th>Parent Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Nutrition</td>
<td>4.8.1</td>
<td>73, 74, 75, 76</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours of Rest</td>
<td>4.8.2</td>
<td>71, 72</td>
<td>23, 24</td>
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<td>Sports</td>
<td>4.8.3</td>
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<td>Friends</td>
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<td>Television</td>
<td>4.8.5</td>
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<td>21, 22</td>
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<td>Sparetime</td>
<td>4.8.6</td>
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<td>Computers</td>
<td>4.8.7</td>
<td>67, 68, 69</td>
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<td>Medication</td>
<td>4.8.8</td>
<td>76a</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth and Head Injuries</td>
<td>4.8.9</td>
<td></td>
<td>40, 41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sibling / Family</td>
<td>4.8.10</td>
<td>59, 60</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Problems</td>
<td>4.8.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>32, 33, 34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.8.1 Nutrition

S73 What do you normally have for breakfast?
S74. How about lunch?
S75. And dinner?
S76. Do you eat a lot of junk food?

Student answers to questions 73, 74, 75, and 76 were compiled into one file. Only five of the twenty-nine students went without breakfast most days. The majority ate either cereal or a cooked breakfast.

'Toast or cereal. I have breakfast every morning 'cause Mum makes me have it.' S15
‘Cereal, fruit, toast, glass of orange juice and a cup of tea.’ S3

All had lunch and although most of them ate sandwiches or meat pies, only two had fruit only. At dinner the food was usually a hot meal. ‘Meat and potatoes and vegetables.’,

Five students mentioned that they went frequently to the fast food outlets for dinner

“Anything, heaps of stuff. We eat at MacDonalds a lot - about once a week, but not KFC.” S71 (KFC - Kentucky Fried Chicken)

“Mostly we have spaghetti bolognaise but sometimes we have different things like fried rice and baked dinners and we go out to dinner about twice a week to restaurants and MacDonalds or Pizza.” S1

Junk food and lollies/candies were popular.

Figure 4-7 Nutrition as Reported by Students

![Nutrition Flowchart]

Breakfast 79%  
No Breakfast 21%

Lunch 98%  
Fruit Only 2%

Dinner 100%

Students

Fast Foods  
‘Frequently’ 17%

Junk Food 52%

Yes 52%  
No 34%  
Sometimes 14%
Of the 29 students, 15 indicated that they ate “a lot” of junk food, 10 said ‘no’ to the question and 4 answered ‘sometimes’.

Without some measure of what “a lot” means it is not possible to evaluate the response, however, the fact that the students feel that they have a more than reasonable amount of junk food would lead to the conclusion that daily sugar and fat intake is excessive. Nevertheless, generally from a nutritional viewpoint the students seemed to be receiving food that was substantial for health (CISRO, 1994.).

4.8.2 Hours of Rest

S71. What time do you usually go to bed?
S72. What time do you usually get up in the morning?
P23. What time does your child go to bed?
P24. Get Up?

Figure 4-8 Hours of Sleep as Reported by Students and Parents

All of the students stated that they received between 8½ and 12 hours sleep with the average of 9.4, using the students report times, and 9.8 using those of the parents’.

Answers from student questions 71 and 72 along with parent answers to questions 23 and 24 were sorted into one file. Bedtimes and rising times stated by the students
were compared to those reported by the parents. There were six discrepancies between the retiring times of the students and the parents and five non-agreements in the rising times. These discrepancies consisted of differences of one hour or greater. There were only two cases where the disparity occurred in both the bedtime and the rising time. This would indicate that in most of the families the parents are cognisant of their children's bedtime hours.

4.8.3 Sports

S62. Do you like sport?
S63. What are your favourite sports?
S64. How often do you play them?
S65. Do most of your friends play these sports too?

All of the students claimed that they enjoyed sport and all participated in some activity. Most of the preferred sports were frequently those offered by the PE teacher at school such as netball, basketball, football and cricket. A number of students stated that they enjoyed these sports but they do require a group to play. A large number of the boys attested a preference for surfing and swimming. The girls primarily indicated that they preferred the group sports that were played in school however a couple enjoyed tennis and dancing.

Less than half of the entire group of students reported that they participated in daily activity and the rest either took part sometimes, weekly or less than once a month.

Generally the students thought that their friends engaged in the same sports as well. This supports the theory that in a number of cases the sport that the students took
part in was that of the school curriculum since the number of friends that these students had was quite small.

Because of the close proximity of the beaches, there were seven of the boys who surfed daily. If the school sports activities were removed from the list of preferred sports, as these demand compulsory participation, then 11 students did not appear to take part in any sport activity outside of school. The sports that were popular with the remaining students were those of an almost individual nature, for example, biking, skate boarding, motor bike riding, horse riding, weights or such sports as tennis, water skiing, snooker where the number of other participants is minimal.

4.8.4 Friends

P35. Does s/he have plenty of friends?

P36. Do you approve of these friends?

S87. What about friends, do you have a lot or only a few?

S88. Tell me about them?

S89. Are they good at school?

Student answers to questions, 87, 88, and 89 were amalgamated with parent answers to questions 35 and 36.

After assembling the responses and collating the data, it was found that 14 of the 29 students indicated that they had a number of friends but the parents did not concur. The parents’ answers indicated that their children had only a few friends. These friends were, in 27 cases, given parental approval while the 28th stated that they approved of half the friends and the 29th parent did not hold an opinion since the student apparently did not have any friends.
The students stated that their friends were fun to be with, they were loyal and helped them when needed. The friends would participate in mutually enjoyed sports and further, they were, for the most part, all academically successful. Only three students believed that their friends were not doing well at school while six indicated that only some of their friends were doing well.

In a number of cases the students reported that they had "lots" or "heaps" of friends. In several cases there was a discrepancy between the number of friends given by the parents and that given by the students, especially when the child declared that s/he had a large number of friends and the parent stated that s/he had only a few.

4.8.5 Television

- P21. How much television does your child watch?
- P22. Do you think this is too much?
- S70. How much TV do you watch?

Student answers to questions 70 were re-collated with parent answers to question 21 and 22. Seventeen (59%) parents thought that their children did not watch too much TV while 12 (41%) parents thought that they did. Those students whose parents thought the amount of TV watched was not excessive, viewed for an average of 2.9 hours each day. Students said
they watched television from 1.5 to 5 hours every night and on the weekends the
amount increased. This latter information was not solicited but offered by the
students themselves.

Twenty-four students stated that they got up before 7 am, and the 17 students
whose parents thought they watched too much television were also members of the
early riser group. Some of the students reported that they watched TV, some went
surfing while others were non-committal about how they spent their time in the
morning before school.

4.8.6 Spare time

S66. What do you do in your spare time?

The responses to the question on what the students did in their spare time resulted
in 17 of the students who watched TV in their spare time as well as other activities
such as sports, read magazines, and those who had friends would play outside.

4.8.7 Computers

S67. Do you have a computer?
S68. Do you play games on your computer?
S69. What kind of games do you play?

All but four students had a computer of some kind. They ranged from the
Commodore 64 to the Nitendo and Sega and the students related that they played
games on these computers. Some of the games were Power at Sea, Basketball,
Shooting Games, War Games, Super Mario Brothers, Mission Impossible, Pit Stop,
Space Games Motor Link. When compared to what these students did in their spare
time only four mentioned that they played on their computer. Three stated that they had spelling programmes.

### 4.8.8 Medication

*S76a. Do you take any medication?*

Only one boy was on medication for hyperactivity.

### 4.8.9 Birth and Head Injuries

*P40. Did s/he endure a difficult birth?*

*P41. Did s/he ever have a fall or a blow to the head?*

Parents reported that there were 17 normal births, five caesarean sections, two births at which forceps were used and one where the umbilical cord was wrapped around the baby's neck.

One caesarean section was a premature birth and two of the births that were included in the normal group, one baby was quite yellow when born and the other the mother had mumps and the flu during the last part of the pregnancy.

Two students were not living with a natural mother, and as a consequence the details of their births were not known.
Parent question 41 investigated the number of blows to head the child had encountered. Responses are depicted in the following Chart 4-44 where in 65% of the respondents offered that their child had received a head injury resulting from either a fall or a blow.

Chart 4-44 Number of Students Who Encountered Head Injuries.

Twenty-eight percent of the students had not had any injury that pertained to the skull area and those students included in the Other 7% had been possibly involved in violent situations the details of which were not known by the respondent.

4.8.10 Siblings

S59. *Do your brothers or sisters have trouble at school?*

S60. *Tell me about their problems?*

Fifteen of the students reported that their brothers or sisters did not have any problems in school while the fourteen remainder had siblings who had similar problems to themselves. This number appears to be abnormally high. Without further investigation into the family dynamics, it is difficult to generalise on the full meaning of this information. It would appear that some unsettling factors exists within the family unit as there is no other common experience shared by the children.
4.8.11 Student Problems

P32. Do you have discipline problems?
P33. What kind of problems?
P34. What do you think has caused these problems?

Figure 4-9 Discipline Problems As Reported by Parents

Eighteen parents reported that they did not have any discipline problems. The remaining 11 parents who did indicate that they had problems stated the following examples of the problems they were having.

“Well she doesn’t listen. That’s why I have to yell at her all the time. I have to go off my brain in the end.” P36

“He’ll push you but he know when to stop. He’s good though, he takes his punishments well.” P78

“Argumentative.” P87

“Laziness. He’s as lazy as they come.” P90

These problems appear to reasonably represent the normal encounters related to rearing teenage children who are testing their identity and developing their autonomy, (Conger and Petersen 1984).

