

Attribution Theory and Music Learning
in the
School Music Classroom:
A Study of Siblings

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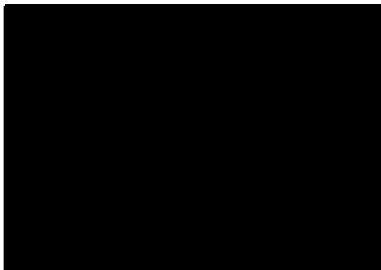
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Statement

This project contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other educational institution and, to the best of the candidate's knowledge or belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the project.

Signed



Nerelee Henry

Date: 27th July 2011

Ethics approval for this research has been received from Monash University Standing Committee for Ethics in Research on Humans (Reference number: 2005/163).

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List of Abbreviations

ACARA - Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

DEST - Department of Education, Science and Training

HSC - Higher School Certificate

IPA – Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

NRSME - National Review of School Music Education

NSW- New South Wales

I1 - Semi-structured Interview One

I2- Semi-structured Interview Two

J - Learning Journal

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Attribution theory and music learning in the school music classroom: A study of siblings

Abstract

This research study will investigate the experience of new learning situations in high school music classes, from the perspective of the student involved. Furthermore, it will attempt to isolate the personal judgments made by these students in successful and unsuccessful learning experiences. Students are not always aware of these judgments or their affect on future learning with similar tasks. The study involves an investigation into the literature associated with Attribution Theory, in relation to achievement motivation.

This project is an extension of a Masters minor thesis, which investigated new learning experiences of students within the music classroom. The initial study (Henry, 2005) was replicated with a specific focus on siblings. The addition of a semi-structured interview with a parent of the siblings was conducted to provide contextual information for the data of the siblings. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, at the beginning and conclusion of the research period. The research was conducted over two consecutive New South Wales State school terms, with participants self-recording details of new learning experiences that occurred during school music class. A set of guiding questions was attached to the inside of each journal, directing students' thoughts towards attributional judgments. As with the initial study, the present data utilized qualitative methodology and a multiple case study design. The data was analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

The study sought to capture, in the participant's own words, the thoughts and experiences of each individual when confronted with new learning that led to a successful or failure achievement situation. Attributional judgments made because of these success or failure experiences and future expectations of success or failure with similar tasks will be examined

in the self-generated text and compared to the related literature on Attributional Theory. Data collected from siblings, at varying levels of educational experience highlight varying attributional habits and styles. Reflective attributional information provides insight related to learning strategy choice within new learning experiences. Less effective learning strategies are continually relied on when successful new learning occurs. Less experience as a learner can manifest in simple and restricted use of learning strategies. The employment of complex learning strategies is also present with self-regulated, mastery oriented learning behaviours. The learning beliefs and attributional examples provided by the parent within the family environment do influence siblings, in varying ways. Siblings can affect each other's learning behaviours and in turn, individual attributional judgments. The contentions of the study are that attributions made about successful or unsuccessful learning experiences find support in the Attribution Theory as presented in the related literature.

Attributional queries can provide educators with invaluable information about each students' individual learning behaviours and also much more information about their learning beliefs. With more insight into the learning process, educators gain more opportunities to enhance attitudes to learning and correct detrimental judgments, which disable a student's chance to experience achievement in the learning context of the classroom. By providing students with correct knowledge about their successful and unsuccessful learning experiences, educators give students more control over their own learning. This can only lead to a more student-centred learning environment and mastery-orientated learning behaviours. In other words, educators can assist students to experience achievement as lifelong learners.

Chapter 1

Nature and scope of the study

Introduction

Music educators should find investigations into the area of motivation extremely timely in the current educational environment. Currently, there seems to be a societal perception that music is an expendable subject in today's school curriculum. The commonly held understanding that 'Music study for the talented only' implies that only people who exhibit a strong ability in the area of music can benefit from study. It is assumed that others, not so lucky to have been born with this 'gift', will not benefit from music study and should concentrate their efforts on other subjects in the curriculum. As a result, music specialist teachers are disappearing from primary schools where the burden of music teaching is often being left to generalist teachers, who frequently have little or no expertise or experience which is often translated into a lack of confidence which can be transferred to the students. As a result music is not currently being taught in many primary schools and as a corollary to this many students enter secondary school with little background in music, making the work of the secondary school music educator that much more challenging. The current research study focuses on secondary students as some students have their first experience with music study in the first year of secondary schooling, due to the lack of Primary music teaching in New South Wales public schools.

