

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 REVIEW OF THE RESEARCH

5.1.1 Introduction

This investigation involved an attempt to establish the relationship between the affective factors self-concept of academic ability in English, students' attitudes towards the subject English and student perceptions of their teachers of English and academic achievement in English. The field of study was demarcated within the bounds of form four students in Zimbabwean urban schools.

5.1.2 Motive for the study

The prime motive for this study was suggested by the dilemma posed by students who are labelled academically weak and who leave secondary school with few or no qualifications, but who nonetheless, display intellectual talent in a variety of settings of a less formal nature. Therefore by implication other factors are preventing them from achieving their full potential. This study was therefore undertaken with the hope of pinpointing those affective factors, within a school setting, which could then be influential in terms of students achieving that potential.

5.1.3 Problem analysis and demarcation

The research problem involves the enormous numbers of talented school students failing to achieve their potential by not being able to pass examinations which essentially decide their future. Many of these students leave school as disaffected individuals feeling 'short-changed' by a system of education and schooling which has failed them in a personal manner. This study therefore addresses ways in which these conditions of 'failure' may be ameliorated by taking cognizance of selected affective factors and their relationship to achievement, specifically in English as a subject.

This study has concentrated on the schooling process and its affects on form four students who comprise of those students who are, in the main, just about to complete their schooling. The students are also selected from urban schools since the rural schools in Zimbabwe are fraught with difficulties such as access, lack of trained personnel and resources. Arguably the problems encountered by these rural schools are also qualitatively different in nature.

5.1.3.1 Aims of the theoretical investigation

The aim of the theoretical investigation was:-

- to provide an historical and contemporaneous overview of English as a subject and as a means of instruction in Zimbabwean schools
- to make a study of the broad spectrum of affective factors related to academic achievement in schools and to make a selection of the most important ones, namely:-
 - self-concept of academic ability in English (SAAE)
 - attitudes towards English (ATE)
 - perceptions of teachers of English (SPT)
- to identify operational constructs related to affective factors which in turn would facilitate the formation of an instrument for the measurement of these affective factors.

5.1.3.2 Aims of the empirical investigation

The aims of the empirical investigation were as follows:-

- to ascertain the relationship between selected affective factors (self-concept of academic ability in English, student attitudes towards the subject English and student perceptions of their teachers of English) and academic achievement (in English), of form four students in Zimbabwean secondary schools

- to investigate the relationship of other factors, that is parental education, home language, area of domicile, school type, gender, socio-economic status and I.Q. to academic achievement in English
- to construct an instrument for the measurement of the selected affective factors.

In order to achieve the stated aim a number of objectives were pursued. These objectives are outlined in paragraph 4.2.

5.1.4 Methodology

After the completion of the theoretical investigation, and subsequent construction of the measuring instrument for gathering of the required data, statistical techniques were used to analyse the data. These were Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient, an item analysis where the alpha reliability coefficient was employed in order to determine whether items in a particular section of the questionnaire were sufficiently significant, the use of stanines to determine the norms and the testing of a number of hypotheses using statistical means including the t- test, the F- test and a step-wise regression analysis.

5.1.5 The sample

The sample of 271 students was randomly selected from five urban schools in Manicaland Zimbabwe which represented the various types of secondary schools found in urban areas.

5.2 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS FROM THE LITERATURE STUDY

5.2.1 Introduction

The literature study revealed that affective factors form an important dimension of the education and learning process. These factors are diverse and interrelated and have a tendency to have an influential effect upon not only the well-being and emotional state, of the individual, but also his/her potential to learn and develop.

The literature study also (see chapter 2), revealed the importance of English as a ‘lingua franca’ and as a means of social mobility within Zimbabwe.

5.2.2 The importance and role of the English language in Zimbabwe

The English language has assumed, both historically and contemporaneously, an important role in Zimbabwean public and private life.

Chapter 2 delineates the role English has played as a means of instruction within the Zimbabwean schooling system and its continuing role in the discourse of commerce and industry. Importantly the chapter also confirms that the English language is held in some esteem by Zimbabweans.

The English language is shown in chapter 2 as a language which became rooted in Zimbabwe through not only its colonial imposition, but also through its ability to respond to local conditions. The instrumentality, flexibility and versatility of the language has made it an acceptable mode of communication in both public and private and it is still arguably seen as a referent in terms of one’s ability to utilize its linguistic offerings.

5.2.3 Affective factors and their role in academic achievement

This study attempts to attribute academic achievement, in the formal schooling sector, to more than just cognitive and academic orientation. It accepts that much of the formal education sector is premised on the view that student cognitive traits are indicators of academic success or otherwise. However the study suggests that a wide spectrum of affective factors may also play a role in the progress, development and success of individuals within school.

As far as this study is concerned the following affective factors were selected: student self-concept of ability in English, student attitudes towards the subject English and student perceptions of their teachers of English.

The self-concept and its relationship to academic achievement has a broad history (see chapter 3). Researchers and others have to a greater or lesser degree, suggested the importance of the self-concept in terms of school achievement. The identification by researchers of the self-concept's hierarchical and multi-faceted nature, in turn, suggested further research initiatives. Subject and content specific self-concepts and their relationship to academic achievement, particularly in the areas of mathematics and English became research targets. With this research history in mind one of this study's prime affective factors was the self-concept of academic ability in English.