The aim of this chapter has been to present the data in a logical and where possible a graphical fashion. The data that is involved in this study is over 5914 pieces and the details of the analysis completed in this chapter will be summarised in Chapter 5 with some relationships between the data and the analysis forming the basis for the grounded theories that have emerged.
CHAPTER 5

5. Discussion

Figure 5-1 Flowchart of Discussion Chapter

- Reflection on Research
  - Composites
    - Composite LD Student
    - Composite LD Student's Parents
    - Composite LD Student's Home
    - Composite LD Student's School
    - Composite LD Teacher
  - Presentation of Grounded Theory
    - Background to Development of Grounded Theory
    - Overview of Grounded Theory
- Detailed Aspects of Grounded Theory
  - Issues Not Supported By Study
  - Family Culture
  - School Culture
  - Expectations of Stakeholders
  - Misunderstandings About Literacy
- Summary of Grounded Theory
  - Implications of Study
  - Future Research
  - Learning Disabilities Revisited
- Conclusions
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Focusing on event leads to ‘event’ explanations...Such explanations may be true as far as they go, but they distract us from seeing the longer-term patterns of change that lie behind the events (Senge 1990, p21).
5.2 *Introduction*

In this chapter I present my grounded theory of what I now believe to be the relationship between the beliefs, values and understandings about learning, learning disabilities, schooling, and academic achievement that are held by the major stakeholders in an LD student’s life. However, before I do this I would like to revisit the ‘big picture’ of the study to create a context for this theory.

As stated in Chapter 1, the primary aim of the study was to develop a grounded theory of the relationship between learning disabilities, beliefs and literacy. By this I mean what impact do the beliefs held by the LD student, his parents and his teachers have on the success or failure of the student in his interaction with literacy?

My conceptual and theoretical frameworks and literature review on which they were based were presented in Chapters 1 and 2. In Chapter 3, I described the research process and the process of analysis which I undertook during the course of the study. The results of my analysis of the data relevant to the above stated aim were presented in Chapter 4. In the course of completing these chapters I have

a. spent considerable time in the field collecting the data,

b. analysed and categorised the data to the point of redundancy, and I have
c. drawn from the information collected, a relationship to the literature of the LD field.

5.3 *Reflection on the Process of My Research*

During the course of my research and the writing of this thesis I have been refining my understanding of the innumerable problems that surround the identification, theories and other influencing factors of learning disabilities as well as some of the proffered solutions to the problem.

As with any summary of research, the final chapter provides a synthesis of the knowledge gained from having conducted the research and it is but a beginning
as the new knowledge is laid bare to all for scrutiny. In Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) words, ‘no manuscript is ever finished’ and so it is with this one. Part of the process, however, is the achievement of a sufficiently satisfying Gestalt at some point in time and space. There is no endpoint to the evolution of the text.

The research process of Naturalistic Inquiry after ‘iteration to redundancy’ is not as ‘linear’ as Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) flow diagram (see Figure 3-2) might suggest but rather consists of multiple Gestalts until a point of intrinsic satisfaction is achieved. That is a sufficient whole or Gestalt for the researcher at that time in that place. By this I mean we develop a mini grounded theory that is in itself a Gestalt each time we examine the data. To perceive data, by definition, we purposively accessed the data pool which consists of a previous Gestalt which is a mini grounded theory. If this is how the research process evolves then the data and the grounded theory co-evolve and together produce an acceptable transient endpoint Gestalt, i.e. the ‘final’ grounded theory is not derived directly from or the consequence of patterning of categories in the data but is the outcome of interactions between current knowledge which initially led to the conduct of the research evolving grounded theory and the data.

It was through creating these Gestalts that I was able to match whether what I was perceiving as patterns in the data were in fact providing meaningful information from which I could construct a shared meaning that met my needs, purposes and expectations for the study. One of the Gestalts I found necessary to create was a set of ‘composites’ based on averages.

5.4 Composites

The composites that I have created from the data are constructs which do not represent any actual person or context. Rather they reflect probabilities in the sense that, given what the data revealed, this is what the mythical ‘typical’ or ‘average’ LD student, LD student’s home background, parent/caregiver and teacher would most probably be like. The process of developing these composites was a necessary prerequisite for the task of constructing a grounded theory because it allowed me to engage in what I now realise was an important process in my writing of this thesis. This process involved the trial and error process of
approximating and shaping the meaning that my review of the literature, data collection and analysis, writing of the actual thesis kept revealing to me. Being able to summarise what the data meant in terms of these composites helped me understand the picture which my grounded theory would have to explain.

The composites that I tried to construct were:

- The composite LD student;
- The composite LD student’s home;
- The composite LD student’s parent/caregiver;
- The composite LD teacher.

5.4.1 The Composite of the Student with Learning Disabilities

From the data reported in Chapter 4, as Coles (1987) and Shaywitz and Shaywitz (1988, cited in Lerner 1993) found, the prototypical student with LD would be male. He would be about 13 years of age and as Melekian (1990) discovered, he would most likely live with both natural parents, and would have at least one sibling.

This student would have attended a minimum of at least two different primary schools and would have a dislike for school in general; however, he would believe that having a good education is important for living in society and for obtaining a job. This individual would hold a firm belief that he really has a problem with academic achievement especially in English and mathematics but that this problem would probably disappear when he grew up. He would believe that his parents were aware of his academic problems and that they cared about him and his welfare.

Similar to the findings of Lerner (1993), this student would feel that the best things about the whole school experience were firstly, the subjects that have a manual implication such as woodworking and metal work; secondly, when he was able to leave school at recess or the end of the day. The worst things about school would be the teachers whom he would feel were unfair, harsh and yelled at him.

However, the overall reaction to school would be that it was ‘OK’.

This student would feel that he was successful at sport and enjoyed participating in school activities that involved physical exercises. Although he would believe
that he generally did not learn things easily, he would believe that he learned best by either watching and doing or in some cases being formally taught. He would have opinions on what should be done in the area of teaching. An example opinion would be to have the teachers teach the students how to learn.

Within the framework of reading, the student would think that he first learned to read in Kindergarten and Grade/Year 1 by first listening to the teacher who read from a book and then he would try to read. He would also remember that he had books with pictures and writing in them in Kindergarten and Grade 1-2 which he would have tried to read also. He would remember the teacher using flash cards for sight word exercises. When he would come to a word that he did not know he would either try to sound it out or he would ask someone for help. Learning to read would have been difficult for him and he would eventually come to the conclusion that really he did not like to read.

He would first became aware of his problem in Grade 5 when he realised that his peers could read faster and easier than he was able to do. He would also feel embarrassed and nervous when asked to read aloud to the class. This would have been caused from a fear of being laughed at if he were to make a mistake. Clearly he would lack confidence in this area. The student, however, would have had no bad experiences related to learning to read that he could recall. He would know a good reader by the very fact that the reader would be able to read quickly and would not make mistakes.

This student would believe that reading was important to his parents and, furthermore, he would claim that his family owned a large number of books. These 'books' would turn out to be magazines, some children's books and usually an encyclopaedia and dictionary. Although he would be able to identify a novel and its author, typically it would be one that he studied at school.

When asked to comment on how he learned to write he would report that he learned to write by copying from the board or tracing outlines. His beliefs about 'writing stories' were similar in that he would report that he would either just write or he would think about what he wanted to write and then write whatever he had planned. Furthermore, he would not think he was a good writer but would know people who were. He would believe these writers were 'good' because they
wrote neatly and he would also believe that every story they wrote would also be ‘good’ because they wrote a number of paragraphs.

In mathematics, the prototypical LD student would encounter problems primarily with the times tables. He would not have learned them and therefore would not be able to comprehend the numerical interaction that they provide to the fundamental understanding of mathematics.

His best class during his primary years would have been either Grade 4 or Grade 6 and those choices would have been made on the basis of the teacher who was much admired. His worst class would have been Grade 2 and that perception would have been based on his reaction to the teacher.

His current teachers would have assessed that he functions at 2.06 years behind his peers in reading and writing and 1.31 years behind in mathematics. These teachers would believe that he had behavioural problems and perhaps some emotional unbalance as well.

This student would not have many friends and although he would play outside occasionally he would watch at least 2.9 hours of television every day which would occupy most of his free time. He would own a computer but it would be used only for games and therefore would not hold much interest after the novelty had worn off.

Medication would not be taken by the student and he would have had a normal birth. However, he would have had a minor blow to the head when he was very young which would be severe enough for his mother to remember as an incident but the injury would not have been serious enough to obtain medical attention.

This student would feel ‘dumb’ and ‘stupid’ because of his inability to achieve academic success but despite these inadequacies he would want to stay in school until Year 12. He knows that he would have difficulty obtaining a job because he would realise that he would need to use reading and writing for most work that he would do.

5.4.2 The Composite LD Student’s Parents/Caregiver

The LD student’s parents would be caring and generally supportive of the their child. The father would have graduated with a school certificate at the end of Year
10 and would be employed in a job where he would work alone, for example, driving a truck or working at a trade such as a butcher or fitter and turner. The student's mother would have Year 9 education and would stay home to look after the family as Melekian (1990) also found in his study. As the major caregiver, she would believe that it is important to have a good education and would feel that she had been average or better in school.

The mother would claim to have liked school in the beginning even though she was shy and nervous and later she would have enjoyed school for the social aspects and friends. She would remember her early teachers which in some cases her child would be unable to do. The student's mother would believe reading is important and would read primarily newspapers and magazines. She would feel comfortable with mathematics.

The mother would think that her son had the ability to do better at school, that he functioned normally in everyday life and worked well with his hands. She would be aware that her son was not doing well at school, that he functioned below average but she would not be fully aware of the academic problems that her son encountered. She would have become aware of the his low performance by Year 3 and would feel that negative experiences at school, especially the lack of good teachers in Year 2, and a variety of events in the family had been detrimentally influencing factors on his school performance.

The parents would not expect their son to do any chores around the house on a regular basis however, if asked to do something then he would comply.

The friends of the student would be approved by the mother and she would seem to be aware of who these friends were and what they did.

The mother would feel that the number of hours of television viewing done by the student was not too much. She would complain about the 'chat-back' that her child gave her but would perceive that she had no major disciplinary problems.

The mother would feel that the child generally liked school but that the child definitely had a reading problem which would probably disappear as he matured but she could not be sure that this would happen. The mother would also not be aware of what the child wanted to do after he left school.
5.4.3 The Composite LD Student’s Home

The home of the LD students would be a single family dwelling which may be, but not necessarily, council subsidised. It would be clean and well tended and furnished adequately within a reasonable standard of living. It would contain at least one TV, computer and stereo system. The TV and stereo system would be located in the living room which would be adjacent to the kitchen.

The meals would generally be made in the home but there would be a tendency toward the ‘fast foods’ for evening meals. The student would receive at least 9 hours sleep each night.