One way of counteracting this detrimental societal belief about the role, place and significance of music education can be found in the study of motivation theories related to academic achievement as it occurs in all school subjects. Music is currently considered an academic subject in the New South Wales state school curriculum therefore discussions involving academic achievement and motivation are relevant to music education. As will be discussed, there is widespread support among researchers that motivation does influence academic achievement in all domains of learning, thus looking closely at research dealing with the ideas of ability and effort should shed some useful light on this particularly disturbing problem for music educators.

Considering that many students enter secondary school with little sequential music education, it is vital to the success of a secondary school music education that students engage with and decide to persevere with their studies. This study of what motivates a student to continue to persist with an achievement task, until achievement has been attained is vital to this continued engagement with music learning. As will be suggested, Attribution Theory may provide a theoretical understanding that can offer insight into that important question.

Attribution Theory and its place in academic achievement motivation frameworks

Over the past few decades, the large number of researchers investigating motivation within the area of academic achievement is a testament to the significant role educators believe it plays in learning. Studies have attempted to unravel the interconnecting factors that account for high and low levels of student motivation. These variables and our ever-expanding attempt to identify them and the role they play in motivation, has led to the birth of many motivational frameworks and theories. One thing has become clear. Student motivation in achievement situations is a complex phenomenon. Unfortunately, this large area of research and the many frameworks and theories put forward, have not only led to a greater understanding, but also to greater levels of confusion. Overlapping factors and terms, such as self-esteem and strategies, have made an educator's initial journey into achievement motivation research a daunting one. The writer believes that one of the main reasons why the confusion has occurred is this ever expanding, complex nature of academic achievement motivation and the subsequent inter-related variables within this area. Achievement motivation is not only seeking the factors of individual motivation but the working relationship and inter-play between these factors.

Attribution theory is an underlying assumption in many social cognitive frameworks. Causal attributions provide insight into students' explanations of why they do what they do. Areas identified as causes for success or failure are ability, effort, task difficulty, luck and later research added strategy (Clifford, 1986a; 1986b). The theory also assumes that these attributions provide the student with an expectancy of failure or success with a similar task in the future.

Self-perception of ability is a major component of many current models of academic achievement motivation such as perceived competence, expectancy-value, self-efficacy, self-worth, and goal orientation with all the models providing features of the self-regulation framework. As Alderman (1999) points out, “Self-regulated learners have (a) adaptive attributional beliefs, accepting responsibility for their learning; (b) a strong sense of self-efficacy; (c) a belief that effort will lead to increased success; and (d) tools for setting effective goals” (p.114).

The current study is deliberately focussed on one specific factor of student achievement motivation, that is, attributions. As identified in the previous paragraph, attribution theory is an accepted part of broader achievement motivation models. The researcher believes that the current study’s findings may well add to the research in these areas, but an in depth analysis of each model is beyond the scope of this study.

Subject domain for this study

Music Education

To begin, this study is a continuation of a previous study conducted by the researcher as partial fulfilment for a Master of Education (Music Education) degree for Monash University in Melbourne, Australia. The first study also investigated learning attributions made by secondary students in their school music classes. The findings provided strong support for attribution theory and the inclusion in teaching and learning of strategy attributions. The emergent themes identified concerned attributions that were teacher driven, occurred between students, and those which occurred in the internal dialogue of student to self. Clear examples of achievement attributions made within these three areas were reported. The importance of peer comparisons in the process of attribution judgements was identified and evidence was found to support Schunk’s (1991) notion of the incremental nature of ability. Of significance, strategy attributions were abundant throughout the case studies, with complex strategy users experiencing higher levels of successful learning. The researcher identified attributions to effort but also persistent effort as a separate strategy, in itself. Participants, who identified persistent effort as a strategy, also

exhibited positive expectations for future success with similar tasks, even if they had not experienced complete success with the original task. To the researcher's knowledge this has not been reported in previous research.

Family Influence

During the initial study (Henry, 2005) two of the student participants were siblings. The researcher's intention was to create a study where the siblings were the focus. The family chosen had three siblings attending the same public High School; one at the beginning of his High School experience, the next in the middle and the last sibling experiencing the last years of her High School experience. To the researchers knowledge there has been no previous research in the area of academic attributions and siblings. All three siblings were enrolled in school music classes; the youngest in a compulsory course and the other two older students in elective classes. More detail will be provided in the individual case study chapters. The researcher hopes to investigate the similarities and differences between the siblings' attributional behaviours during new learning experiences within the authentic environment of the school music classroom.