Much research is also focused on the role of attitude in determining scholastic success. Attitudes stem from a variety of sources (see chapter 3) and are able to cause negative or positive academic orientations; thus the selection by the writer of the affective factor student attitudes towards the subject English.

Finally the writer selected the affective factor student perceptions of their teachers of English, since this area is not only of increasing importance to researchers but the current educational climate suggests that the views of students themselves, ought to be taken into account. Therefore this investigation of student perceptions of their teachers is seen as a response to the notions above.

5.2.3.1 Student attitudes towards English (ATE)

It must be borne in mind that research studies related to the Zimbabwean context in this area are sparse. However they reveal that students in general have a very positive attitude towards school in Zimbabwe. Essentially students append school success to occupational goals and are then driven by the desire to meet those goals.

Chapter 3 revealed that attitudes towards English are generally positive in Zimbabwe (Gordon 1961, Hofman 1977, Lemmer 1996 and Lemmer et al 1997). Given the fact that the English language is eclectic in nature and has the ability to adapt to a variety of

conditions, it is unsurprising that the language has left a legacy of admiration and respect among the populace. As a result, its adoption by post-independent Governments in Africa in general and in Zimbabwe in particular, has cemented and confirmed its role as a modern and dynamic form of discourse which suits modern times and conditions.

5.2.3.2 Student self-concepts of academic ability (SAAE)

This affective factor has been well documented and it has historically and contemporaneously been accorded prominence in terms of its educative and learning influence. Many researchers of note from Brookover in 1964 to the extensive work of Marsh et al (1999) and Mboya (1998), have shown that the self-concept of academic ability has a definitive and reciprocal relationship with academic achievement or performance (see chapter 3).

The construct itself has a long history and within this historical context the philosophers Descartes (in Magee 1985) and James (1890) contributed significantly to its establishment in psychology as a construct of import. The literature review also reveals the difficulties of forming a definitive definition of the self-concept with many researchers using a variety of terms to describe the same phenomenon. For example many researchers would interchangeably use self-esteem and self-concept. However Researchers as far back as Cooley (1902) and more recently Goffman (1980), and Harter (1989), have not only given us a clearer idea of the self-concept's multifarious roles but have enhanced our understanding of the concept as one that derives its existence from the social world of significant others, peer group and other forms of social interaction. Essentially the self-concept arguably provides us with (to use a metaphor) a 'roadmap'. It provides us with a direction for our actions yet displays a sensitivity which allows changes to the 'map'. This in turn seems to suggest that these 'directions,' need to be navigated with care at times.

The concept's relationship with academic performance and the recognition of its importance in terms of academic outcomes came essentially from the extensive research conducted in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's and documented by researchers such as Burn's (1979). More recently extensive fieldwork by Marsh et al (1985) and others, have revealed the complexity of the self-concept in terms of its differentiated and multi-dimensional characteristics. Instead of the self-concept being conceptualized only in global terms, it is now increasingly accepted as a construct which is hierarchical and content specific in nature.

5.2.3.3 Student perceptions of teachers (SPT)

The literature study (see chapter 3) revealed that the notions and perceptions students have of their teachers have traditionally been used in the area of teacher education (Cooper & Hyland 2000), but researchers such as Mboya (1994), have argued that the perceptions students hold of their teachers ought to play a more definitive role in the learning process. Mboya (1994: 420) stresses, that it is of more importance to ascertain the perceptual world of the student, than to describe the nature of the actual environment to which individuals are exposed. Adolescents tend to interpret the interaction between themselves and their teachers and their particular definitions of that interaction holds sway in their own minds. Thus he developed an inventory of adolescents' perceptions of their teachers' behaviours which was adapted for use in this study.

5.2.3.4 Conclusions

The literature study has revealed that affective factors and their role in the process of schooling and education are increasingly being investigated by researchers. Studies which go as far back as the latter part of the 19th century (James 1890), to the prolific work of Marsh et al (1983, 1984, 1998, 1999) have demonstrated that affective factors may have an important influence on academic outcomes within a school setting.

5.3 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS BASED ON THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

5.3.1 Introduction

The prime objective of the empirical investigation was to establish whether factors other than the cognitive could account for academic success in school. The factors other than I.Q. were referred to in this investigation as affective factors. A number of hypotheses were tested in order to establish whether relationships exist between the affective factors designated by this study, students' attitudes towards the English language, students' self-concept of academic ability in English and students' perceptions of their teachers of English, and achievement in English. In order to provide further breadth to the investigation a number of biographical and background variables were also tested against these selected affective factors. These were gender, home background, area of domicile, school attended, fathers' education, mothers' education, and the age when English was first acquired. Statistical analyses were used for this purpose. The specific results emanating from the statistical applications, for each hypothesis, appear in paragraph 4.5.6. The findings and conclusions are discussed in the following paragraph and it begins with the background factors and their links to the selected affective factors.