The general overall view of the families in this study is one where the family unit would consist of a natural father and mother with more than one child, however, there were cases of single mothers or parents with a partner who would not be the biological genitor. These families would live in individual houses. They would eat relatively well and have sufficient hours of sleep. Television would play a major role in their lives as most of the available leisure time was occupied by watching television.

5.4.4 The Composite LD Student’s School

The school that the student would attend would be a State Government operated co-ed high school where the LD students would be integrated into mainstream classes. These classes would be ‘streamed’ in ability and the LD students would be placed in the lowest functioning classes. The LD student would encounter about seven different teachers every day in a school of about 1000 students. The classes would consist of approximately 28 students per class with the exception of the English class which would consist of approximately 15 to 20 students. The STLD teacher would work with the classroom teachers who would have LD students in the class.

5.4.5 The Composite LD Teacher

The composite LD teacher would be able to provide multiple reasons for the occurrence of learning disabilities which would be speculative in nature. The LD teacher would appear to lack knowledge of the learning disabilities problem which of course is the enigma of the LD community.
It was also interesting to note that these data show that there was a policy among primary school principals to place inexperienced teachers in Years 2 and 3 which seem to be the years in which the LD students first encounter problems with reading.

5.5 Presenting a Grounded Theory of the Relationship Between Learning Disabilities, Beliefs and Literacy

5.5.1 Background to the Development of the Grounded Theory

I have employed the research methods as described in Chapter 3 and 4 with a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory of the relationship between beliefs of the major stakeholders about learning and schooling and learning disabilities. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990),

"...[a] well-constructed grounded theory will meet four central criteria for judging the applicability of theory to a phenomenon: fit, understanding, generality and control." (p23)

In essence, a grounded theory should make sense and be useful in furthering understanding about the focus phenomenon in the context related to the phenomena under consideration. A grounded theory should also provide information that guides stakeholders in what action should be taken in regard to the phenomena, in this case the relationship between learning disabilities and the beliefs held by the major participants in the LD student’s life.

In this section my grounded theory is presented as follows:

- An overview of the multifariousness of learning disabilities
- Detailed aspects
- A summary of the grounded theory.

5.5.2 An Overview of My Grounded Theory

The participants in this study have provided data which indicate that there is a possible relationship between learning disabilities, the family culture and the culture of the school. These cultures involve the beliefs, attitudes, habits and practices that are associated with learning.
• A summary of the grounded theory.

5.5.2 An Overview of My Grounded Theory

The participants in this study have provided data which indicate that there is a possible relationship between learning disabilities, the family culture and the culture of the school. These cultures involve the beliefs, attitudes, habits and practices that are associated with learning.

The data also suggest that there is not one specific factor that produces LD but that there are many factors that accumulate, and contribute to, the development and continuance of LD in a student (Coles, 1987).

5.6 Detailed Aspects of My Grounded Theory

From the data it is possible to postulate that learning disabilities is a complex phenomenon which cannot be explained by simplistic theories of minimal brain dysfunction, genetic predisposition, diet or any other singular factor. The data suggest that learning disabilities of the kind encountered in the study are more likely to be a function of a complex mix of other factors. Some of these factors seem to be related to frightening experiences either at school or through some family tragedy while other circumstances seem to be related to the mores of the LD student’s culture, especially as they relate to educational factors.

5.6.1 Issues That the Data of This Study Cannot Support

There is no evidence from the data collected and analysed in this study that could support the theories of a central nervous system disorder (CNS) as there was no apparent pattern from the students’ performances of a common malfunctioning of the brain. They acted and reacted in the school environment as any student would who was either bored or frustrated. According to the parents these students functioned normally in everyday life. There is such copious support for this CNS theory but to date there are only theories and not proof that these students present as physically disabled in any way.

There did not appear to be any indication that the learning disabilities condition of the 29 subjects of this study was connected to a genetic deficiency and although there were cases in the study where the siblings of the family were also
fact there was no singular factor from the study that could be identified as the contributing source of LD.

However, the data did suggest that there were a conglomeration of factors that could lead to inadequate academic achievement. The major portion of these factors can be assessed under two headings: the culture of the family and the culture of the school.

5.6.2 Family Culture

The data related that the family unit from an external viewpoint was one in which the child's basic needs were well met and that within the family, in most cases, the relationships between the students and their parents seemed supportive of each other.

Maslow's (1987) theory is relevant here. He refers to an hierarchy of human needs which he portrays in pyramidal format. At the base of the pyramid he places the fundamental physiological needs for survival. On the step just above the physiological needs are the human requirements for safety and security followed on the third step by love and belonging. If Maslow's pyramid is considered a benchmark for the well-being of the students, then at least up to the love and belonging stage it could be said that most of these students' basic needs were met. From the nutritional data collected, they indicated that they were well fed, they received sufficient sleep and they lived in warm houses wherein they had beds and other furniture. They all lived in a form of family unit which to all intents and purposes for most of the students was safe and secure. The love and belonging stage seemed to be established since the data related much support from the parents for the children.

Television played a major role in their lives as most of the available leisure time was occupied by watching television. In some families TV viewing started when the children arose in the morning. Some parents thought that the children watched too much TV but there was not an indication that an attempt to change the length of the viewing time was made.
The families were working class and many of the mothers worked at home. The mothers who did go outside of the home to work held jobs that were generally classified as unskilled.

The data showed that these students had come from a lower socio-economic group than those described by Coles (1987) who proposed that this was a middle class problem. This supports Cole's findings that it is a class phenomenon but there could be different class structures in different cultures as well as different definitions for each class.

If the level of education can be considered as an indicator of social class, it could be argued that the level of education attained by the parents in this study could have affected the way their children reacted to school. Education widens choices through the transfer of cultural information which is passed on through the generations. This information provides the framework for cultural change which in turn furnishes an avenue for the change in the division of labour and its ensuing social integration (Halsey 1967). Without a solid information base, the flow of information is restricted and thus limits the socialisation of the upcoming generation. Since the average finishing year/grade of the mothers is 9.3 which would equate to a chronological age of 15 years, then it is possible to postulate that the information being passed on from less educated mothers is more limited in its content than if the mothers had achieved higher education. This implication could result in disinterest in the school achievements or activities of the child on the part of the mother/caregiver combined with a feeling of inadequacy when the imparting of knowledge is required. In other words the children could be lacking in fundamental knowledge of the world in which they live which the mother is unable to provide.

Another influential factor that could impact on the students would be the emotional attributes of the parents and the students themselves. Whether the reported nervousness and shyness experienced by the parents can be an influential factor in their success or failure at school is questionable; however, if a child is nervous or shy, then these emotional factors may interfere with the learning process (Coles, 1984).
The parents suggested that some major and minor traumas could have affected the child. Some of these reported calamities were divorce, abuse and death of a family member. How the parent dealt with the child and the experiences could have further impact on the emotions of the child. Family upsets and marriage breakdowns have possibly played an important role in the development of academic non-success as reported by the parents. If the parent is emotionally occupied with other matters then the possibility of the child being neglected for the time is great. This could create or exacerbate a feeling of insecurity which could increase nervousness and a lack of confidence. If emotional stress is taking place in the home at the same time that the child is trying to learn something new such as reading or writing at school and the teacher is unaware of the psychological effects of her/his unprofessional negative actions, then the end result is likely to be withdrawal from risk taking on the part of the student.

When the family unit dissolves, feelings of doubt and low self-esteem creep into the remaining family members and if the students are removed from familiar surroundings and friends, then this too adds to the insecurity factor. Murik (1994) found that the students developed a lack of trust not only in themselves but more essentially in those persons who played the main adult role in their lives when there was a break in important relationships either through marriage breakdown or other family crisis.

Some of the students were reported by their parents to be helpful around the house but none of the students was assigned regular duties such as washing the dishes after the evening meal or the taking out of the garbage every night. A few parents noted that the children would help if asked. This could indicate that these parents do not necessarily value the giving and taking of responsibility for home and/or family tasks. This in turn could conflict with the view that schools hold about the role that the taking of responsibility plays in learning.

The overall acceptance by the parents of the LD problem in its totality without some incentive or initiative to change the situation or even to investigate the underlying causes of their child's downfall seems to indicate a lack of power to influence either the child or the educational system. The parents however, repeatedly came back to the school as a major source of unpleasant experiences that could have affected the child and teachers were the prime target.
The values placed on education by the parents and students, that the data related, were superficially positive but the underlying messages that were imparted to the students were that one must go to school and put in the time because that was what everyone did and while there, one had to try to do the work and do what one was told by the teacher. However, once one left school at the end of the day then it was no longer necessary to continue to study or do homework. As one parent said, and others indicated, ‘they get learned enough at school’ and therefore to do more work was not part of the after school life nor was it part of the life of the family. It seemed that what happened in school was of little relevance at home. These were separate and distinct entities.

The parents indicated that they cared how the children performed at school but they did not maintain close contact with the teachers or the school environment. Many parents were not aware that their child had been classified as having a serious learning problem. Those that did know did not contact the school to see what could be done and the responsibility for the child’s achievement was left entirely to the teachers. This reluctance to investigate the underlying causes for their child’s lack of success, especially in view of the fact that they believed the child was capable, seemed to indicate a perceived lack of power to influence either the child or the educational system. As an influencing cultural factor, this reluctance to interfere in the school administration is typical of the attitude that prevails in the working class sector of Australia. This aspect of Australian culture has possible historical roots. Australia began as a nation of convicts which was governed by an elite bureaucracy and this perspective is visible to-day with the prevailing attitude of ‘that is not my job that is the government’s job’.

If both the students and their parents liked their early days at school but did not carry that feeling much after Grade 2 or 3 then the question arises as to what happened to change that attitude. The animosity that most of the students held against at least one teacher demonstrated the impact and influence that teachers have on the learning lives of students. There were positive reactions to teachers in other grades but nearly every student in the study had encountered negative experiences from a teacher in at least one of the years in primary school. It can be argued that these are experiences that one encounters in life but these students, especially if they are experiencing some form of pressure from their lives outside
school, are likely to react more sensitively to those pressures inside school than would be otherwise expected.

Although the mothers reported that they had enjoyed school in their early years and expressed their belief that having a good education was important, they did not read to their children when they were in the pre-primary years. Further, when the parents read themselves, generally they only read newspapers and magazines.