To investigate the siblings it is important to provide a parental environment context for the data. As siblings, they share the same parents and the same parenting environment as each other. By providing a context for the sibling data, the parent data may provide an insight into the relationship between parental attributions in achievement situations and the siblings' attributions in the achievement situations of school learning. The role of the parent in a child's development is well documented in the literature and will be discussed in more detail in the literature review. It is hoped the contextual data provided by the parent in this study will illuminate specific areas of influence in relation to achievement attributional styles in the area of music study and learning.

Music education in Australian public schools

To contextualise this study a brief overview of music education in Australian public schools is offered. Currently there is no Australian national school curriculum, although there are moves in that direction. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the statutory body responsible for the development of the national curriculum, is currently undertaking trials of some subjects and preparing curricular statements for others (ACARA, 2010). Music education is in the second group. However the current, Australian education system is overseen by the individual six states (Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia) and two territories (Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory). At present, each state has its own education system and school curriculum guidelines. Within these music education requirements vary from state to state. In 2005 the National Review of School Music Education (NRSME) found that nationally music was poorly resourced, often neglected and general teachers in primary schools were unprepared to deliver effective, sequential music education. The NRSME found that “there is a need for immediate priority on improving and sustaining the quality and status of music education” (DEST, 2005, p. v.). Many creative arts subjects, including music, are taught as extra-curricular activities or not at all, due to funding shortfalls and/or a lack of skilled teaching staff. This is particularly prevalent in the Primary years of schooling which encompass entry level kindergarten to year 6 (ages 5 to 11).

This research is situated in New South Wales so it is helpful to outline the current New South Wales (NSW) K–12 Curriculum which provides music education to all levels of schooling from kindergarten to the final year of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) undertaken in year 12 (Board of Studies, 2003). The music education learning and teaching objectives are presented consistently in the six stages of learning outlined for all subjects of study. Learning stages begin at Early Stage 1 and continue through to Stage 3 in the Primary years of schooling. Music education in these years, kindergarten to year 6, is presented as a part of the Creative Arts K-6 syllabus, along with drama, dance and art. Stages 4, 5 and 6 are the High school years. Stage 4 is a mandatory music course where students are required to study music in the first two years of high school, years 7 and 8. Stage 5 is an elective music course available to students who choose to undertake further music study at school. Stage 6

involves the final two years of High school, years 11 and 12. Stage 6 offers 2 levels of music study for the HSC, Music 1 and Music 2. Music 1 builds on the mandatory course and caters for students with formal and informal musical background. Music 2 builds on the elective course and caters for students with an established musical background in performance, composition or musicology skills. The Music Extension course builds on the Music 2 course and is studied in conjunction with Music 2. The Music Extension course is not recommended for students enrolled in the Music 1 course (New South Wales Public Schools, 2011).

