

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This study attempts to investigate the degree to which factors other than those derived from cognitive attributions, may account for school academic success. School students are often perceived by their teachers and others as either cognitively talented or otherwise, in the various curricula areas they become exposed to within the school environment. Research however (Marsh, Parker & Smith 1983, Mboya 1998) has indicated that affective factors, other than cognitive ones, may account for a considerable degree of academic success and learning potential in school.

The research work of Howard (1997) has also indicated a growing consensus that affective factors particularly attitudes and beliefs, play a major part in the construction of knowledge. Instead of being passive recipients (of knowledge), students are increasingly seen as active participants in the construction of knowledge within the teaching and learning domains.

These affective factors which seem to involve and inform the students' state of mind, particularly their feelings and emotions, may cause students to respond positively, negatively or in a disinterested or disaffected manner towards the school curriculum in general, and their school subjects and teachers in particular.

Although there are a significant number of these affective factors which include the self-concept, student attitudes and motivation, student perceptions of the teachers and teachers' perceptions of students, and willingness to learn, some have been given more prominence than others by researchers. As a result of a literature review, this study has selected a certain number of these affective factors, in order to conduct its investigation concerning the relationship these factors have with academic success or achievement in school.

English as a school subject is used as the gauge to measure academic achievement in this study. This is a prominent and important school subject in Zimbabwe since

success within the subject extends beyond its ambit. In fact, it has also become the 'lingua franca' of the school and all discourse of a theoretical nature is conducted in the language.

The selected affective factors chosen by this study and on which this study is focused, include the way in which students reflect on themselves in terms of their ability (their self-concepts of academic ability), their feelings and emotional responses towards school (their attitudes), and their perceptions of their teachers. The study will also attempt to establish whether these factors significantly affect learning outcomes.

The affective factors selected by this study were deemed to be prominent by researchers like Hamacheck (1987), Baker and Morotz (1997), Ruggiero (1998). Since certain school subjects such as English and Mathematics seem to provide more reference points in research concerning the influence of affective factors on achievement (Marsh et al 1983, Marsh, Byrne & Shavelson 1988), it was deemed appropriate to focus this study on the following specific affective factors (see chapter 3):-

- the way in which students conceptualise their ability in English, that is, their self-concepts of academic ability in English (SAAE)
- the attitudes students have towards the subject of English (ATE)
- the way in which the students perceive their teachers of English (SPT)

Although both the cognitive and affective domains are interrelated in terms of learning outcomes and student achievement, current practice seems to suggest the dominance of the former at the expense of the latter. One of the prime objectives of this study is therefore to examine the part played by affective factors on learning outcomes in school. Recommendations will also be made which offer and give due prominence to affective teaching strategies for teachers, in line with their cognitive counterparts.

The intention of this study is to examine the relationship selected affective factors have with academic achievement in English at form four level (age 16/17), within the context of the Zimbabwean high school.

1.2 PROBLEM ANALYSIS

1.2.1 Awareness of the problem

For a number of years the writer has been aware of the students becoming enmeshed in self-fulfilling prophecies as a result of the way in which schools operate. If institutional and national examination requirements are not met (by students), not only are they deemed to be intellectually weak and unable to cope by their teachers, but, more importantly perhaps, students begin to perceive themselves in these terms. The writer was also aware of teachers, in many instances, being dismissive of those students who were apparently unable to understand basic concepts and who had weaker modes of expression. However, those very same secondary school students (in his experience), in quite different contexts, seemed to behave entirely differently and more importantly, with some intellectual finesse.

An example that arises in this context concerns a group of school students in a London setting, who were weak achievers in school, but who collectively worked evenings and weekends in the local market. There they were apparently fully conversant with the selling and marketing of goods and displayed talents and skills including the ability to calculate mental and arithmetical problems on the spot.

It was thought then by the writer that their lack of achievement in school could be less to do with their intellect and rather more to do with how capable they perceived themselves to be, in academic terms and their attitudes to school. These very students were often labelled ‘disaffected.’

John Holt, a renowned and influential educationist, in his seminal work ‘The Under-achieving School,’ suggests that the child becomes inhibited within the school and learns ‘not to ask questions’. The child seems eventually to accept without question the adults’ evaluation of him (Holt 1972).