5.3.2 Affective factors and gender

This part of the investigation attempted to establish the link between gender and the selected affective factors. The result of the statistical analyses appeared in 4.5.6 (a), (b) and (c). Only one of the factors proved significant. It was found that there is a significant difference between student attitudes towards English and student gender. The other factors, student self-concepts of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English were not significant in terms of gender. The reason for these findings may be attributed to the notion that urban students come from a similar milieu and that the prejudices and injustices of the past and how these impacted on females, are a thing of the past.

The result suggesting that there are no significant differences between males and females regarding the perceptions of their teachers of English in the Zimbabwean context, is surprising and seems to contradict research studies such as that of Masutha et al (1999) as well as Carpenter (1985) and that of Fisher & Fraser (1983), who contend that female students perceive the classroom environment more positively than male students especially as far as participation, teacher support and teacher involvement are concerned .

5.3.3 Affective factors and home language

This part of the investigation attempted to establish a link between the selected affective factors which were students' attitudes towards English, students' self-concepts of academic ability in English and students' perceptions of their teacher of English and the home languages of students.

The results as reported in 4.5.6 (d), (e) and (f) show that there were no significant differences between the affective factors student attitudes towards English and student self-concepts of academic ability and the home languages spoken by the students surveyed. As far as these two affective factors are concerned, the results would appear surprising since differences may have been predicted. The result may however reveal a certain homogeneity as far as attitude and self-concept is concerned in a world increasingly dominated and mediated through the media; therefore the occurrence of a convergence of views.

However there was a significant difference found between students' perceptions of their teachers of English and the different home languages spoken by the students as reported in 4.5.6 (f). Specifically the differences occurred between those who spoke Shona (as their home language) and those whose home language was English. One may surmise that students whose home language is English felt more comfortable with their teachers of English and by extrapolation, the subject English. On the other hand the Shona speakers would see the language as difficult and therefore their attitudes towards the language would perhaps not be as positive. This contention is borne out to an extent by

the 'O' level English examination results showing a consistent 20% pass rate: the lowest of all the subjects.

5.3.4 Affective factors and area of domicile

This part of the investigation attempted to establish a link between the affective factors, students' attitudes towards English, students' self-concepts of academic ability in English and students' perceptions of their teachers of English and the areas in which the students reside. As far as the first two factors are concerned there proved to be no significant differences between them and where the students reside. This was reported in 4.5.6 (g) and 4.5.5 (h). The reasons for this may mainly be attributed to the similarity in social composition between those people living in the high and low density areas whose children attend school on a regular basis and who are capable of meeting school expenses, particularly uniforms and fees.

However the result reported in 4.5.6 (i), indicates that there are significant differences between students who live in high and low density areas and their perceptions they have of their teachers of English. In fact the step-wise regression analysis (see table 4.42) showed that this variable is the most important variable in terms of predicting academic achievement.

This finding may be explained by the tendency of those whose first language is English, to live in the low density suburbs and therefore they are more likely to see English in a positive light.

5.3.5 Affective factors and school type

This part of the investigation attempted to establish a link between the key affective factors, students' attitude towards English, students' self-concepts of academic ability in English and students' perceptions of their teachers of English and the different schools attended by the students. The results were reported in 4.5.6 (j), 4.5.6 (k) and 4.5.6 (l).

In terms of the first affective factor attitude to English, it was found that there is a significant difference between students who attend different types of school and their attitude towards English. Specifically there was a marked difference in attitude towards English between students attending the low density boys' school and the private school. This finding may be explained by the predominance of English in the private school both in and out of the classroom and the school's excellent results in the discipline of English. On the other hand the predominantly Shona speaking boys' school had mediocre English language results.

As far as the second affective factor that is student self-concept of academic ability is concerned, it was found, as reported in 4.5.6 (k), that there was no significant difference between type of school attended and the factor.

However there was a significant difference between students attending different types of school and the perceptions students have of their teachers of English. There were particular differences between certain school types. These included the low density girls' school and the high density co-ed school. This may be explained by the ethos of the girls school which has a dynamic Head who is concerned about the way in which the school projects itself and therefore the all round education of the girls. Teachers are respected enormously and high academic and deportment standards are expected from the girls. Thus the girls have very positive perceptions of their teachers. A very different set of circumstances prevails in the co-ed school which has two teaching sessions and is characterised by a lack of ethos and cohesion. Teachers seemingly have no sense of commitment in a situation where leadership seems to be at a premium. Results are poor and students and teachers are difficult to tell apart.

5.3.6 Affective factors and fathers' level of education

The results concerning the tests conducted on the three hypotheses that is whether there were significant differences between students' whose fathers have different levels of education and students' attitudes towards English, students' self-concepts of academic ability in English and students' perceptions of their teachers of English, were reported in 4.5.6 (m), 4.5.6 (n) and 4.5.6 (o).

There were no significant differences found between students whose fathers' have different levels of education and the three affective factors; attitudes towards English, student self-concepts of academic ability in English and student perceptions of their teachers of English.

This may be attributed to the traditional perception in this part of Africa that education is the prerogative and under the purview of the mother.