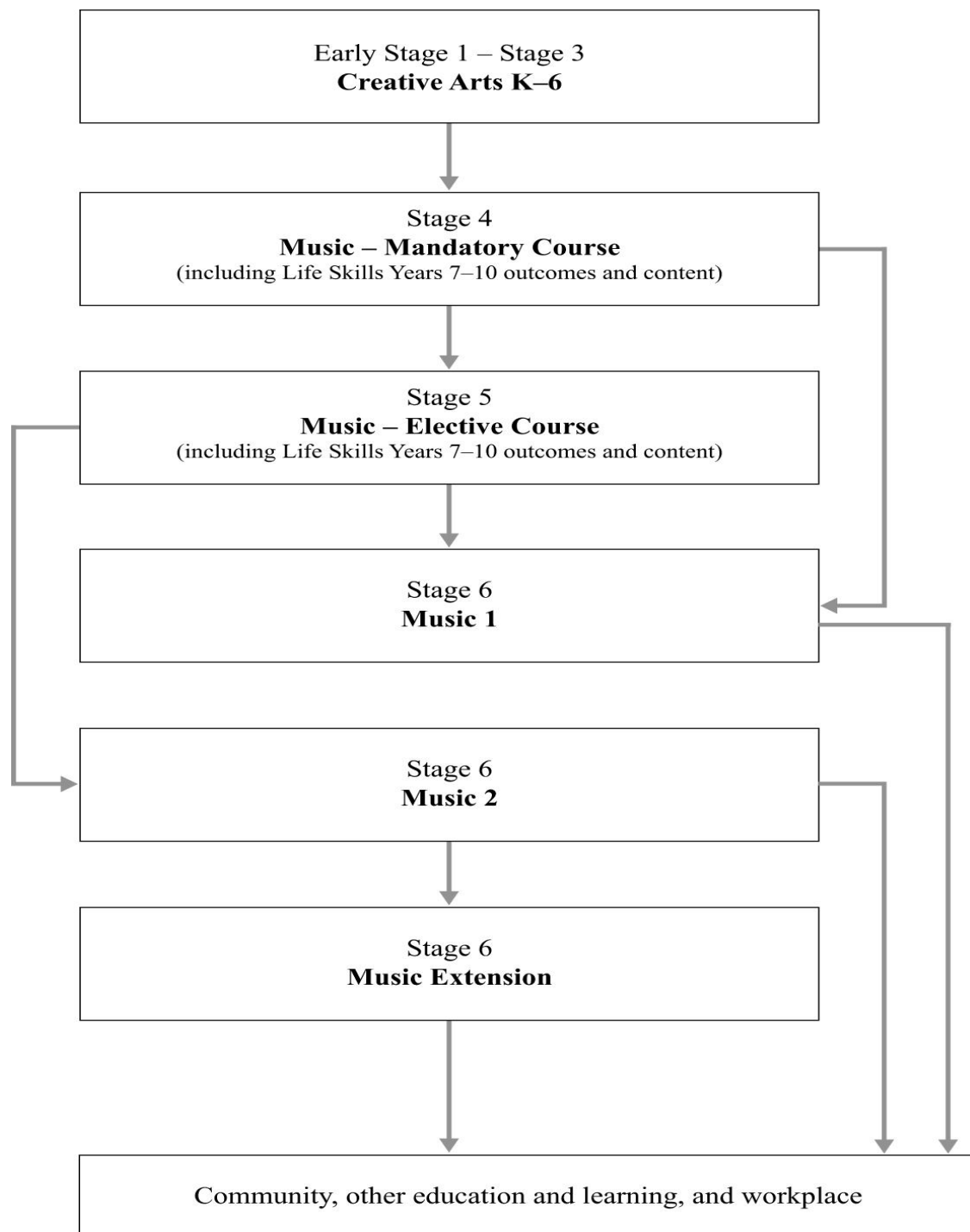


Figure 1. The Pathway of Learning for Music in the K–12 Curriculum

(New South Wales Board of Studies, 2003)

This chart is included to provide a clear visual representation of the progressive relationships between the areas of music study from the initial year of public

schooling (Early Stage 1) through to the final year and culmination of public schooling, the Higher School Certificate (Stage 6). The subjects in this study all take music within their secondary schooling.

Contentions

It is a contention of this study that students in school music classes make achievement attributions when learning new skills and knowledge, affecting future performance motivation and expectations of future success with similar tasks. It is also believed that attributions occur in authentic learning environments, such as the High School music classroom. Attributions about failure and successful new learning can be vastly different and can affect expectations of future success with similar tasks. If ability is blamed for a failure experience students may reaffirm a doubt that they lack a 'natural' ability for music and never again pursue the study of music. If something changeable such as task difficulty or luck is blamed for a successful learning experience, the student may not expect success again with a similar task in the future. Music educators need to be aware of the attributions being made by their students. Detrimental attributions can lead to decreasing levels of motivation and may lead to an avoidance of the subject altogether. Attributions made towards learning strategies are optimal, as the outcome can change due to the use of a different learning strategy. Strategy attributions are internal, unstable and changeable, leading a student to believe the learning outcome can change with the use of more effective learning strategies. Learning becomes a problem-solving process where failure is not an outcome, but the search for a more effective strategy for new learning is to goal. It is contended that strategy attributions occur in authentic learning environments such as the High school music classroom. It is also a contention of this study that parental influence and sibling influence of children's attributional behaviours can be identified by an exploration of the home parenting environment and that this may prove to be significant.