The parents tried to help their children by buying encyclopaedias and dictionaries but they did not spend money on books for the students nor did they encourage homework. The books of which the students were aware came from their school experience. Part of the difficulty could be that the parents did not know how to help their children and did not have the skills or knowledge to provide an environment that would encourage academic achievement.

This could be the result of a number of factors. First the parents themselves have not had an education which provided them with information beyond the basic skills that are obtained from the first nine years at school. This factor alone left the parents without the necessary experience to provide to the children those values that lead to academic achievement. Secondly, the parents did not seem to value the giving and taking of specific responsibilities for anything around the house and so the children seem to drift through their daily routine of waking up in the morning, watching TV for an hour or so, then off to school after a bowl of cereal or a slice of toast, generally with money to buy a sandwich at the canteen. They endured the school academic subjects but looked forward to sport and design and technology which provided opportunities to work in manual skills. As soon as they could they were out, back home to watch more television and occasionally taking their evening meal in front of television. Thirdly, these parents did not seem to value the creation and enforcing of specific rules of behaviour. Rather the children seemed to have the freedom to ‘come and go’ as they wished.

It appeared that these students did not know how to cope with the transition from the home culture to that of the school where they were required to work. The students did not know how to write a story nor did they have the skills to do so. As one student pointed out, they did not know how to learn.
There is some research which suggests that the values that parents hold influence the values of the child, and these credos have an effect on the achievement of the child (Norman 1966 cited in Miletic 1986). Parents in this study reported that they believed that there were causes for concern about the treatment their child had received at school and teachers were the main reason. As reported by the study’s parents and students, the worst thing about school were the teachers and since both parents and students held these same beliefs, it is possible that the parents could have influenced the thinking of the children. Furthermore, if the students did not like either the teacher or the activities and became bored they would likely rebel in varying degrees. Actions such as these elicited reactions from the teachers and established beliefs that these students had behavioural problems.

There seems to be a lack of commitment to the learning process in general. These attitudes and values in themselves could have been passed down to the parents from their parents which perpetuates the situation.

Lerner and Spanier (1978) have suggested that this lack of commitment reflects a cultural attribute which is related to parenting skills. They state

\[
... that \text{ serious difficulties in the acquisition of reading skills could be considered, to a certain extent, as a symptom of high dependency associated with early age identification problems and with the quality of the mother's nurturing skills. (p362)}
\]

This statement indicates that the confidence, language skills and control of assertive language that are needed to communicate concerns about schooling might not be part of some parents’ culture. Certainly the parents in this study appeared to be relatively insecure about dealing with the school setting. Furthermore, they perceived themselves to be ‘shy’ and ‘nervous’, a trait that their children also reported they felt in being asked to read aloud. Without self-esteem and accompanying self-confidence the child would inevitably be faced with major learning hurdles.

There were other similarities between the parents’ and students’ perceptions and understandings of schools and schooling. For example, parents reported that they felt they were good at school in general and that they were proficient at mathematics. They also reported that they perceived that rote memorisation of the
times tables to be a part of school. Their children expressed similar notions. They admitted that they had not learned their times tables and that was part of the reason that they were not adept in mathematics.

After the years in primary school, Kindergarten to Year 6 in NSW, school became a relatively enjoyable place to be, from sports and manual skills subjects, to friends and social life. Academically the reverse was indicated. The students did not think that school was important enough to merit work; however, it is a speculative possibility that LD students did not have the necessary coping skills.

It was obvious that the family values reflected beliefs other than those necessary to make one successful at school. Although the parents reported that they had become aware of the child's difficulties around Year 2 the parents did not do a great deal about the difficulties that they perceived nor did they seek medical advice when their child received a head injury. This would indicate a lack in some essential parenting skills.

Success at school is typically a result of a home culture that meshes with the school culture in ways that optimise learning. It appears that the students are receiving messages and values outside school that do not lead to academic success.

5.6.3 School Culture

The purpose of school is to provide students with the basic literacy and numeracy skills along with the necessary information to not only use those skills but to enable them to function in a literate society. The State educational system in NSW provides the framework in which students are able to acquire these essential skills and accompanying information. Support Teachers are provided to help those students who have not mastered the basics, attain the chronologically expected level of students in Years 7 and 8. The school system expects that students will do the necessary work both in school and at home to attain the required literacy level.

The beliefs of both students and parents in the study supported the notion that it was important to have a good education; however, the encouragement in attaining it was not advanced at home. Many parents felt that the children did enough work at school and therefore it was not necessary for them to do any
more. This attitude seemed to be adopted by the children and did not help to improve their academic functioning of more than two years behind their peers. The teachers, because the students were not completing the required work, felt frustrated and categorised the students as difficult to teach because of their perceived learning, behavioural and emotional problems.

The environment in the schools is established and constructed by the people who work within a system set out by the Department of School Education, by the governmental policies under which they must function, and by each person’s beliefs. The teachers very quickly establish a set of beliefs about each student in their area of responsibility. These beliefs seem to have been formed by the teachers in this study without a great deal of background information on the student and further their conclusions resulted in statements that a student had behavioural problems or emotional problems. It was not evident that the reasons behind these apparent problems were ever investigated. The teachers, because of their lack of knowledge of learning disabilities, due to their lack of training, encountered difficulty making their decision on whether or not the LD problem would ever be resolved for these students. They were, however, willing to adjust the LD students’ marks on the report cards so that they did not reflect the true value of the students’ efforts. This, they reported, made the student feel better. If the real results were registered then most of the students’ marks would be devastatingly low.

Singled out as enjoyable aspects of school were subjects such as metal work, woodworking, cooking and sewing. Getting out, friends, and sports seemed to compensate for other areas that elicited a previous negative reaction to school. This same reaction was shared by the parents. Only a small number suggested that they were in school to learn which indicated that these students did not place a high priority on the learning aspect of school. They also implied their need for an environment in which they would feel safe and secure and where they were able to feel worthwhile.

From the data it was found that the primary principals placed inexperienced teachers in Years 2 and 3 as they believed that these are the easier years. A number of students experienced several teachers in one year at primary school which could lead to major gaps in the curriculum. In high school, these students
who were encountering difficulty learning were subjected to a minimum of seven teachers per day. This high rate of segmenting the day presents a challenge to everyone but to these students in years seven and eight it may have been more than they could handle.

5.6.3.1 **Teachers from Parents' and Students' Viewpoints.**

Generally, as noted earlier in this chapter, the reactions to teachers by the students and their parents were not favourable. The parents felt that some of the teachers had been insensitive and frequently unfair in their treatment of the students. In a number of cases there were very strong reactions against a specific and named teacher.

Interestingly students felt that it was due to the teacher that they enjoyed a good year at school. At establishing the best and the worst year at school as estimated by the students, it was evident from the response that Year 2 was worse than Year 6 which was second in disfavour followed by Year 3. It was also Year 2 that parents first became aware of their child’s academic problems. Good teachers were chosen from Years 6, 5 and 4 in order of preference.

These data have shown that there are a number of important issues that need to be addressed. For example, there could be a tenuous relationship between these identified students and their traumatic experiences at school during their primary years. The data suggest that most of these students could recall adverse reactions to their early teachers, with the majority reporting a trauma in Year/Grade 2. Given that Howe (1993) argues that this is a significant year from the perspective of developing a self identity, perhaps Grade 2 experiences need to be carefully monitored. Again I would like to make reference to Lerner and Spanier (1978) as quoted above and emphasise their notion that there is a relationship between reading skills, high dependency, possibly on teachers, early age identification and parenting skills.

It is also noteworthy that parents and students in some cases could not remember their early teachers. The lack of memory of certain years of their lives seem to be attached to unpleasant occurrences either from moving or stressful incidents. It seemed that, in the majority of cases when early teachers could not be recalled,
there were other events affecting the students' lives at this time. One parent reported that she came from an alcoholic and violent family and therefore she couldn’t remember anything except that she worried all of the time that her mother might not be alive when she got home. One student said that he couldn’t remember because that was the time that he went to live with his grandmother who lived a long way from his mother.

5.6.3.2 Effective Learning

The feelings that grew from the school experience seemed to be an influencing factor in the learning process. The questions asked and coded under the title 'Learning' were primarily to gather information on what the students thought about themselves and others as learners. It was also hoped that some information on the self-image and self-esteem held by these students would elucidate the reasons for how and why they reacted to school as they did.

When it came to the breaking down of the tasks and thinking about how they first learned a skill with which they felt confident, the students' answers could be separated into basically two distinct categories: learning through imitation and learning from didactic methods.

If, as some of the students reported, they did not learn things easily, this possibly could be attributable to their shyness, nervousness, lack of self-confidence or simply from their experiences of failure. It is possible that these feelings could be considered as another influential factor in the learning process.

Another attributable factor in the learning process of these students could be found in the examination of the academic functioning levels of the students. If the functioning levels as assessed by the special education and English teachers are contemplated, then it can be seen that the Year 7 students were functioning at approximately Year 4 level in most cases. This seems to indicate that the students stopped progressing at Year 3 and that therefore, something must have happened to impede the advancement of learning.

Apart from the school environment itself, a number of reasons could contribute to negative feelings that the students held toward school and learning. For example, the number of re-locations and changes in schools that over half of the students
have experienced would tend to indicate an unsettled home life and if this were to be considered along with the number of failed marriages plus the reality that the parents did not like school themselves; these findings together could possibly be interpreted as non-school based negative environmental influences. This confirms Murik's (1994) findings that the emotional turbulence caused by many changes of school and environments not only left large gaps in the students' learning process but negatively affected their stability and attitude to the learning. Another consideration could be that because of the breakdown in the family, there arises some need for adjustment in the education for these students.

5.6.3.3 Relationships Established in the School Setting

Students and teachers make up the major portion of the school population. The relationships between the students themselves and the students and the teachers play a vital role in the whole learning process. From the data it can be postulated that the role of the teacher of any grade, but especially those teachers of Years 1, 2 and 3 with emphasis on Grade 2, play a vital role in the learning process for students. They also become the main barometer with which students judge and react to the school environment and further to participating in active learning. As reported earlier, when the students were asked to relate the worst things about school they responded with ‘teachers’ and although they also complained about the hard work and the homework, an indicator of the prevailing attitude in this group of students, the reaction towards teachers nevertheless raises a cause for concern.