5.3.7 Affective factors and mothers' level of education

The results of the tests conducted on the three hypotheses concerning the differences between the three affective factors which are students' attitudes towards English, students' self-concepts of academic ability and students' perceptions of their teachers of English, and mothers' level of education, were reported in 4.5.6 (p), 4.5.6 (q) and 4.5.6 (r).

There were no significant differences found between students whose mothers had different levels of education and student attitudes towards English, students whose mothers had different levels of education and student self-concepts of academic ability in English and students whose mothers have different levels of education and student perceptions of their teachers of English. Mother's level of education seems to make no difference in terms of these affective factors. These results are surprising since mothers tend to traditionally play an important role in the education of their offspring.

5.3.8 Affective factors and the age at which English was first acquired

The results of the tests conducted on the three hypotheses concerning whether there were significant differences between the age students first started to learn English, and their attitudes towards English, their self-concepts of academic ability and their perceptions of their teachers of English, were all reported in 4.5.6 (s), 4.5.6 (t) and 4.5.6 (u).

Only one of the hypotheses proved to be significant. There is a significant difference between the age that students first started to learn English and their self-concepts of academic ability in English. In order to particularize those differences, a t test was conducted. It was found that there were significant differences between those who had first learned English before the age of 4 and those who had first learned English at between the ages of 5 – 7. This finding may be explained by the notion that those who had acquired English before the age of 4 were English first language speakers (some 38% of those surveyed were English first language speakers). Therefore they would have been more likely to have acquired positive self-concepts as far as English was concerned than those in the second group who had acquired English at a later stage. The same reasons would have applied to the significant differences found between the group which had acquired English before the age of four and the group which had acquired English beyond the age of eight.

5.3.9 The selected affective factors and achievement in English

The findings below represent the core concerns of the study and investigation. This investigation attempted to ascertain whether the affective factors represented by student attitudes towards English, student self-concepts of academic ability and student perceptions of their teachers of English were related to achievement in English. The three hypotheses were:-

- The relationship between student attitude towards English and achievement in English.

- The relationship between student self-concept of ability and achievement in English.
- The relationship between student perceptions of their teachers of English and achievement in English.

The results were reported in 4.5.6 (v).

Only one affective factor had a significant correlation with achievement in English. This affective factor was student self-concept of academic ability in English. Much of the research in the area of self-concept of academic ability from the pioneering work of Brookover (1964), whose study confirmed the relationship between self-concept of ability and academic achievement, to the work of Byrne & Shavelson (1986), who recognised the multi-dimensionality of the self-concept, was predicated on the belief that ones conceptions of oneself in the arena of learning/achievement, rested on those very conceptions.

This finding confirms that the self-concept of academic ability in English does share a relationship with achievement in English and that one affects the other.

However notwithstanding the above it must be said that the three affective factors themselves correlate significantly with each other in a mutually positive manner. Therefore they are interrelated and of equal importance.

5.3.10 Stepwise multiple regression analysis

The stepwise multiple regression analysis revealed (table 4.42), that the area in which students live whether in high or low density areas, is the best single predictor of achievement in English. This is followed by I.Q., SAAE, ATE, and school type. In total approximately 33% of the variance may be attributed to these factors.

This result seems to suggest that educational achievement is dependent upon social standing which is more often than not reflected in the type of area in which one resides.

5.3.11 Conclusions

The findings which appear above confirm that the key affective factors selected in this investigation which were students attitudes towards English, student self-concepts of academic ability and student perceptions of their teachers of English, share a relationship with a number of selected variables. The findings also reveal that the most important of these variables was the area in which students live in terms of predicting achievement in English. The other variables include, gender, school attended and importantly achievement in English.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.4.1 Introduction

The results and findings of both the literature study and the empirical investigation suggest a number of areas, in education in general and schooling in particular, where change could be suggested or indeed improvements embarked upon.

Education and schooling in the formal sense, tends to be premised upon judgmental foundations. Students at the form four levels sit formal examinations which are in the public domain. Teachers essentially prepare students for these examinations ('O' levels), by setting tests, mock examinations and course work assignments. The preparation is very content based and seemingly takes no cognizance of the students gender, their home language, the area in which they live and background characteristics such as the education of their parents and perhaps more importantly, their emotional and affective state, in the run-up to these examinations. It must also be remembered that the 'O' level examinations often decide future prospects in terms of further education and occupational opportunities.

There could be many reasons for students meeting with success or otherwise in these important examinations other than their cognitive abilities.

The results of this investigation suggest a number of strategies and initiatives which would help the achievement of students within the English classroom. **These initiatives include a whole school policy initiative, a suggestion that teachers need to know more about the backgrounds of their students through a ‘feedback’ mechanism, and a teaching programme to enhance achievement.** This recommendation would partially address the results of the empirical investigation where area of domicile was found to be the most important factor in terms of predicting academic achievement.