The idea that the child be subjected to the judgement of adults seems of particular relevance to this study. In the same publication, Holt's views also seem to corroborate the views of the writer. He says: -

“Almost every child on the first day he sets foot in a school building is smarter, more curious, less afraid of what he doesn't know, better at finding and figuring things out, more more confident, more resourceful, persistent and independent, than he will ever be again in his schooling”
(Holt 1972: 24).

If Holt's views are accepted, then by extrapolation, each individual has therefore, the potential to achieve. One way in which individuals are arguably prevented from fulfilling this potential, is the way in which systematic conditions (streaming, setting and testing), impact on their perceptions of themselves. If, for example, a student consistently comes top of his class, he would have been a product of those very systemic conditions and that student would receive the 'system's' approbation. However if the student consistently displays intellectual weakness and demonstrates poor attitude, he would instead receive the system's 'punishment'. In Zimbabwe, it may be argued, similar systemic conditions persist. One such imposition in Zimbabwe is its inherited examination system.

The national examinations in Zimbabwe (General Certificate of Education: Ordinary and Advanced Level), are public in nature and until recently were moderated by the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. Therefore, the curricula of our schools are understandably guided by the provisions and imperatives of an examination system which may not meet all the needs of both the students and the country.

In addition, seemingly little cognizance (by researchers and others), is taken of a number of potentially deleterious conditions which could mitigate against many of our students fulfilling their academic potential. These conditions include large classes, lack of counselling services and poor resources. However, whichever system of education borrowed or otherwise, prevails in Zimbabwe, the issue is that large numbers of our students not only underachieve but also fail. Statistically some 20%

pass five or more “O” levels (a pass criterion), whilst between 5% and 10% of that cohort go on to meet the university entrance requirements of three good ‘A’ levels.

Thus, this study essentially focuses on whether the following are significant contributory factors towards academic achievement in English. These are:-self-concept of academic ability (in English), student perceptions of their teachers (in English classes), and student attitudes towards their teachers (of English). This may best be illustrated diagrammatically (see figure 1.1).

Figure 1.1 The way in which the variables interrelate

Independent variables	Dependent variable
<p>Self-concept of academic ability in English (SAAE)</p> <p>Student perceptions of their teachers of English (SPT)</p> <p>Student attitudes towards English (SAAE)</p>	<p>Achievement in English</p>

Figure 1.1 reflects the primary concerns and research questions of the study. These are:-

- Is there a relationship between self-concept of academic ability in English and academic achievement (in English)?
- Is there a relationship between student perceptions of their teachers of English and academic achievement (in English)?
- Is there a relationship between student attitudes towards English and academic achievement (in English)?

1.2.2 The concerns and importance of the study

In the past, the role of affective factors in education has been rather subdued and given little prominence, especially in terms of the results of the research filtering into schools. Researchers such as Marsh et al (1988) and others, have renewed research interest in affective factors such as the self-concept and its relationship to academic achievement. In turn this has provided the modus operandi for the selection of the self-concept and two additional affective factors (and their relationship to academic achievement), for the investigative focus of this study. Therefore the affective factors selected by this study are:-student self-concept of academic ability, the attitudes students have towards English and student perceptions of their teachers of English.

Some research in recent years has focused on the importance of the self-concept in terms of academic achievement. However many of these studies have focused on one affective factor at a time and have been, in particular, concerned with the relationship between student self-concept and achievement (Marsh, et al 1988 and Marsh & Yeung 1997). Not as many have been undertaken on student perceptions of their teachers and its impact on academic achievement (Black 1996 and Mboya 1998) and even less on how student attitudes impact on academic achievement (Ruggiero 1998 and Hofman 1977). This study, however, has selected the three affective factors mentioned above, in an attempt to gauge their impact, as a group of factors, on academic achievement.

Thus the prime objective of this study is therefore to investigate the prominent affective factors mentioned above, in order to ascertain whether or not they have a relationship with academic outcomes (see figure 1.1).

1.2.3 Demarcation of the study

This study is concerned with the potential relationship affective factors have with the learning/achievement process in secondary schools. The affective factors chosen for this study were selected on the basis of the literature study conducted in chapters two and three. In terms of the demarcation of this study further considerations were taken into account. These were:-

- Only urban schools would be utilized since they are staffed by qualified personnel, sit public examinations which are monitored (by education officers) and possess similar resources.
- Only those students in their 'O' level year would act as respondents.
- Since English is a compulsory subject in all Zimbabwean secondary schools, it was thought that it would be the most appropriate subject to use for gathering data.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

From the analysis of the problem, the following research questions are posited:-

- Which affective factors are related to the academic achievement of school students?
- What is the relationship between selected affective factors and academic achievement?
- What teaching model may be proposed for the enhancement of affective factors and hence learning and academic achievement?