There was a strong indication that teachers in general have played an influential role in the development of certain animosities against school and its subsequent rejection. These conflicts have occurred at crucial times in the child’s development when the personality is developing and the building of confidence and self-esteem is taking place. Year 2 seems to be the Grade most identified by the parents and the students as the Year in which most of the traumatic incidences have occurred. According to Howe (1993), second graders are sensitive and are very much interested in pleasing the teacher. This concept could be taken further by suggesting any caregiver. The teacher can control Grade/Year 2s by being displeased or even reprimanding (Howe 1993), which in excess could be
detrimental to the positive development of the child. Further, it is a period when
the child becomes aware of the expected academic stands and spends a great deal
of time trying hard not to make one mistake. They also become upset with tests
and homework and worry that they will not be good enough (Howe 1993).

Year/Grade 3 can be a turning point in the academic successes or failures of the
child. The third grader again becomes active and very involved with peers. This
age group is easily distracted but is still dependent and has a great need for adult
support (Howe, 1993). Friends and the social aspects of school life begin to play an
influential role about Grade 3 (Howe 1993) and this influence continues into high
school where the pressure to be accepted is increased. The LD students in the
study admitted to a large number of friends at school but in fact had few friends
with whom they could play after school hours. It was probably the shortage of
real friends that encouraged the LD student to watch so much television.

The lack of parental and teachers' understanding of the developmental stages of
the children, their needs and dependency on adults to provide the necessary
encouragement without the creation of self-doubt and negative remarks will
threaten the confidence of these students and lead to the development of learning
disabilities. If a child falls behind his peers teachers then treat this student
differently from those who are successful. Thus the downward spiral commences
in ever-widening circles to end with the student becoming unable to take the risks
necessary to participate in the world of learning.

5.6.3.4 How Effective Learning is Supported or Destroyed

The mismatch between the school and the LD student's home gives rise to
confusion on what happens or is supposed to happen in school. There are a
number of factors that are presuppositions that have been built into the child
before he starts school. Everyone must go to school, there will be a lot of friends to
play with. The child does not want to leave his mother therefore the child starts
school with some threat to his security. Given that in Kindergarten and Years 1
and 2, the student generally desires to please the teacher (Howe 1993) then the far
reaching effects of the teacher shouting at or criticising harshly a young student
would be detrimental to his enthusiasm and interest in any school activity that
involved a potentially threatening situation such as reading aloud. If the teacher
shouted at one student and another child were shy and nervous then the fear created by the teacher shouting at one student could negatively affect the other.

The attitude of the parents can also impact negatively on learning through their attitude to school and their lack of active communication with the teachers. If the child perceives that his parents are not in total agreement and thus supportive of school policies and expectations then the child is likely to adopt negative attitudes to those issues and people involved in the school environment.

5.6.4 The Expectations of Each Stakeholder

An important part of any culture is the expectations that those who have a stake in that culture hold about the purposes, routines and ways of behaving and responding in them. Each stakeholder in the LD student’s life in this study had different expectations.

5.6.4.1 Child’s Expectation

The students expected that they would have to go to school until they were 15 years old because ‘that is the law’. They expected to stay in school longer than the law required because they indicated that they wanted to finish their High School Certificate in Year 12. They anticipated that this would happen even though they were not willing to put in the required effort of which they may not have been aware. They presumed that the school would ensure that this happened. Perhaps they had not thought about the commitment that they must make for this to take place. However, the school system had always allowed them to pass to the next grade so therefore it would continue to do so.

The expectations of those who design school policy and implement it are prepared to provide the necessary aids for the LD students but they also expect that students will be willing to exert the requisite effort.

The students expected that they would have difficulty getting a job after they finish school and yet they portrayed every confidence that they would be successful in this area. These students were not prepared to leave school until they received their High School Certificate in Year 12. The students were in grades
7 and 8 and had not yet reached the age where they would think about leaving either in Grade 9 or 10.

Realising that obtaining a job without reading and writing would be difficult did not seem to upset the students because their potential jobs would be that of a butcher, carpenter or truck driver for which they believed that they did not need reading and writing.

5.6.4.2 Parents' Expectations

Parents' expectations of school through the viewpoint of their own lives were reflected in their expectations for their children. Some parents indicated that they felt that there may not be much hope of the child overcoming the problems that were being encountered in school. They expected that the children would attend school, that they would obey the teachers but the children would not have to do a great deal of work, especially after school.

This attitude is in conflict with the expectations of the school and the policy makers to a limited extent. The students soon learn that they will pass from one year to the next regardless of how much work they do and the parents have learned this same aspect of the system. The policy which lowers academic standards for those students who encounter academic difficulty encourages the student to do less and less work. Parents do not expect that their child will contribute to the family unit by assuming regular responsibilities. This seems to confirm to the child that it is not necessary to do any work. He soon learns that no matter what he does or does not, nothing really serious can happen to him.

Although the parents in the study were unaware of the career aspirations of their children, it was obvious that they would expect to lend support whenever needed.

5.6.4.3 Teachers' Expectations

Teachers expected that students would behave and participate actively in the learning process. They believed that most of the students who had been identified as LD would be slow intellectually, they would likely be behavioural problems and some would have emotional problems as well. Teachers believed that as long as they presented the information then it was the responsibility of the student to
understand. An example of this is the teacher who was reported banging her head against the wall, shouting 'How many times do I have to tell you?'. It seems that the message that she should have been receiving was that her students were not understanding her lesson and with that display of emotion, they were probably too afraid to ask questions. Therefore the end result is that the teacher who expects that the class is following her lesson, does not meet the expectations of the students who especially in Grade 2 are trying very hard to follow.

Since teachers were the main reason for LD students not liking school, it is possible that the teachers did not hold beliefs that provided the support and understanding necessary in order to capture the interest of these students. It is possible from the data to presume that some of the teachers did not have sufficient training to provide the necessary support required by these students.

5.6.5 Misunderstanding that Learners Themselves, the Teachers and Parents Have About Literacy

5.6.5.1 Reading

When students were asked what they thought made a good reader their answers were almost unanimous in two or three areas. They felt that a good reader read quickly and without error. Comprehension was not taken into consideration by the students, nor was the fact that a child may well understand the words that are written on a page but is not able to speak them fluently. This would then classify that person as not a good reader by the LD students. Whether the ‘good’ reader could comprehend what was read was not considered by the LD student.

It is a possibility that these students developed this theory from the classroom experiences when the students were asked to read aloud. Those students who did not make mistakes and read quickly probably received accolades from the teacher but when they read aloud and made mistakes by not knowing the words then they would not receive the praises and hence could classify themselves as poor readers.

They realised at an early stage that they could not read in the same manner as their peers and felt nervous or embarrassed because of this. This nervousness seems to flow over from those feelings of the parents in their early years of school.
5.6.5.2 Writing

Similar theories as those held for reading were held by the LD students regarding the writing process. They believed that a person who could write a large number of words, who was neat and produced a 'good' story was therefore a 'good' writer. How the 'good' story was evaluated was not determined but the majority of the students felt that the number of words that were produced was the most important factor in being a good writer.

These 'good' writers were able to meet the criteria for a 'good' writer because they were able to learn more quickly. Therefore the conclusion to which the LD students came was that they were not 'good' writers because they were not able to write neatly and they could not write stories.

These students would attempt to write stories by just starting to write which indicated that they had not learned to make outlines and frameworks within which to establish their work. In some cases they reported that they would think first and then write. These students believed that this was the way one wrote stories. Spelling was carried out by sounding the words.

5.7 A Summary of My Grounded Theory

When all of the data was summarised, a tentative grounded theory emerges. This grounded theory is depicted in schematic form in Figure 5-2 below. As Figure 5-2 shows, the LD student is caught between two broad cultures, that of the family and that of the school. Each of these cultures is a complex mix of people, interacting with each other, with physical entities and objects. All of these interactions are both influenced by and in turn shape the values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of those people who inhabit each. These LD students' family cultures were characterised by an attitude that education was not their responsibility but that of the school.

When the data collected in this study is considered we can conclude that:

- The premise that learning disabilities can only be attributable to some kind of neurological damage, genetic programming or diet problem can be rejected. Although 65% of the parents reported that their children had
received a minor head injury when young there is no evidence to support a strong relationship between the head injuries and learning difficulties. Nor is there strong evidence of a relationship between 'junk food' and learning disabilities since just over half of the students reported that they liked candy and chips et cetera as most children do.

- Learning disabilities is a function of the mismatch between home culture and school culture. Home culture would include all of the values, beliefs, attitudes, habits and practices associated with school, education, learning, and literacy and numeracy. School culture would include all of the same attributes as noted above i.e. values, beliefs et cetera that are necessary for high achievement. If these attributes for academic achievement are not met then the end result is a student with learning disabilities.

As can be seen in Figure 5-2, the LD student stands and moves between the cultures of the school and that of the family. The family provides food, rest, shelter to the student and he shares in family activities such as television with his siblings. Albeit seldom, the student also participates in other activities such as surfing, skateboarding or bicycle riding. The parents hold certain beliefs about the relationship with the school and teachers but have little contact with them. The family does not require the student to assume responsibilities and holds values, as discussed above, about education that are different from those necessary for academic success.

The school provides a variety of activities in which the student participates. Sports and manual skill subjects are the preferred activities, however, the school also offers the student academic subjects which are not so enjoyed but provide the student with another form of exposure to knowledge. The student is subjected to the opportunities for learning but is hampered in his progress by the difference in values held by the family and those held by the school.

The school although offering these opportunities has also created situations wherein the student has been intimidated by teacher reactions to various situations that have occurred in the classroom. These may have been frightening experiences especially if they occurred in the early years but notwithstanding the repercussions of these situations, the atmosphere and the values held by the
teachers has had a major impact on the attitude of the student and perhaps the parents. The lack of communication between the family and the school has exacerbated the distance that has developed over the school career of the child.

Figure 5-2 Diagram of Relationships

5.8 Implications of This Study

5.8.1 Some Recommendations Which Emerge From This Study:

- Years 1, 2, and 3 teachers need to be more highly trained: I make this recommendation because this is the most crucial time in the development of individual identity for the child and if this process is hampered in a serious manner then the implication is that so too will the learning development process be in jeopardy. Therefore, it is essential that teachers of these junior years be fully knowledgeable of the developmental process through which each child passes so that they are able to deflect from the child some of the offending occurrences that take place in the classroom every day.