A common phrase is often used to describe a situation where some people may not have the same opportunities as others. This phrase is ‘a level playing field’. Metaphorically if this playing field, where it involves school students, is not level in terms of gender, home circumstances (poverty levels), area of domicile, type of school attended, then a number of students may be disadvantaged. The empirical investigation of this study has revealed that indeed there are differences between students who attend different institutions, who come from different backgrounds and whose parents have had different levels of education and indeed who learnt the language of the school (English) at different ages. What follows is a proposed model to enhance the affective factors and achievement in English.

5.4.2 Proposed model to enhance academic achievement and affective factors

5.4.2.1 Whole school policy initiative (WSPI) ; a school centred strategy

This whole school policy initiative (WSPI) is graphically shown in figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 An academic enhancement roadmap

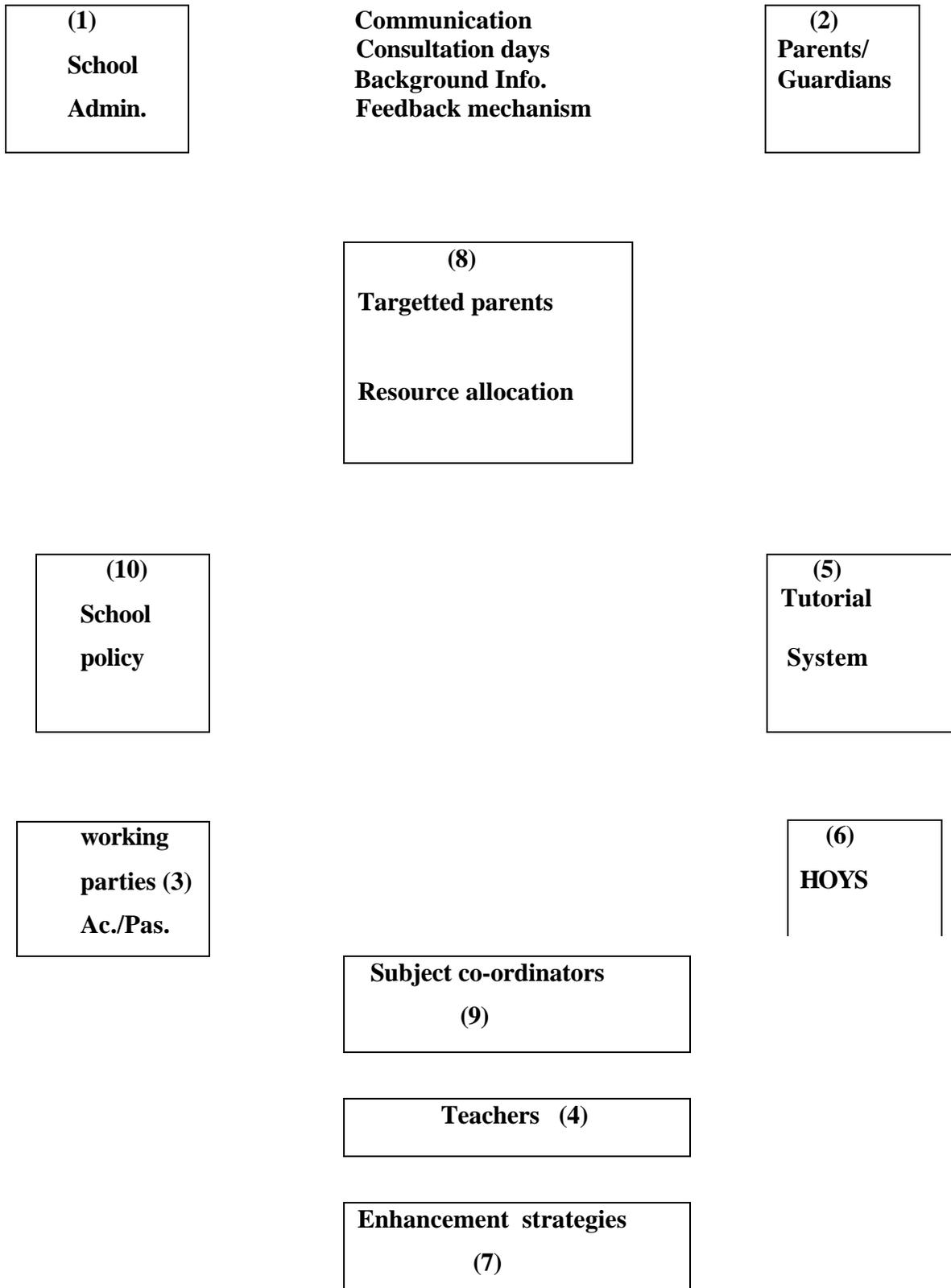


Figure 5.1 graphically displays one of the recommendations emanating from this study. **It involves a whole school policy which takes into cognizance intervention strategies in order to address poor academic performance arguably resulting from a background where levels of deprivation make it difficult for parents' to substantially help their offspring, where poor self-concept and poor attitudes towards school reign and where students view school staff negatively. This recommendation attempts to get all the stake holders involved; the teachers the parents and the students themselves.**

In particular figure 5.1 demonstrates how enlightened school policy may strategically address the concern that many students feel alienated from the learning process. Instead of achieving optimally these students are instead labeled disaffected and as a corollary, academically weak. It is suggested that if a whole school policy initiative were to be implemented (see figure 5.1) then the root causes of poor academic achievement such as poor self-esteem, poor motivation and negative attitudes may be addressed.