Furthermore, attributional responses can develop and mature from the early High School learning experiences in Year 7, to more established and habitual styles during

the middle to senior years of High School. Though the attributional behaviours may develop and mature, it is also contended that as they mature, they do not always become the most effective attributional behaviours for successful learning. If an attributional judgement, such as a learning strategy achieves success in a new learning situation, then it will become a relied on and established learning pattern. As long as it is effective in achieving success, it will be repeated, even if there are other more effective learning strategies available. It is also contended that, as found in the initial study (Henry, 2005), some students view persistent effort as a learning strategy to be employed to achieve successful new learning.

Significance of the study

The wealth and complexity of research and literature in the area of achievement motivation illustrates the importance educators and researchers place on its role in learning. Persistent effort and individual perception of abilities are directly related to how a student performs in a learning situation and whether they continue to try. Students' judgements about their own abilities and potential for learning is an area where educators need more insight. Preventative measures can be identified for detrimental judgements that may limit or exclude a student from participating in learning. More perceptive teaching methods could also be designed to encourage more students to see the possibility of academic achievement and long-term learning.

This phenomenological study delves into the life world of three High School aged siblings, specifically into their most significant academic learning environment, the school classroom. The researcher is attempting to understand how the students perceive themselves as they are confronted with new learning experiences in the context of the classroom. Much of the research dealing with Attribution Theory has dealt with the creation of artificial learning situations and/or involved students' comments about someone else's attempts to learn. This study will create a window into how actual students perceive their new learning in the classroom context. Through this window the researcher hopes to find evidence to explain why students make certain judgements about their own learning attempts, how these affect their

expectations of future success, how stable and consistent these judgements are and what features affect the stability or instability of attributions.

To the researcher's knowledge, there has been no recent research investigating student attributions to learning strategy choice, particularly in the authentic learning environment of a classroom. Little research has investigated actual new learning experiences and the authentic attributions made in the holistic context of the classroom, including influence not only from the actual learning process but also other students and classroom influences. It is also the one of the first studies, including the initial study (Henry, 2005), to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis when investigating academic attributions. This approach will be discussed in chapter three.

Although the work of O'Neill and Sloboda (1997) investigated the behavioural and affective responses of elementary aged children during an evaluative musical testing situation and acknowledged the presence of attributions, the study did not investigate authentic new learning experiences within the context of the school classroom environment. A test is not a new learning experience, but the evaluation of previous learning experiences. To the researcher's knowledge no previous attribution theory research has been conducted in a High School music classroom focussing on authentic new learning experiences of individual students. All work has involved instrumentalists, bands and orchestras. To the researcher's knowledge there has been no previous attribution theory research has focussed on siblings in an academic achievement context, and no previous attributional theory research has included parent attributional achievement data to provide a contextual basis for sibling attributional behaviour in achievement situations. Only one recent study, Khodayarifard, Brinthaup and Anshel (2010), has investigated the relationship between attributional behaviour in achievement situations of parents and those of their children.

Finally, the majority of attribution theory research has employed quantitative research methods. This study employs qualitative case study research methods adding another perspective to the already established body of research.

Reasoning for a natural learning context versus a laboratory or hypothetical scenario

Yin (1994) argued that an optimal time to use qualitative methods is when it is not possible to separate a phenomenon from its context. It could be argued that research into attribution theory and its relationship to academic motivation, is one of these times.

Hypothetical situations are not ideal when investigating students' achievement attributions. Even though scenarios give researchers more freedom when composing events, the stimuli presented in hypothetical situations can be brief and the cues so obvious that the attribution process becomes an activity in logic, where all subjects could arrive at the same attributional judgements in the end (Fielder, 1982). Medway and Lowe (1980) showed differences between attributions made about real and hypothetical events and research investigating the comparisons between attributions made about the self and other people's performances by Fontaine (1975) and illustrated their shortcomings.

Seegers, Van Putten and Vermeer (2004) collected students' attributional judgements using a questionnaire after a math examination. A test is a useful event for collection of attributions but the researcher believes it is an accumulation of a collection of individual learning experiences. A test is designed to show whether learning has occurred and usually assesses more than one aspect of new knowledge or a skill. A test also possesses additional anxiety for the student. Grades are the way the community; directly (peers, classmates, teachers, school, family) and indirectly (potential employers, community members) judge their level of intelligence.