1.4 PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE: THE NON-COGNITIVE DOMAIN OF LEARNING

1.4.1 Affective factors versus cognitive factors

Research conducted over a number of years has recognised the important role affective factors play in terms of academic achievement. Each study involving the recognition of the role these affective factors play in achievement, has contributed to our increasing knowledge of what determines scholastic success or otherwise.

However, within the context of the western world, self-concept has been of particular interest to researchers dedicated to finding the causes of strong and weak school achievement. Their body of research seems to suggest that the self-concept underlies much of what is deemed to be responsible for academic success or otherwise.

Unfortunately, fewer studies implicating the self-concept as important in the context of school success or failure have been undertaken on the continent of Africa (Mwamwenda 1996, Mboya 1998, 1999).

This study embraces the way in which these particular factors are related to achievement in English, since English is a prime school subject and is of historical, social and civil import (Lemmer 1996).

The affective factors chosen by the researcher as a result of the literature reviews (see chapters 2 and 3), are the attitudes students have towards English, the students' self-concepts of academic ability in English and the way in which students perceive their teachers of English. These factors and their relationship with achievement form the modus operandi of the study.

Both historical and contemporaneous research in the areas mentioned above, suggest that the way in which students perceive their ability within a subject area (Marsh, Smith & Barnes 1984), the way students perceive their teachers (Mboya 1998), and their attitudes towards subject areas (Ruggiero 1998), influence their academic achievement.

Importantly, the data generated by this study will emanate from Zimbabwean sources. Regrettably research findings within the affective domain are rather sparse and the supremacy of the cognitive domain (in terms of the evaluation of academic achievement), persists.

This paradigmatic climate (within the context of education), as far as intelligence is concerned was enshrined in the seminal work of Spearman, Thurstone and Guilford (in Kagan, Havemann & Segal 1984: 200), among others. They were instrumental in

ensuring that intelligence (where the primacy of mental ability was of the greatest importance), was perceived as the key pre-requisite to educational ability and success.

Certainly in psychological circles there was an initial concern to identify those children suffering from what were then seen as mental disabilities (a pathological perception), and who were consequently in need of special education and training. The emphasis soon shifted to a more general attempt to test and categorize children in terms of their 'intelligence' (Kagan et al 1984: 209), and those verbal and spatial abilities of which 'intelligence' is apparently composed.

Although some children were identified (by the process of intelligence testing), as having high intellectual potential, it may be argued that many were instead labelled as being of below average ability, or indeed, capacity.

This in turn, distracted researchers and educationists from pursuing other factors of consequence in terms of academic outcomes. In particular, social and affective factors such as nutrition, self-concept and student attitudes, were neglected. To this day a 'residue' (arguably), of misplaced faith in the doctrine of inherited capabilities, remains difficult to dislodge from everyday conceptions. However, some researchers agree that intelligence is a factor rather than an explanatory tool of human aptitude and endeavour.

In the domain of the school, affective factors (Myburgh, Grobler & Niehaus 1999) are increasingly seen by researchers as major components in academic success or otherwise. These factors have been brought to the fore in recent educational research as opposed to the stereotypical sine qua non of academic success: intelligence.

Researchers, (Brookover, Thomas & Paterson 1964, Burns 1979, Mboya 1999, Mwamwenda 1996, and Saraswat 1989), recognize that these affective factors may impact on the scholastic success, or otherwise, of individual students; and may be the most significant variables in relation to school achievement.

These affective factors are examined in more detail in the following paragraph.

1.4.2 The self-concept

Historically, the self-concept became firmly embedded in mainstream educational psychology in the middle of the 20th century. The views of Fink (1962) expressed succinctly the conceptions of the concept during that era: -

‘Self-concept is defined as the attitudes and feelings that a person has regarding himself. It is implicit in this definition that these attitudes and feelings lead to attempts on the part of the individual through various actions to enhance or defend himself ’

(Fink 1962: 57).

Others including Marsh and Craven (1994: 3) see the self-concept as a : -

‘..... mediating variable that facilitates the attainment of other desired outcomes.’

Another dimension of self, suggested by Combs and Snygg (1949) in their seminal work ‘Individual Behaviour’, is that self-concept is not a behavioural concept but rather one which explores the internal life of an individual and therefore it becomes perceptual and organizational in intent.