It is recommended that an open forum for discussion be instituted by the school on a designated day before the beginning of a new school year and preferably during the vacation period before the new school year commences. The Open Day's programme would be entitled 'Ways to address disaffection and academic disillusionment among form three and form four students and ways to enhance academic performance'. All members of staff would be invited to attend and a full programme for the day would be drawn up by the school's administration on the basis of an invitation to all staff to submit background papers and topics for discussion well before the designated date.

The key objective of this kind of initiative by the school's administration would be to move away from the normal hierarchical routes to problem solving and to create a forum for the discussion of individual students whom perhaps the school is under serving.

Figure 5.1 shows that the school is a crucial trigger in terms of addressing weak academic performance and that without good communication between the three elements of school,

parents and students, the likelihood of achieving positive results, is weak.

In terms of (figure 5.1), the school is seen to be a crucial and important initiator of change in the way in which those who are served (by the school), especially students and parents, perceive educational provision and the way in which preconceived notions of what constitutes a 'good' student is cemented in the language (argot) of the school. By allowing the staff to have sufficient time to air their views with a view to initiating an open forum to discuss ways to address disaffection and weak academic performance, the school would go a long way in attaining a staff consensus and be perhaps more able to address issues of weak academic performance.

Thus box (1) above represents the school authorities who would initiate a whole school policy by taking a consensual route through a whole day conference. This conference would involve all members of staff and would be formally organized by the school authorities. Based on the topics and ideas submitted it would be organized so that participation by the staff would be maximized. Revolving groups would be constructed, views aired and notes taken for a plenary session.

Importantly a representative body of staff would be selected to form a working party to discuss and make recommendations concerning ways in which to address weak academic performance in the school where the barriers to performance would seem to be factors other than intellect.

The parents, box (2), would also be represented in the process by providing their representatives (two) the opportunity to join the open day forum. This in itself represents a departure from normal practice where parents may be seen as intruders.

The students themselves play a vital role in not only identifying their own problems but they would also be vital cogs in the machinery of change. They would input the process by completing a questionnaire where their views would be sought on a number of issues. These would include what they feel about the teachers who teach them, what they feel

about the aims and objectives of the school and what they consider to be the way forward concerning their education. The questionnaire and its status within this initiative would be thereafter subject to changes decided upon by the working party. **Importantly each and every student would be issued with a handbook which would essentially allow and facilitate information and communication between the school and parents; between the student and parents and between the students and their tutors** (see appendix 8).

The working party or standing committee to be entitled School Initiative Regarding the Enhancement of Academic Performance (SIREAP); a Guidance and Counselling Strategy, box 3 in figure 5.1, would be constituted in order to meet not only the demands of diversity of view and opinion but also issues of a practical concern. Thus the committee should comprise of representatives of the school, teachers and administration, the parents and the students themselves. The suggestion is that there ought to be not more than ten people on the committee.

This working party will be able to call on others for advice and expert opinion especially from the subject teachers (4), tutors (5) and Heads of Year (HOYS) (6). The goal of the committee would be to recommend strategies and ways in which to implement the school's policy concerning the enhancement of academic performance and to 'feed' box 7 where not only the housing of the school policy regarding enhancement strategies will be based but it would also serve as a data base for staff to access these strategies. Ultimately changes in school policy will ensue from the working parties deliberations (box 10).

This strategy would therefore involve the early detection of disaffection and academic weakness. The key players would quickly be able to access the data base which in turn would guide and inform teachers and others of the educational/pastoral provision needed for particular students. The English subject teacher could for example relay information concerning the content areas to the tutor who would interview the student. The Head of Year (HOY) may for example find that the student does not have

breakfast in the morning because of parental financial problems. Resources could then be targeted to those parents in terms of the provision of breakfast (box 8). Records of the meetings between all the parties involved as well as academic progress would then be stored on the data base.

Constant communication and knowledge of the students would lead to more awareness of a student's particular and individual problems.

5.4.2.2 A pastoral strategy to enhance affective factors and academic achievement in the English classroom

The suggestions below concern an approach to the teaching of form four English (the final year of the two year 'O' level course). **This initiative seeks to address the concern that students are treated and perhaps also perceived as part of a unit (the class), rather than as individual students, by their teachers. It also incorporates the notion that the views of the students themselves ought to be taken cognizance of.** It seems that there are very few opportunities for students to express their concerns and indeed the continued reference to students in terms of their class, seems to encourage communicative barriers. **Indeed the strategy is also aimed at providing students with sufficient confidence, in terms of their self-esteem to enable them to adopt positive attitudes towards the subject.** The strategies outlined below (tutorial support, a student questionnaire and the monitoring of student progress), hopefully address these concerns.