This current study is not concerned with the grand attributions that occur after an event that combines so many different learning experiences and personal anxiety. The researcher is interested in the incidental attributions that are made not only after the learning has occurred (or not) but throughout the actual process of learning. Learning can be incremental where there are steps that lead a student towards the learning objective. An example of this could be learning how to perform a set piece on the

marimba. Both these learning objectives may be the concluding outcome of the lesson but the process that leads the student towards these goals is incremental in nature. A music student may first have to learn how to hold the mallets correctly and then coordinate her hand movements while reading the first bar of the music. Even though the student described has begun to learn something new to them, they have not successfully completed the learning objective. The music student has successfully begun the process of learning that could lead them towards a successful learning outcome. It is the judgements (attributions) made during the process that help them decide whether to persist or give up, how to cope with difficulties that arise (ask for assistance, use other strategies, give up) and their understanding of the process of learning. This is such an individual experience, influenced by so many factors particularly in the environment (Weiner 1985, 1992).

Recent research conducted by Cushman (2010) involved asking North American teenagers from diverse backgrounds about motivation and learning. The students provided information about many subject domains, including music study. Although academic attributions are not identified by name, the research data is full of attributional information about why students continue to learn, even when learning is challenging. When asking the students about motivation and learning, the students in the study reflected on real life experiences. The learning experiences reported were authentic and set in genuine learning contexts, such as the classroom. The research illustrates the importance of asking students about their learning experiences and provides evidence that students know much information about motivation and mastery that is invaluable for educators.

Instigating achievement attributions in natural events, for example learning situations that occur in the actual learning environment, independent of any study, have only been done using examinations (for example see O'Neill & Sloboda, 1997).

Attributions collected in the natural learning environment of a student have an enormous advantage, as the event itself is real, the environment is authentic, learning outcomes have direct consequences for the subject and provide ecological validity to the findings (Salili & Hau, 1993). Collection of students' attributions in the natural environment of learning, for example the classroom, and relating to the actual learning experiences of the individual student within that classroom, have not been done, to the knowledge of the researcher. It is the aim of this study to create a

window into this holistic experience within the natural environment in which it so frequently occurs. It is hoped that the phenomenological approach of this study provides genuine insight into this significant phenomenon.

The researcher

The researcher is a Primary School teacher with a Bachelor of Education (Primary) awarded from Newcastle University and a Master of Education (Music Education) awarded from Monash University. At the time of research she has also been a private vocal teacher for nineteen years. She has also worked as a music tutor, assisting High School aged students with all aspects of their music education. In addition she is a working vocalist and percussionist, performing in small groups and studio situations. She has worked in schools in New South Wales, Australia and England, and as a performance artist in the United States. The inspiration for this research stemmed from her observations of primary aged students and private music students. She was constantly dealing with comments such as, “I can’t sing. I’ll never be able to” or “Jeremy doesn’t have a musical bone in his body. That’s why we have always encouraged him to play sport”. The researcher was led to question, why do students at such an early age, label themselves and create such strong limitations on future learning experiences? Why is this reinforced by many of their parents and accepted as a natural phenomenon? It is important for music educators to investigate how these beliefs are being internalised by students and whether the classroom-learning environment can counteract them.

The following chapter will provide a thorough review of the research literature regarding Attribution Theory and its relationship to motivation in learning contexts. Effort, ability and strategy attributions will be explored with the potential of attribution retraining addressed. Attribution research relevant to music education will then be presented, followed by the role of parents in attribution theory research related to academic achievement and motivation

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter will review the relevant substantive research literature concerning Attribution Theory in the context of achievement motivation, including its origins, subsequent development, and relationship to music and education. Also discussed is research investigating parent's influence on children's academic attributions.

Attribution Theory

An important element in students' perception of self is beliefs about the causes of their own successes and failures. Students may ask themselves why they performed a task well or unsatisfactorily, thus, attempting to explain why things happened as they did. Attributions about why a student fails or succeeds affect motivation thus future performance. Theories concerning how an individual explains successes and failures cognitively are known as attribution theories of motivation (Berk, 1984; McLean, 2003; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996; Stipek, 1988; Woolfolk, 1995).

Attribution theory is a cognitive theory of motivation suggesting that individuals are conscious, rational decision makers. Individuals are likened to naïve scientists, who are motivated to understand the natural world in order to predict and control future events. Individuals are motivated by a goal of understanding and mastering the environment and themselves. In this goal of mastery, individuals seek to understand *why* things happen to themselves and others, thus seeking causal determinants (Weiner 1992; Graham & Weiner cited in Berliner & Calfee, 1996; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996).