This aspect of the self-concept is alluded to later by Myburgh et al (1999), (see 1.7.2). More recent research, notwithstanding the above, has been directed towards establishing the empirical credentials of the self-concept as an empirically validated construct. Research undertaken by Byrne (1984), Byrne (1986), Byrne and Shavelson (1986), Shavelson, Hubner and Stanton (1976), Marsh and Shavelson (1985), and Shavelson and Bolus (1982), suggest that the self-concept in entomological terms is a multi-faceted construct. It is hierarchical in nature with the general self-concept at the apex and the situation specific self-concepts at the base (see Chapter 3).

Although much research has been conducted on the self-concept (as reported later in this study), much debate and discussion in research and education circles continues in terms of the self-concept’s utility value within educational contexts. Indeed, the concept also seems to elude an adequate definition since many of the studies are dependent upon self-report mechanisms. However, on a more pragmatic note, teachers, including the writer, are aware of the self-concept as a factor in learning,

when confronted by students who are often so unsure of themselves and their potential abilities that they fail to achieve their potential.

1.4.3 Student attitudes towards English

In a seminal study conducted by Hofman (1977), it is suggested that attitudes towards a particular language exist for a number of reasons. In Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where Hofman's study was conducted, he singles out one overriding reason which all groups in the country agreed on, that is, the instrumental importance of English. He suggests that without a good grasp of the language, obtaining employment is difficult. He also alludes to the use of the English language in schools: -

“.....the present advantages of English in schools are viewed in terms of expediency and the overall task of wider communication is seen as the achievement of national unity” (Hofman 1977 :29).

1.4.4 Student perceptions of their teachers

The literature in this area demonstrates the growing realization that in the learning environment of the school, the students play a vital role. This role demands that students are more than just passive recipients of the process of education, but rather, as more recent research reflects, prime movers within this process.

In a study investigating student perceptions of teachers, Masutha and Ackerman (1999), concluded that this was an important but neglected area in terms of student motivation and scholastic success. Their respondents, who were generally poor achievers, were in most cases negative about their teachers, citing lack of interest and encouragement in particular. Clarke (1995) also revealed the importance of student perception in terms of learning outcomes. These studies and others are discussed in Chapter 3 in greater detail.

1.5 THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

1.5.1 The aims of the theoretical investigation

The theoretical investigation will review the literature in the area to be investigated and includes:-

- an historical and contemporaneous review of the importance of English as a medium of instruction in Zimbabwe
- the self-concept with particular reference to the self-concept of academic ability in English and its relationship to academic achievement
- students' perceptions of their teachers of English as a subject and its relationship to academic achievement
- student attitudes towards English as a subject and its relationship to academic achievement

1.5.2 The aims of the empirical investigation

The aims of the empirical investigation are as follows:-

- to investigate the relationship between self-concept of academic ability and academic achievement in English among school students in urban Zimbabwe
- to investigate the relationship between student perceptions of their teachers of English and academic achievement among school students in urban Zimbabwe
- to investigate the relationship between student attitude towards English and academic achievement among school students in an urban setting in Zimbabwe
- to investigate additional variables i.e. gender, I.Q., socio-economic status, school type, acquisition of English and their relationship to success or otherwise in English

How the investigation attempts to fulfil its aims is discussed in paragraphs 1.6.1 – 1.6.5

1.5.3 The research questions

The primary research questions, as far as this study is concerned, are:-

- Is there a relationship between student attitudes towards English and academic achievement in English?
- Is there a relationship between student self-concept of academic ability in English and academic achievement in English?
- Is there a relationship between student perceptions of their teachers of English and academic achievement in English?

- Is there a relationship between student gender and the following affective factors:-attitude towards English, self-concept of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English?
- Is there a relationship between when students first learn to speak English and the following affective factors:-attitude towards English, self-concept of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teacher of English?
- Is there a relationship between parental education and the following affective factors:-attitude towards English, self-concept of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English?
- Is there a relationship between the type of school attended and the following affective factors:-attitude towards English, self-concept of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English?
- Is there a relationship between where students live and the following affective factors:-attitude towards English, self-concept of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English?

1.5.4 The hypotheses

The following hypotheses are generated from the research questions and will be statistically tested in chapter 4.

- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of male and female students.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students who have different home languages.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students who live in different areas.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students who attend different schools.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students whose fathers have different levels of education.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students whose mothers have different levels of education.
- There is a significant difference between the mean ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) of students when they first start to learn English.
- There is a significant relationship between ATE, SAAE and SPT (respectively) and achievement in English.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

1.6.1 The student sample

The sample will comprise of Form 4 students who sit the ordinary level national examinations for the first time. The students will be randomly selected (see 4.3.1). from within classes which have been designated (by the schools themselves) as top stream, middle stream and low stream. The schools from which the students will be selected will represent the types of school found in the urban settings of Zimbabwe. These are: -

- a co-educational school, in a ‘high density area.’
- a boys high school, in a ‘low density area.’
- a girls high school, in a ‘low density area.’
- a co-educational mission school.
- a co-educational private school.

These students are to be used primarily because the ordinary level courses form the terminal courses for the majority of the students and indeed their results at ‘O’ level often decide their career paths.

The reasons for limiting this investigation to urban Mutare schools are as follows: -

- the urban schools are established and are similar in most respects for example in terms of human resources, material resources, and management systems.
- large numbers of rural schools are manned by untrained members of staff, are poorly resourced and a significant number of the age cohort do not sit their “O” levels.

The sample size will be approximately three hundred (300) school students. This number seems adequate in terms of the provision of the data for this study. The sample will be selected from each of the schools mentioned above that is a high-density area (formerly township) high school, a low-density area (leafy suburb) high school, a low-density area girls’ school, a church related (peri-urban) co-ed school, and a private co-ed school.

1.6.2 The assumptions

The assumptions made in terms of this study are as follows:-

- that the factors being investigated are important in determining academic outcomes
- that Form Four students used in the sample are a good and sufficient sample group
- that the factors being investigated are amenable to measurement / can be quantified

1.6.3 The instruments

One instrument is to be employed: -

1 The Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be developed using the work of the writer and researchers such as Brookover et al (1964), Marsh (1992), Mboya (1993) and others. Items will be constructed and formulated after identifying measurable constructs in the research literature.

1.6.4 Data collection

In terms of administering the questionnaire the following provisions will be complied with: -

- In the first instance permission will be sought from the local education authority to conduct the research.
- Individual Headteachers will then be asked for permission to enter their schools.
- Each and every student selected will be asked to return a signed letter from their parents or guardians, granting permission to the researcher to conduct the survey.
- The questionnaire will be administered personally by the researcher.
- The language of the questionnaire will be English since the medium of instruction in all Zimbabwean High Schools, is English.

1.6.5 Data analysis

The following data processing techniques and tools are to be used to determine the relationship between the affective factors ATE, SAAE and SPT and various biographical and background factors including gender and their relationship to achievement in English.

- Item analyses
- Determination of the norms (stanines)
- Analysis of variance (F test, t test, Bonferroni test)
- Pearson's r product moment correlation
- Step-wise regression analysis

1.7 EXPLANATION OF CORE CONCEPTS

1.7.1 Affective factors

A multiplicity of factors or conditions is able to affect school academic performance in both negative and positive ways. Every factor or condition impinges on the students' state of mind. These vary from the relationships shared with parents (Marjoribanks & Mboya 1997, 1998(a) and (b), the attitudes students have towards their teachers (Ruggiero 1998), the relationship shared with peers, the ethos of the school and, perhaps of greater importance, the way in which students feel about themselves and their abilities (Alvis-Martins, Peixoto, Gouveia-Pereira, Amaral & Pedro 2002). We seem to adopt attitudes and perceptions towards others and ourselves in relation to persons or events outside ourselves, and then internalize them.

Thus the writer broadly views affective factors as a multiplicity of internalized attributions underpinned by those conceptions that we have of ourselves. We perceive the world initially from our own perspective. In this way, these conceptions become the starting point in terms of the way we see and measure ourselves in relation to others. However, the relationship between the many affective factors which confront us in our daily lives and our self-concept is a dynamic and integrative one. For

example, if one is constantly and consistently negatively criticised by important significant others (parents and teachers, for example), then the likelihood is that one comes to believe them, and one's self-concept may be negatively affected.

1.7.2 Self-concept

The self-concept is deemed to be an important psychological construct. It is relatively new in the field of psychology and literature within the area has grown enormously since the mid-nineteen sixties. Its origins (see chapter 3) date from the philosophic writings of Plato, Aristotle and Descartes (in Magee 1998:24). Descartes' famous 'Cognito Ergo Sum' and, later, Freud's 'Ego' and 'Id', created the climate for discussion, debate and expression of a construct later to become firmly embedded within the psychological frame of reference.