(a) Tutorial support

It is recommended that the first step in providing tutorial support involves changes in the school timetable. It is suggested that two strategic changes should be made. The first one calls for English staff to be timetabled together for an hour (often two lessons) per week. The second timetable change involves a suspension of the normal timetable for one week at the beginning of the school term and for one week at the end of the school term. Instead of the normal distribution of classes, each department would be allocated

blocked times to meet each year group. This would allow the teachers within the English department to utilize the allocated time for the form fours, as effectively as possible. It is envisaged that the allocated blocked time for the form fours would be two blocks of two hours .

Therefore at the beginning of each term sufficient time is made available on the timetable to structure and organize an English department tutorial system. The purpose of this tutorial system would be to assign each and every student a tutor who would be responsible for not only assessing his/her tutees but also for the construction of an achievable academic/remedial programme (taking into account the syllabus). As a result tutees will be able to access the help of the tutor who may or may not be that persons English subject teacher.

The essential idea enshrined in this suggestion is that every form four student within the school's English department has his or her needs individualized in terms of approach and teaching strategy. The aims of these approaches are to enhance students' academic work, attitude towards that work and self-confidence.

(b) The background questionnaire.

In terms of the results concerning the prime affective factors: student attitude towards English, student self-concepts of academic ability and student perceptions of their teachers of English and their relationship with the dependent variable; achievement in English, it was found that a relationship existed between self-concept of academic ability and achievement in English in particular. However since the three affective factors are interrelated this relationship between them and achievement in English applies to the three. Therefore this seems to suggest a number of possibilities in terms of recommendations.

It is suggested that the first step in the process of enhancing achievement is to acquire necessary background knowledge of how students themselves feel about their English programmes. This would take the form of a questionnaire which

would be devised in order to elicit student views and provide ‘feedback’ from the students at the beginning and end of the course. The questionnaire would be formulated in a manner which would allow students to select their responses from prepared statements (Likert style). Open ended questions would also be provided. The reason for offering students opportunities to critically appraise the course and perhaps the teacher is to empower the students so that they would become interested parties in their education rather than passive recipients. If this were to happen they would perhaps feel better about themselves and their conceptions of themselves may improve. Examples of these questions include:-

I feel that my lessons are stimulating and interesting.

I feel that my lessons are boring and unimaginative.

I like my teachers when they do something different.

I wish we could experience the world outside the classroom by having more visits to interesting places.

I feel that I am weak in English

I do not like reading long boring passages.

For answers to the above questions a 5 point Likert type scale would be used. The suggestion is that teachers could initially use some of their teaching time to get informal feedback from the students. Examples appear above of the kind of questions which could be asked. These questions would initially be asked on an informal basis and devised by subject teachers themselves since it is beyond the scope of this study to suggest a definitive school devised questionnaire.

The open-ended questions would be subject related. For example in English the question could be:- Describe in not more than one side of A4 (and not less than half a page) what you feel has helped or disappointed you in your English classes this term.

Thus the teachers would be introducing an important feedback mechanism into their teaching and perhaps they would begin to start to appraise their students differently.

(c) **Monitoring student progress**

Other ways of raising student perceptions of their abilities, their perceptions of their teachers and the teaching programme itself, requires teachers to ensure that all students in a class are monitored in terms of their reading, writing and comprehension skills at regular intervals. This would mean that some of the lesson time ought to be devoted to interviewing each and every student in the class over a period of time and keeping a record of that student's progress. **The least this exercise would do is to provide the student with confidence in the teacher and an awareness of the teachers concern for the student.** Many teachers of English are concerned about the requirements of the syllabus (which is understandable), but which sometimes allows the impression that the syllabus requirements are above the requirements of individual students. **It is recommended that teachers treat students as individuals and that individual progress or otherwise is monitored by the use of record cards or (if available) on a computer data base.**

5.4.2.3 An individualised teaching programme to enhance academic achievement in the English classroom (a subject centred strategy)

This subject centred strategy to enhance academic achievement is predicated upon the belief that affective factors such as the self-concept in academic ability, attitude towards school subjects and perceptions of teachers are related to academic outcomes.

This recommendation involves the enhancement of specific skills and confidence levels within the English classroom. Much of the work undertaken within the English classroom revolves around the ability to write well, to read and speak fluently and of no less importance, to listen attentively. If students find that their skill levels in these areas are repeatedly and consistently questioned by their teachers, they tend to lapse into a self-deprecating mode. They begin to see themselves as being unable to perform the tasks

required of them. They then lose their confidence levels and by extrapolation, their notions of self-efficacy within the subject area.

It is recommended that in order to circumvent these negative notions and to raise and sustain both skill and confidence levels an individualized approach to learning ought to be adopted.