Weiner and his associates published one of the most widely used and respected attribution theories of achievement motivation. They suggested that, “individuals’ beliefs about causes of success and failure may be of major importance in understanding achievement related behaviour” (Bar-Tal, 1978, p. 260). Students can attribute outcomes of learning experiences to four causes: ability, effort, task difficulty, or luck (Refer to Figure 2). These are classified in two ways – internal or external and stability over time. Ability and effort are seen as internal causal elements that originate within a person. Task difficulty and luck are external causal elements because they occur outside the person. The second classification is stability over time. Ability and task difficulty are both seen as stable because they do not vary if the same task is repeated several times. Effort and luck are seen as unstable because they can change at any time.

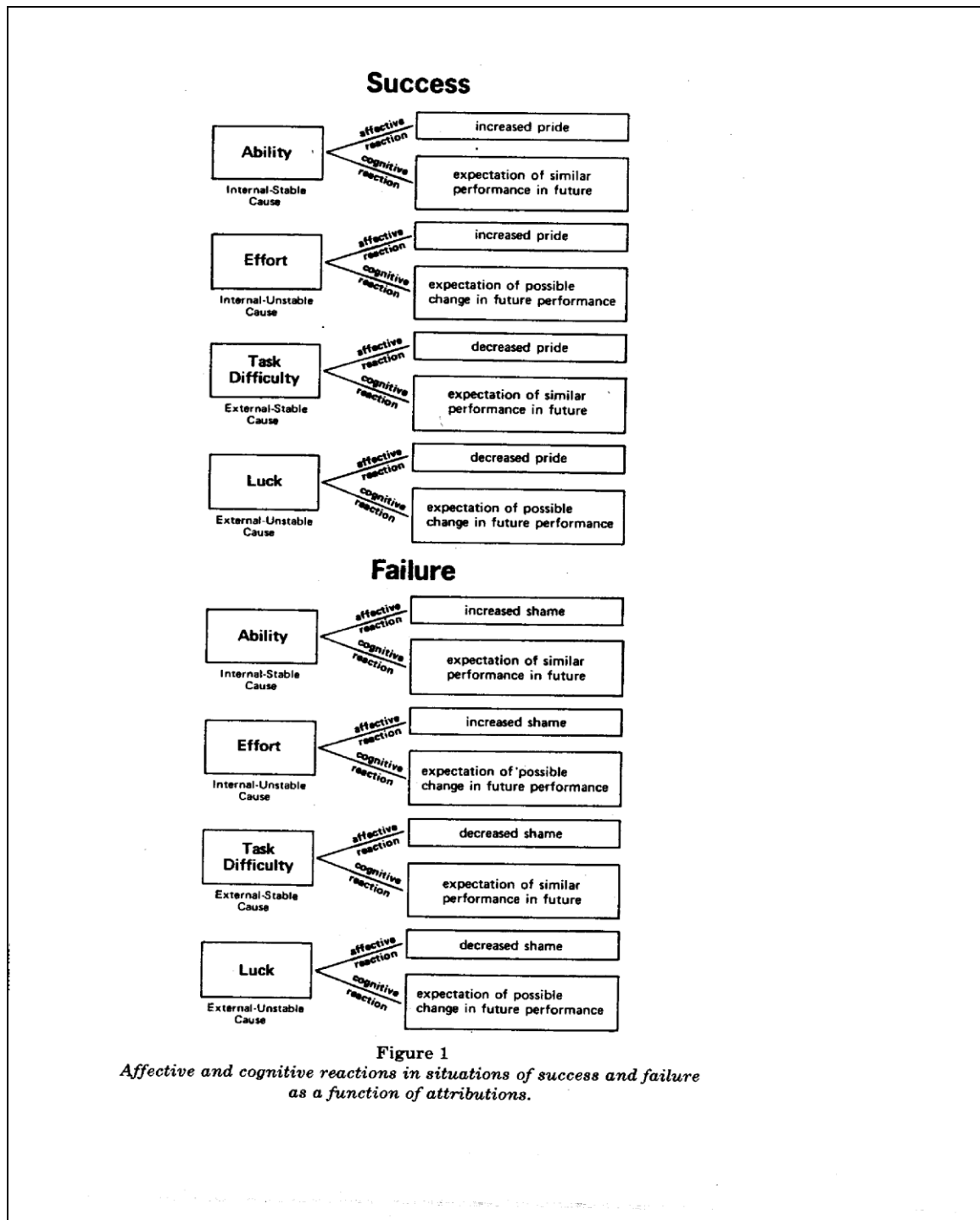


Figure 2. Taken from Bar-Tal, D. 1978 Attributional Analysis of Achievement-related Behaviour, in *Review of Educational Research*, 48, (2), 259-271.