- Students must feel that treatment in school is fair, especially from teachers. This recommendation seems to be exceedingly obvious but the
perceived unfairness may stem from the vast differences in culture about which we have been discussing. It is nevertheless essential the child perceives that he is treated fairly and this can easily be accomplished though a checking procedure. If punishment is administered, the teacher needs to inquire whether or not the child feels that the punishment is fair. A safe environment must be created by the teacher and principal to provide avenues for the child to be able to declare to the negative if he feels that the situation is not fair.

- Home and school environments need to support each other. If, as this study has shown, the parents are not communicating with ease with the teachers and the school, then the teachers must find a safe and comfortable method though which the parents can increase the communication interaction. This can be accomplished through weekly letters home from the school or just a monthly telephone call from the teacher for the education of the child is a shared responsibility which parents may require help in knowing.

- Schools need to implement programmes that will accommodate students whose family environment does not mesh with the requirements for high academic achievement. As the students are first enrolled in Kindergarten, then the indoctrination of the school's expectations should commence. The students should be made aware of those expectations and the higher those expectations are the more the students will achieve. The students should also be taught their areas of responsibilities which would probably be included with the expectations.

- Students need coping strategies in order to achieve. It seems difficult for students whose family hold a different set of values on education than do the school and the school's policy makers. The system needs to be explained to the students and the consequences of not successfully achieving should be established and emphasised. This gives the students a sense of direction which bridges the culture differences.
5.9 Future Research

From this study a number of areas that pertain to LD children have been identified as possibilities for future research. They are as follows:

a. Research into teaching strategies. This is recommended as one area for future research because there seem to be certain strategies that work well with some students but are simply inappropriate for others. Although it is interesting to vary the teaching strategies, the purpose of transferring information should be accomplished in the most effective manner. School is not necessarily an entertainment arena.

b. Research into minor head injuries which have been a common factor in this study. There appeared to be a pattern emerging when this data was collected. Although there was no evidence that this injury did any more permanent damage than would a cut finger, it is an area that perhaps could be investigated further.

c. Research into discipline provided both by the school and the parents. The lack of discipline that carries with it responsibility seemed to be an area that was not apparent in the families of the students in this study. Since children do not have the life experience necessary to make important decisions they should learn through doing. The school has lowered standards for academic achievement to the point that the students do not have to do any work and they know that there will be no repercussions if they do not do any. They have not had enough life experience to realise that the acquisition of essential literacy skills for ordinary survival in today's society is just as imperative as learning how to eat, dress oneself and participate in activities with one's hands.

d. Research into parenting in general. This is an area in which the data from the study seem to demand further investigation. Parents seemed to allow their children to come and go as they wished and did not take an active role outside the family unit. They did not bother to seek medical attention when the child bumped his head nor did they attempt to seek answers to the academic difficulties encountered by their child when they first became aware that there were problems.
e. Research into special training for Kindergarten to Grade 6 teachers especially emphasising psychology of early childhood. This is an extension of the first implication of the study as noted above.

f. Research into the social values of society with the main question pertaining to the deterioration or the maintenance of 20th century values. As with any society there is constant change but it may be of some value to examine the pattern and to document the major changes that have occurred over the last fifty years in western society. This suggested research is based on the major increase in learning disabilities over the last few decades. Is there a social/societal reason for this influx of children who encounter difficulties in learning?

g. Research into leisure time activities for children. Is the TV an essential element to this time slot? From the study there appeared to be a large portion of leisure time spent on sitting watching a variety of programmes on television few of which allowed the development of the imagination to take place. Since imagination plays an important role in reading and writing, it seems that the deprivation of opportunities for the use of the imagination could impact on the literacy process.

h. Research into the common knowledge base of the average parent in partnership with what common knowledge is taught in school. As research has shown, learning takes place best when one adds to and builds on previous knowledge. The basic information such as how airports work, how trains run and where Holland is located in the world for example, are bits of information that the student uses to understand the society in which he lives. If the parents are not well informed about social activities and world events they will not be able to offer the opportunities for such exposure to their children. How much responsibility lies with the school to provide this information?

i. Research into family traumas during the early primary grades for impact on learning. This area from the study requires investigation for it may be relevant in the prevention of learning difficulties and it may provide information to parents who could use this data to adjust the manner in which they handle family crisis.
5.10 Learning Disabilities Revisited

The identifying criteria used in the study were: normal intelligence of students, as established through formal testing or professional opinion; normal functioning, i.e., without physical or mental debilitating impairments and finally, academic functioning at least two years behind their peers.

The definitions and major criteria used for identification of learning disabilities does not really classify all of the conditions.

The principal problems that underlies this ‘condition’ are:

- the attitude of educators toward these children
- the lack of commitment of parents to the furtherance of the child’s education and
- the approach taken in providing a solution to the problem.

From my observation and experience I have discovered that most teachers dealing with students with learning disabilities are not particularly interested in creating methods by which these students can be taught. They appear to feel that it is a ‘hopeless task’, especially when the students reach high school. In primary school, the methods presently used are proving to be ineffective. The real damage has been done in and around Year 2.

On the other hand, all of the responsibility for this problem cannot be placed at the education door. Parents are equally responsible for the problem. They do not require the child to take on regular responsibilities in the family unit nor do they encourage the child to complete the homework assigned by the school. The parents do not implement the values necessary for academic success.

I believe it is the responsibility of the teachers to ensure that they are providing the very best educational practices for the students. Teachers need to plan carefully, and they need to experiment with all of the available teaching strategies plus their imagination to provide for the student a technique through which he can acquire the knowledge and skills of literacy. Teachers should also be assessing themselves and their use of the specific strategies.
5.11 Conclusions

The community concerned with learning disabilities has struggled over the years in their search for a solution to the Orton’s “word blindness”. It is one of the most mystifying ‘afflictions’ and the solution most elusive. This study has brought to the field of learning disabilities another aspect to the phenomenon. It is hoped that this knowledge will lead to the unfolding of the learning disability quandary.

The students in this study could be classified in all ways normal except in their academic performance at school. The study set out to investigate for a better understanding of the inter-relationship of learning disabilities, the family and the school.

At the time of interview and data collection, these students had acquired skills up to middle primary level. Despite delayed reading skills, these students were expected by the subject teachers specifically and by the Department of School Education generally, to cope with material in other subject areas that rely heavily on adequate reading and writing skills presumed to have been attained prior to that year.

It appears that the outcomes of this study suggest that the link between literacy, learning disabilities and beliefs of parents, students and teachers is such that these beliefs support and in some cases instigate the learning disabilities. The lack of parental encouragement and assistance in the academic progress of the child tend to worsen the situation. Further, when teachers formally become aware that the student is encountering difficulties with learning, he is believed to be lacking in intelligence since he is functioning two or three years behind their peers, and that this student has emotional/behavioural problems. Once the label is in place and the beliefs of the teachers are established then there is less effort put into the teaching process for these children. In all fairness, it is difficult to plan lessons that expand such a wide range in functioning ability. This type of planning requires a great deal of specific organisation of the lesson content and teaching strategies. Most teachers do not have the time required for this type of preparation.

The data gathered in this study have hopefully broadened and added to the information on learning disabilities already accumulated. The interaction of the
two major contenders in the learning disability scenario, the teachers and the parents, each playing vital roles in the moulding and in the development of the child, could consider changing their attitudes and approaches to the child in the school environment and in the family environment. Children require guidance and they need to know how to accept the responsibility for their own learning and their own contribution to the family unit which will extend into the community as they mature.

The educational system can do little to modify parental behaviour but should attempt to provide teachers with adequate training and the resources with which to work. Teachers need to be prepared to take a more active interventionist role especially when dealing with sensitive years and some of the traumas with which the children are attempting to cope.

This may require a change in the philosophical approach to the selection of teachers and the selection of learning experiences in the early Years/Grades.
References


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O'Sullivan, Julia T. (1992). Reading Beliefs and Reading Achievement: A Development Study of Students From Lower Income Families. Report Number 6, Summary Reports of Paths to Literacy and Illiteracy in Newfoundland and Labrador, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, Newfoundland, 1-22.


Appendices

A. Introduction Letter
B. Consent Form
C. Student Profile
D. Questionnaire For Students
E. Questionnaire For Parents
F. Educational Research Data Form
G. Questions For Teachers
H. Topic Analysis Form
I. Interviews With Principals
J. Coding Manual
Introduction Letter

Dear parent's name

My name is Mary Elizabeth Pryce and I am presently enrolled as a graduate student at Wollongong University in the Faculty of Education. I have a Masters of Science of Education Degree and I have my Specialist qualifications in Special Education. I am also a regular classroom teacher certified in English and French for both the Primary and Secondary levels.

I am interested in conducting research into the areas of Learning Disabilities, Belief Systems and Literacy. The acquisition of the skills of reading and writing is so essential to the quality of life of our children. It is hoped that through this research, some aspect of the unknown factors of Learning Disabilities will surface which will add to the present bank of knowledge and possibly lead to a better design of programmes for these children.

I am writing to you to ask if you and child's name will participate in this project. I simply want to interview you, and child's name and his/her teachers. Hopefully the time involved will not too much exceed an initial one hour interview and a short follow-up session to verify the information that I gather. Of course, this timeframe is the best I can estimate right now.

All information gathered from you or child's name will be confidential and further, there will be no identifiable references in the final report.

Naturally I hope that you will see the project through to completion but you and your child may withdraw from the study at any time without jeopardising either you or your child's treatment and standing within the school.

If you are willing to participate in the research and also to have your children interviewed, would you please sign the attached consent form.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you.

Yours truly,

Mary Elizabeth Pryce.
CONSENT FORM

I/We parent’s name give permission to Mary Elizabeth Pryce to interview myself/us and my son/daughter for the purposes of conducting an investigation into the areas of Learning Disabilities, Belief Systems and Literacy.

I/we understand that I/we am/are free to withdraw from the project at any time and that all information gathered is to be handled in a confidential manner.

If I have any complaints regarding the conduct of this research I may contact the Secretary of the University of Wollongong human Ethics Committee on (042)213079.