Essentially this would involve, as a first step, a diagnostic, assessment of the students' capabilities in the designated areas of speaking and listening, reading, and writing. These would be assessed in the following manner by the English teacher at the beginning of the form four year:

- a class written assignment on the topic 'My friends' or 'My family' (length one side A4)
- a short dictation (half a side A4)
- students to read at least one page (chosen by the teacher), from a class literature or language text
- students to speak to the class on a topic of their interest for three minutes

In terms of the written assignment the teacher would correct and indicate all errors of a grammatical and expressive nature. The number of errors would be indicated on the paper. The dictated work would be treated in a similar manner. The reading assignment would be assessed by the teacher in terms of fluency and reading with understanding and expression. The ability to speak to the class on a chosen topic will also be teacher assessed in terms of level of confidence, fluency and expressive qualities. The results of the diagnostic tests would be indicated on a grid (figure 5. 2):

(b) Reading assignment

- Level 1 reads with fluency, insight, understanding and engagement
- Level 2 reads with less fluency and with some understanding and expression
- Level 3 reads in a hesitant sometimes inaccurate manner
- Level 4 reads with little fluency and a great degree of inaccuracy

(c) Dictation

- Level 1 the dictation is accurate in terms of spelling and punctuation
- Level 2 there are some inaccuracies in terms of spelling and punctuation
- Level 3 there are many spelling and punctuation errors
- Level 4 the meaning has been entirely lost due to the number of errors

(d) Speaking

- Level 1 speaks fluently, confidently, knowledgeably and with conviction
- Level 2 speaks fairly fluently, confidently and knowledgeably
- Level 3 speaks hesitantly with less confidence
- Level 4 struggles to maintain fluency with very little confidence and knowledge

Once these skill areas have been assessed by the teacher he/she then has an accurate idea of the academic capabilities of the student. The second step would then be to interview each student in turn in order to assess their confidence levels and to report back to the students their assessment results. This could be achieved not only during class time but also during lunch and after school. It does require commitment from the teacher in order to evaluate each student as soon as possible.

The interview session with each student would involve going through their assessments, evaluating their levels of confidence and target setting. The confidence levels would be assessed during the interview in the following manner:

Confidence levels

Level 1 speaks clearly, with eye contact and has a great deal of pride in work

Level 2 speaks clearly with some eye contact with some pride in work

Level 3 speaks hesitantly and is unsure of where schooling is leading

Level 4 is disaffected and bored by school and has little pride in work

The results of the interviews would be entered on the grid (figure 5.3):

Table 5.44 Skills and confidence level grid

Name	Class			Date
	Writing	Reading	Speaking	Listening
Skill level				
Target level				
Comments				
Confidence Level				
Target level				
Comments				

Both student and teacher would, after entering the skill and confidence assessments on the grid, set targets. These would also be entered on the grid (see figure 5.3). Essentially teacher and student would be in negotiation. They would talk to each other in order to come to a negotiated way forward for the student. Hopefully the teacher would not only fulfil the role of appraiser but also that of motivator through target setting.

The very fact that the teacher seeks to engage each and every student in a discussion about their work, would in the opinion of the writer, go a long way in providing the student with a degree of commitment and an enhancement of that student's self-concept, attitude and importantly, that student's perceptions of the teacher, within that discipline.

5.4 SHORTCOMINGS OF THE RESEARCH

The empirical research explored a limited number of affective factors and their relationship to achievement within the subject discipline of English. Although the empirical investigation revealed that variables such as domicile, I.Q, and self-concept of academic ability in English in particular, could best predict achievement in English, they only took up 33% of the variance. Therefore there are potentially many other factors at work regarding achievement in English.

The empirical aspect of this investigation was only concerned with urban schools. Indeed it would have been instructive to compare urban and rural schools in Zimbabwe in terms of the relationship between affective factors and achievement in English.

5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This investigation through a survey of the literature, selected three affective factors in order to ascertain their relationship to achievement in English. There are however many other affective factors (for example motivation, examination orientation, teacher attitudes), which may also be important for successful learning to occur. These and others perhaps need to be explored in research terms, if a broader picture of the nature of the relationship between affective factors and achievement in English, is to occur.

Further research is also perhaps needed in order to formulate a school and subject based questionnaire for the use by classroom teachers. The formulation of this instrument ought not to be restricted to an academic exercise but could potentially serve the interests of the student and teacher in a useful and pragmatic way. The questionnaire could provide the teacher with necessary background data on the student as well as data concerning student views. It would then provide a means whereby teachers have ready access to student

views attitudes and opinions, so that the students themselves feel that they are part of the process of education and are not being side-lined.

It is further suggested that the training of teachers in Zimbabwe and their orientation towards their profession is worthy of further investigation. The fact that schools are under resourced and undermanned and where ill-trained teachers (especially in the rural areas) seem prevalent, has to be seen as a cause for concern. Teachers of a more professional orientation often feel that their efforts are undermined by the apparent failure of authorities to meet minimum obligations.

5.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The nature of this research and investigation has hopefully highlighted the need for society in general and its system of education in particular to take cognizance of the role played by affective factors in the learning requirements of individual students. If every student within a school setting is perceived as an individual (within the classroom) and if teachers and administrators could in practical terms address the needs of the individual student, instead of for example referring to classes as homogeneous units, many more students may avoid disaffected attitudes and indeed their self-concepts of academic ability, their attitudes, their perceptions of their teachers and indeed their academic achievement may be strengthened.

Finally, the author is of the opinion that the findings and recommendations of this study will make a meaningful contribution in raising the awareness of teachers in Zimbabwean schools, to the important role affective factors play in the teaching of their students. The proposed teaching and learning model to enhance affective factors may make a meaningful contribution in this respect.