Descartes influenced psychologists such as James (1890) into making 'the self' worthy of exploration as a psychological phenomenon and construct. It was James who drew the important distinction between the 'I' and the 'Me' and who essentially saw these categories as inextricably linked, by the former as 'pure' experience and, by the latter, as the content of that experience.

Later Cooley (1902), Mead (1934), and Goffman (1980), among others, elaborated and cemented the construct (in psychological research), so much so that during the sixties and beyond, it became an important psychological reference point for those seeking explanations of certain types of school phenomena.

Thus the self may be seen as an important construct in terms of the behaviour of individuals and in terms of this study. Elements, which are incorporated in our definition of the self-concept, include:

- a) the sum total of all the characteristics the individual attributes to himself (Purkey 1970)
- b) a judgement of worthiness (Coopersmith 1967)
- c) not only one's perceptions of oneself, but also one's expectations of oneself (Hjelle & Ziegler 1976)
- d) it may also be viewed as a force in directing our behaviour (Labene & Green 1969)

Therefore, how we view or see ourselves, where we obtain this picture of ourselves and what we say, do, or how we act as a result of this picture, has repercussions in terms of not only the way in which we live, but also our aspirations, educationally or otherwise. According to Myburgh et al (1999:166) the self-concept can be regarded as: -

“.....a persons map.....every individual’s ‘map’ is unique in the sense that it holds a unique meaning and value with regard to him/herself. It follows that the self-concept could be described as organised, unique, dynamic and complex, configuration of conceptions, beliefs and perceptions about self.”

From the writer’s point of view the self-concept would therefore incorporate the way in which individuals are able to not only have a (subconscious) idea of their individuality and difference but that these differences are often seemingly expressed through the self-concept.

1.7.3 Self-concept of academic ability

This concept is essentially defined as those attitudes, feelings and perceptions about a person’s own intellectual or academic skills which are indicated by that person’s responses on a scale or instrument. The concept’s origin stems from the seminal research conducted by Marsh and Shavelson (1985), entitled ‘Self-concept: its multi-faceted hierarchical structure.’ This research was then further elaborated upon by Mboya (1998). He sees the self-concept of academic ability as a facet of the global self and more able to predict academic outcomes and achievement in academic areas. He therefore sees the self as a social product which emerges as a result of the reflected appraisals of others which are then transmitted through the course of social interaction. Mboya (1998) also argues that individuals tend to define and perceive themselves on the basis of how others define and perceive them. In terms of this study the self-concept of academic ability, as defined by Mboya (1998), seems to reflect the way in which individuals conceptualise their academic abilities within the context of school.

1.7.4 Perceptions

Perceptions broadly involve the process through which we become aware of our environment by selecting, organizing and interpreting the evidence from our senses and learning from this process. Importantly, we do this in an individualistic manner and according to Black (1996), our perceptions are subjective in terms of being an individual's own evaluations and beliefs. These perceptions then form, according to Black (1996:20), the subjective component in this process which in turn contains the individual's own evaluations and beliefs about a particular method as distinct from its objective characteristics. These perceptions then form a construct of reality for each individual (Black 1996).

Therefore, how we perceive others becomes dependent upon their attitudes towards us, through the recognition of their responses towards our behaviour.

These perceptions are important in terms of their impact on student motivation. If teachers are perceived as a positive influence, then it is predicted that academic outcomes, in particular performance, would improve (Burkhardt 1991:200).

In summation, perceptions involve the way in which individuals 'colour' the world they see by their own particular imprint.. This imprint is most often garnered by the views they have of significant others such as parents, their peer group and teachers. In particular their perceptions of teachers involve, *inter alia*, whether or not teachers show an interest in their students, whether or not they encourage them, whether or not they are concerned in a pastoral sense about them. These are all important considerations in terms of informing the entire matrix of academic performance.

1.7.5 Attitudes

Attitudes arise from a number of sources and tend to form from interactions with significant others. Once formed, they become deeply ingrained or difficult to alter (Kagan et al 1984). Many are acquired through the socialization process and tend to influence us throughout our lives. For instance postures or attitudes of a negative or positive nature are adopted by school students towards subject areas or their instructors. These attitudes in particular are often inextricably intertwined.