Date _______________

Signature_________________________
STUDENT PROFILE

Student Data;
S_code:__________
Sf_name:_________________  Ss_name:____________
Age:__________  Sex:____________
Sisters:_______  Brothers:__________
Grade:_____
Teacher:_________________  Co_ord:__________

Parent Data;
P_name:______________________(Formal name)
M_name:______________________(Mother)
M_ed:______________  M_job:______________
F_name:______________________(Father)
F_ed:______________  F_job:______________
Socec:______________

Addr_1:______________________________________
Addr_2:________________________Post_c:_______
Phone:___________

School Data;
School_n:______________
Code:__________

Correspondence;
Perm_out:______________  Perm_in:______________
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STUDENTS.

1  Do you like school?
2  Have you always liked school?
3  Tell me about the good things about school
4  Why do you think that?
5  Tell me about the bad things about school.
6  Why do you think that?
7  Tell me when you learned to read.
8  What do you remember about learning to read?
9  How did you learn to read?
10  Was it easy?
11  Do you like to read?
12  When did you learn to write?
13  What do you remember about learning to write?
14  Do you write other than at school?
15  Tell me do you think that you have any problems in school?
16  What do think those problems are?
17  How long have you been aware that you have had problems with school?
18  Tell me about them.
19  Do you have trouble with mathematics?
20  Why do you think you have difficulty?
21  How do you feel about the fact that you have difficulty reading or doing maths?
22  Can you tell me something of how you feel when you are asked to read
   a. aloud  b. silently?
23  Do you have any idea what caused you to feel this way?
24  Can you remember any incident that made you feel uncomfortable about school?
25  Can you remember anything that happened to you that made you feel uncomfortable about reading?
26  Tell me what you are going to do when you leave school.
27  Do you think you will have trouble getting a job because of your difficulties in reading and maths?
Appendix D

28 Do you think you will grow out of it or do you think that this problem will be with you all your life?
29 What aspects of school do you enjoy?
30 How do you think the school can help?
31 What do you think you will use reading and writing for when you leave school?
32 What do you consider to be a good book?
33 Do you think reading and writing are important?
34 How do you think it could be taught better?
35 Do your parents read books or newspapers?
36 How many books do you have in your house?
37 What kind of books are they?
38 What are your impressions of school?
39 Tell me what you think you are good at.
40 When did you learn that?
41 How did you learn it?
42 Tell me more.
43 Do you think that you learn things easily?
44 Tell me more
45 Do you think that you are a good writer?
46 Do you know anyone who is a good writer?
47 Why do you think they are a good writer?
48 Do you know anyone who is a good reader?
49 What do they do when they are reading that makes you think they are good?
50 When you come to a word in reading that you don't know, what do you do?
51 How do you spell a word that you may not know?
52 How would you go about writing something
53 Do you believe that learning to read and write well is important?
54 Deleted
55 Did they read to you when you were younger?
56 Tell me, do you think that reading is important to your parents?
57 Do you think that your parents believe that you have a problem at school?
58 Do they care?
59 Do your brothers or sisters have trouble at school?
60 Tell me about their problems?
61 Do you think that having an education is important?
62 Do you like sport?
What are your favourite sports?
How often do you play them?
Do most of your friends play these sports too?
What do you do in your spare time?
Do you have a computer?
Do you play games on your computer?
What kind of games do you play?
How much TV do you watch?
What time do you usually go to bed?
What time do you usually get up in the morning?
What do you normally have for breakfast?
How about lunch?
And dinner?
Do you eat a lot of junk food?
Do you take any medication?
Have you had what you consider good teachers?
Tell me about them?
Tell me about the ones that you think weren't so good.
What did they do that made you think that?
Is this the only school that you have attended?
Tell me about the others.
What was your best class?
Why?
What was your worst?
Why?
What about friends, do you have a lot or only a few?
Tell me about them?
Are they good at school?
When do you think that you will leave school?
What are your thoughts on getting an education. Do you think that it is important to have a good education?
Tell me do you think you are dumb or stupid?

I have read and I agree that this is an accurate account of the interview.
Date of Interview:
Time:
Typed from notes:

QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

1. Would you tell me something about your schooling?
2. How far did you go in school?
3. Did you enjoy school?
4. Why? Why not?
5. When did you learn to read?
6. Did you enjoy your first days in school?
7. Can you remember your early teachers?
8. Would you say that you were a shy or nervous child?
9. Did you do well at maths?
10. Generally did you do well at school?
11. Do you believe it is important to have a good education?
12. Do you think that your son/daughter really has a reading problem?
13. Do you think that your child's progress is average for their grade level?
14. Do you think that they are capable of doing better in school?
15. When did you become aware of any difficulties at school?
16. What do you think is the cause of these difficulties?
17. Are you aware of any incident or situations that might have been a negative experience for the child?
18. Do you think that your child has always had good teachers?
19. Has your child ever had any unpleasant experiences in school?
20. Has your child enjoyed school at any time - maybe the early years?
21. How much television does your child watch?
22. Do you think this is too much?
23. What time does your child go to bed?
24. Get up?
25. Would you tell me what you think your child is good at?
26. Did you ever read to him/her when he/she was little?
27. Do you like to read?
28. What do you read - books? newspaper?
29. Do you believe that your son/daughter will grow out of this difficulty?
30. Do you believe that your son/daughter has the ability to cope with the demands of school?
31. Do you have any idea what your child is likely to do when he/she grows up?
32. Do you have discipline problems?
33. What kind of problems?
34. What do you think has caused these problems?
35. Does he/she have plenty of friends?
36. Do you approve of these friends?
37. Does your child function normally in everyday life in spite of the reading/writing difficulties?
38. Is he/she good at crafts, art, music and/or working with his hands?
39. Is he/she helpful around the house?
40. Did he/she endure a difficult birth?
41. Did he/she ever have a fall or blow to the head?

I have read and I agree that this is an accurate account of the interview.
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH DATA FORM

Student Name: ________________________________

Form: ________

Teacher: ________________________________

ACADEMIC

Please give your assessment of the student's level as compared with his/her peers.

Indicate the number of years behind with a "-" or ahead with a " +", eg. -2.

Reading:_______

Writing:_______

Oral:_______

Comprehension:_______

Arithmetic:_______

Do you think the student will grow out of his learning difficulties? Please comment.

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

EMOTIONAL

Problems? ..............................................................

BEHAVIOUR

Problems? ..............................................................

Comments:

........................................................................................................................................
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Appendix G

Date of Interview: 

Time: 

Typed from notes: 

Questions for Teachers 

1. What criteria was used to identify the students who are withdrawn for the purposes of remedial lessons? 

2. In relationship to the students that are given this help, what are your views on the causes of their Learning Difficulties. 

3. To what degree do you believe that you can help these children? 

4. What criteria did you use to select the students for this study? 

I have read and I agree that this is an accurate account of the interview.
### Topic Analysis Form

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stud No</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>78</td>
<td></td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td>87</td>
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<td>90</td>
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<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I

INTERVIEWS WITH PRINCIPALS

Questions general that were asked.

1. *What is the average age of the teaching staff?*

2. *How would you decide what grades/years the teachers would teach? Or How do you place teachers in specific classes?*
Coding Manual

This document is arranged in the same order as the question groups appear in Chapter 4. The questions were grouped together by first making an assessment of the topic of the question and then placing those questions of similarity together. Each set of questions was coded in similar but not exact ways. The coding evolved from the response to the questions. The majority of the questions were coded on a Topic Analysis Form (Appendix H) an example of which is found in the explanation of the first set of questions below.

Examples of the coding procedure followed in the study will be provided for the first five question sets in order to enable the reader to follow the steps taken. There will also be a narrative to accompany the procedure. The coding only will be given for the rest of the data. An explanation is provided in the event that there could be a misunderstanding in the process.
Beliefs

Thoughts of Students and Parents on The Necessity of a Good Education

S61 Do you think that having an education is important?
S91 What are your thoughts on getting an education. Do you think that it is important to have a good education?
P11 Do you believe it is important to have a good education?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S61, S91,</th>
<th>Secondary Code</th>
<th>P11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to questions S61 and S91 were coded as yes, no or Don't Know and were recorded on a Topic Analysis Form (Appendix H). Across the top of the form, the numbers of each question were set down and the coded answer was placed underneath the question number. The response from each student/parent was placed opposite the student/parent number. I also added secondary coding information, in this case, on whether the good education was required for a job, just for living or in some applicable cases, both. An example of this follows using Y for yes, N for no, J for job and L for living:
Extract From the Topic Analysis Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Student and Parent Responses to 'Good Education Importance'</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stud No</td>
<td>Student Question 61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>YJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>YJ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>YL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All of the recording of the question sets in this study followed the above format.

Students' Feelings on School

S1. Do you like school?
S2. Have you always liked school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S1,</th>
<th>S2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Acceptable</td>
<td>JA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question was initially collated with the parent questions P3 and P4 but the response from the students became too large and thus the parent responses were reported in a separate section. The second step involved the comparison of student questions 1 and 2 with parent question 3. The responses were coded into three categories; Y for yes, N for no and JA for just acceptable. The responses from student question 1 were tallied and then each group was compared to student question 2.
**Number of Primary Schools Attended by Students**

**S81.** *Is this the only school that you have attended?*

**S82** *Tell me about the others?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S81</th>
<th>S82</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toted the number</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from these two questions were entered onto a Topic Analysis Form along with the information from the students records used to cross-check the information given by the students. The responses were coded with the number of primary schools attended. As there were few answers to S82 and of those the responses were so varied that it was impossible to gain any constructive information.

**Parents' Level of Schooling and Their Assessment of the Their Shyness**

**P2.** *How far did you go in school?*

**P8** *Would you say that you were a shy or nervous child?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P2</th>
<th>P8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Toted the last year</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The answers to years at school were recorded and tallied. The nervous or shy responses were recorded with simple Y for yes or N for no. The answers were then tallied and reported.
Parent Responses to General Academic Achievement

P10. Generally did you do well at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P10</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>G</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reactions of Parents to Their School Experiences

P1. Would you tell me something about your schooling?
P6. Did you enjoy your first days in school?
P3. Did you enjoy school?
P4. Why? Why not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P6</th>
<th>P3</th>
<th>P4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Friends F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Subjects S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Remember</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Just Acceptable JA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Students Thoughts About School**

S3  Tell me about the good things about school
S4  Why do you think that?
S5  Tell me about the bad things about school.
S6  Why do you think that?
S24 Can you remember any incident that made you feel uncomfortable about school?
S29 What aspects of school do you enjoy?
S38 What are your impressions of school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learn</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting Out</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Subjects</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S24</th>
<th>S38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard Work</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Incidences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>HW</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students Thoughts on Learning

S39. Tell me what you think you are good at.
S40. When did you learn it?
S41. How did you learn it?
S42. Tell me more.
S43. Do you think that you learn things easily?
S44. Tell me more.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S39</th>
<th>S41, S42</th>
<th>S43, S44</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sport</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>Watched &amp; Did</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjects</td>
<td>Su</td>
<td>Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everything</td>
<td>E</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parents re Skills and Ability of Child,

P25. Would you tell me what you think your child is good at?
P30. Do you believe that your son/daughter has the ability to cope with the demands of school?
P37. Does your child function normally in everyday life in spite of the reading/writing difficulties?
P38. Is he/she good at crafts, art, music and/or working with his hands?
P39. Is he/she helpful around the house?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P25</th>
<th>P30, P39</th>
<th>P37, P38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Coding</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Student Problems**

S15. *Tell me do you think that you have any problems in school?*

S16. *What do you think those problems are?*

S17. *How long have you been aware that you have had problems with school?*

S18. *Tell me about them.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S15</th>
<th>S16</th>
<th>S17, S18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Work</td>
<td>DW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parents on Child’s Ability and Performance at School**

P12. *Do you think that your son/daughter really has a reading problem?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Beliefs of Parents on Child’s Academic Standing

P13. Do you think that your child’s progress is average for their grade level?
P14. Do you think that they are capable of doing better in school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P13</th>
<th>P14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes/Average or Above</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No/Below Average</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parent’s Opinions on Child’s Problems

P15. When did you become aware of any difficulties at school?
P16. What do you think is the cause of these difficulties?
P17. Are you aware of any incident or situations that might have been a negative experience for the child?
P19. Has your child had any unpleasant experiences in school?
P20. Has your child enjoyed school at any time - maybe the early years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P15</th>
<th>P16</th>
<th>P17</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</td>
<td>School</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hereditary</td>
<td>School Exper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diet</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Problem with Student</td>
<td>Problem with Child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>No Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

256
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P19</th>
<th>P20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Injuries</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fights</td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/Child</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student and Parent Beliefs on Overcoming Learning Disabilities**

S28  Do you think you will grow out of it or do you think that this problem will be with you all your life?

P29  Do you believe that your son/daughter will grow out of this difficulty?

S30  How do you think the school can help?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S28, P29</th>
<th>S30</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Students' Beliefs on Parents' Views**

S57  Do you think that your parents believe that you have a problem at school?

S58  Do they care?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S57, S58</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Teachers

P18. Do you think that your child has always had good teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P18</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students Beliefs About School

S83 What was your best class?
S84 Why?
S85 What was your worst?
S86 Why?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S83, S85</th>
<th>S84</th>
<th>S86</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fun</td>
<td>Unhappy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students' Perceptions of Good Teachers

S77 Have you had what you consider good teachers?
S78 Tell me about them.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S77</th>
<th>S78</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Can't Remember</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

258
**Students' Perceptions of Poor Teachers**

S79  Tell me about the ones that you think weren't so good.
S80  What did they do that made you think that?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S79</th>
<th>S80</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,2,3,4,5,6,7</td>
<td>Yelled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unfair Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Poor Teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Parents' Recollection of Their Early Teachers**

P7  Can you remember your early teachers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P7</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Self-Esteem

S92 Tell me do you think you are dumb or stupid?
S21 How do you feel about the fact that you have difficulty reading or doing maths?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S92</th>
<th>S21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somtimes</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumb</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Different</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Care</td>
<td>DC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Bad</td>
<td>NB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students Views For Future

S26 Tell me what you are going to do when you leave school.
S90 When do you think that you will leave school?
P31 Do you have any idea what your child is likely to do when he/she grows up?
S27 Do you think you will have trouble getting a job because of your difficulties in reading and maths?
S31 What do you think you will use reading and writing for when you leave school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S26, P31</th>
<th>S90</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tallied answers</td>
<td>No. in Yrs 7 - 12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S27</th>
<th>S31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>WP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Literacy

### Student Beliefs on the Importance of Reading and Writing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S53</th>
<th>Secondary</th>
<th>S33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>J</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Parent Beliefs on Their Children's Reading Problems

<table>
<thead>
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<th>P12</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoided</td>
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</table>

### Reading and Learning How

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S56</th>
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<th>P5</th>
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<td>Y</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Reading and Books**

S35. Do your parents read books or newspapers?  
S36. How many books do you have in your house?  
S37. What kind of books are they?  
P28. What do you read - books? newspapers?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S35, P28</th>
<th>S36, S37</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>B</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Beliefs and Books**

S32. What do you consider to be a good book?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S32</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Reading When Young**

S55. Did they (the Parents) read to you when you were younger?  
P26. Did you ever read to him/her when s/he was little?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S55, P26</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning to Read

S7. Tell me when did you learn to read.
S8. What do you remember about learning to read?
S9. How did you learn to read?
S10. Was it easy?
S11. Do you like to read?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S7</th>
<th>S8, S9</th>
<th>S10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counted Years</td>
<td>Recorded Responses</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Beliefs on Teaching Reading

S34. How do you think that it could be taught better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recorded Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Qualities of a Good Reader From LD Students' Perspective

S48  Do you know anyone who is a good reader?
S49  What do they do when they are reading that makes you think they are good?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S48</th>
<th>S49</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Amount/Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students on Reading

S22  Can you tell me something of how you feel when you are asked to read
    a. aloud
    b. silently?
S23  Do you have any idea what caused you to feel this way?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S22a</th>
<th>S22b, S23</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nervous/Embarrassed</td>
<td>NE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refuse</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Read</td>
<td>JR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like to Read</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hate it</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiences Connected to Reading

S25. Can you remember anything that happened to you that made you feel uncomfortable about reading?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laughed At</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yelled At</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couldn't Read</td>
<td>CR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reading and Spelling

S50. When you come to a word in reading that you don't know, what do you do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S50</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound Out/Guess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

S51. How do you spell a word that you may not know?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S51</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sound Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syllables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask Someone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

265
**Writing and Learning How**

S12. When did you learn to write?
S13. What do you remember about learning to write?
S14. Do you write other than at school?
S52. How would you go about writing something?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S12</th>
<th>S13, S14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K,1,2,3,4,5,6,7</td>
<td>No Coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S52</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Write</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think and Write</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Good Writers**

S45. Do you think that you are a good writer?
S46. Do you know anyone who is a good writer?
S47. Why do you think they are a good writer?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S45</th>
<th>S46</th>
<th>S47</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Neat N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Write More M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Good Stories GS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Learn Quicker L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J

Mathematics

P9. Did you do well at Maths?
S19. Do you have trouble with mathematics?
S20. Why do you think you have difficulty?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P9</th>
<th>S19</th>
<th>S20</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Can't Learn Quickly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Bad</td>
<td>NB</td>
<td>Times Tables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don't Know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Can't Read</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Behavioural and Educational Data

The data obtained from the Educational Research Data From (Appendix F), were tabulated by taking the various teacher responses and placing them in a negative or positive column. The negative column indicated comments that pertained to a behavioural problem and the positive column contained the responses that detailed the absence of a behavioural problem.

The comments from the teachers on emotional problems were tabulated in the same manner as those data on behavioural problems.
**Nutrition**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S73</th>
<th>What do you normally have for breakfast?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S74</td>
<td>How about lunch?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S75</td>
<td>And dinner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S76</td>
<td>Do you eat a lot of junk food?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S73,S74,S75, No Coding</th>
<th>S76</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The replies were reviewed and were tabulated as such without the need of coding.

**Hours of Rest**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S71</th>
<th>What time do you usually go to bed?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S72</td>
<td>What time do you usually get up in the morning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P23</td>
<td>What time does your child go to bed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P24</td>
<td>Get Up?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S71,S72,P23,P24</th>
<th>Tabulated</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The replies were reviewed and were tabulated as such without the need of coding.
**Sports**

S62. Do you like sport?  
S63. What are your favourite sports?  
S64. How often do you play them?  
S65. Do most of your friends play these sports too?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S62</th>
<th>S63</th>
<th>S64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>Group GP Daily D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Individual IN Weekly W</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Either E Several Times a Week S</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Monthly M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>More Than a Month O</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Individual sports were considered activities that one could do alone while group sports were activities that required a team.
Friends

P35. Does s/he have plenty of friends?
P36. Do you approve of these friends?
S87. What about friends, do you have a lot or only a few?
S88. Tell me about them?
S89. Are they good at school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P35, P36, S87, S88, S89</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Coding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to the above questions did not require coding as the answers virtually provided the information without classification.

Television

P21. How much television does your child watch?
P22. Do you think this is too much?
S70. How much TV do you watch?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P21, S70</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tabulated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Spare time**

**S66.** What do you do in your spare time?

| S66 | Tabulated Activities |

The replies were reviewed and were tabulated as such without the need of coding.

**Computers**

**S67.** Do you have a computer?

**S68.** Do you play games on your computer?

**S69.** What kind of games do you play?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S67, S68</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| S69 | No Coding |

No coding was necessary because the games were of such wide variety that it was difficult if not impossible to derive any pertinent information from the data.

**Medication**

**S76a.** Do you take any medication?

| S76a | No Coding |

Only one person was taking medication.
## Birth and Head Injuries

**P40.** Did s/he endure a difficult birth?

**P41.** Did s/he ever have a fall or a blow to the head?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>P40</th>
<th>P41</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caesarean</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceps</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't Know</td>
<td>DK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Possibly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Siblings

**S59.** Do your brothers or sisters have trouble at school?

**S60.** Tell me about their problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S59</th>
<th>S60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y No Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Student Problems

**P32.** Do you have discipline problems?

**P33.** What kind of problems?

**P34.** What do you think has caused these problems?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S32</th>
<th>S33, S34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Y No Coding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>