Thus attitudes may be defined as the voiced or unvoiced views an individual adopts towards situations or people that that individual sees or comes into contact with.

1.7.6 Relationship

The term relationship suggests a connection or correspondence between one state of affairs and another. In research terms it means something goes with or is associated with something else. A relationship may, for example, illustrate the symbiosis between two entities, which in turn would often define the relationship experienced (between those two entities).

In quantitative terms relationship therefore refers to the degree of influence one factor has over another or in terms of reciprocal influences. By the use of statistical tools such as the Pearson product moment correlational index and the Bonferroni t-test, this study seeks to establish relationships between the affective factors ATE, SAAE and SPT plus other correlates, and academic achievement in English

1.7.7 Secondary schools in Zimbabwe

Some of the senior secondary schools in Zimbabwe date back to the late 19th century. They were established primarily to enable a small group of settlers to educate their progeny. They had small beginnings but later became established on the British public school model. Independence in 1980 caused a massive expansion of secondary school provision. There was also a consequent change of emphasis in terms of allowing unbridled entry of students of school going age into schools which often lacked commensurate human and other resources.

In Zimbabwe, students generally enter formal education at the age of six (grade one). This is followed by seven years of primary education and later by a minimum of four years of secondary education. On completion of primary school, all students take what is known as the grade seven examinations. In order to proceed to secondary school a student must have taken this examination and will need to produce the certificate (no particular standard is required), in order acquire a secondary school place.

After completing four years of post-primary education, all students who have remained in school are required to enter for what is commonly known as the ‘O’ level examination (the General Certificate of Education at the Ordinary examination level). These were formerly internationally based examinations moderated by the British Examining Board; Cambridge. However the examination has now been localised in terms of the setting, the marking and the moderation of papers. It must be said however, that their structure and international recognition remain.

Students are admitted to Advanced level studies commonly known as ‘A’ levels, on the basis of their ‘O’ level results. The selected students then remain in school for a further two years and undertake the study of three or four subjects. On successful completion students become qualified to enter degree programmes at university level.

1.7.8 Secondary school students in Zimbabwe

At the age of six, most children in Zimbabwe start their formal education. The seven years of primary school education (grades 1-7) culminate in the taking of the Grade Seven examination. This is not a qualifying examination for secondary education although cognizance of individual results is taken into account, either for entry to some schools, or placement in a particular stream. The primary school years are generally followed by four years of secondary education.

After completion of four years of post – primary education all school students enter for what are commonly known as ‘O’ levels (General Certificate of Education Ordinary Level). These were formerly international British-based examinations which have since been localised in terms of the setting and marking of papers.

On the basis of the ‘O’ level results, students may be admitted to Advanced Level (‘A’ level) courses conducted in schools. If selected, students stay on at school for a further two years, whilst undertaking courses in at least three subjects. On successful completion, the student becomes qualified to undertake degree programmes at university level.

1.7.9 Achievement in English

Achievement in English presupposes a measurable quality. In terms of school, this takes the form of tests and internal examinations conducted throughout the year, from which an average percentage mark is obtained. A pass mark is considered to be 50% or above.

1.8 AN OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

This study comprises the following chapters:-

Chapter 1 INTRODUCTORY ORIENTATION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This chapter provides the necessary background to the study as well as discussing and elucidating its research goals, its methodology and definitions of its key concepts.

Chapter 2 ENGLISH: ATTITUDINAL DIMENSIONS, ORIGINS, HISTORY AND ROLE IN THE ZIMBABWEAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

This chapter provides the theoretical background through a literature study which encompasses the historical and contemporaneous importance of English as a medium of instruction within a Zimbabwean setting in general and its educational system in particular.

Chapter 3 AFFECTIVE FACTORS, AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP TO ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

This chapter discusses the affective factors, attitudes towards English, self-concept of academic ability and student perceptions of their teachers of English and the relationship these factors have to academic achievement (with reference to English).

Chapter 4 THE DESIGN OF THE EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION: PLANNING, METHOD, EXECUTION AND RESULTS

This chapter outlines the empirical investigation. It covers the planning, method, execution and results of the empirical investigation. The measuring instruments,

subjects, statistical tools and procedures to be followed are described and are followed by the results and their interpretation.

Chapter 5 **FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUDING REMARKS**

In this chapter the findings and conclusions of the study are summarised while recommendations are made for the enhancement of affective factors in school teaching through the provision of a proposed teaching and learning model.