In later work (Weiner, 1974; Weiner, 1979) the four initial causes of academic achievement situations were expanded to include “factors such as mood, fatigue, illness and bias could serve as necessary and/or sufficient reasons for achievement performance” (Weiner, 1979, p. 4). With the addition of such causes a controllability

dimension of causality was needed. Effort is volitional but fatigue and mood cannot usually be willed to change with increased effort. So the causal dimensions became internal, stable and controllable (Weiner, 1979; Weiner, 1992).

It is clear that causal elements not only induce a cognitive reaction but also influence an affective reaction (see Figure 1). In music education a central goal is “the development of positive attitudes toward music” (Abeles, Hoffer & Klotman, 1984, p. 142). Using attribution theory, if a student attributes a successful situation to ability or effort, then they will experience maximum self-satisfaction because both these causal elements are internal. The student can feel ownership of the achievement and expect more success on similar future tasks. If the student attributes success to luck, then there will be less pride because it is external to the student. There can be no personal responsibility for success and no confidence of future successes with similar tasks.

Attributions for failures are just as important. If a student attributes an unsuccessful situation to an internal causal element, there is increased shame because they feel personally responsible. Whereas, failure attributed to task difficulty or luck, both external causal elements, results in little shame, as the student feels no personal responsibility for the outcome. The main difference here is the way stability affects the cognitive outcomes. Unsuccessful experiences blamed on ability or task difficulty result in the student expecting more unsuccessful outcomes on similar future tasks. Both these attributes are seen as stable. Unsuccessful experiences blamed on effort or luck are seen as unstable, so there is the possibility that the past experience could change to a successful one on a similar future task. This is extremely important for educators.

Generally successful students make external attributions for failures or realistic internal attributions. By attributing the failure to an internal, controllable cause, the student is more likely to concentrate on task-orientated plans. As Legette (2003) points out, “If students believe that they have some influence on the outcome of a particular task, they may be less likely to characterize themselves as helpless learners. Instead they may feel that subsequent attempts at similar tasks will yield totally different outcomes” (p. 47). These students are known to exhibit mastery-oriented

attributions (Berk, 1994) and have high academic self-concepts (Madonna, Bailey & Wesley, 1990). Thus “experiences with success and internal control are the cause rather than the result of good feelings and self-esteem” (Kleinke, 1978, p. 176).

The distressing opposite of the previous description is the student who attributes failure to internal, stable attributes that cannot be controlled. These students rarely expect success, they experience low academic self-concept and are usually labelled ‘underachievers’ (Nurmi, Onatsu & Haavisto, 1995). A study by Asmus (1986a) considered how music students perceive their own successes and failures and if this effects their perceptions of other students’ successes and failures. Asmus found that overachievers felt greater pride in their success than underachievers, who had low persistence since they saw their goals as unattainable. Not all underachievers attribute their successes and failures to the same causal attributions. Current research has indicated a need for educators to identify the attribution behaviour strategies exhibited by their students. The three main dysfunctional strategies that appear in classrooms are learned helplessness, self-handicapping and self-worth protective behaviours. Learned helplessness students explain failures due to internal, stable causal attributions such as inability. Self-handicapping students create excuses to attribute failures to behavioural excuses that protect the self-esteem from damage (Woolfolk, 1995). Self-worth protective students believe failure occurs because of a voluntary withdrawal of effort (Thompson, 1993).

Recently, Malle (2004) presented a more complex perspective of attribution theory. He challenged the person versus situation, or internal versus external causes that individuals have been assumed to be relying on when forming behaviour explanations. Malle argues that the traditional dichotomy has been assumed by previous researchers, not tested. Malle explains that this has been caused by a misunderstanding of an historical and widely cited work of Heider (1958). Heider discusses the distinct causal models that individuals use when making social perceptions. The causal models of personal and impersonal causality are applied separately to the domains of intentional and unintentional behaviour. One causal model is applied to the domain of intentional behaviour, for which people assume the

involvement of an intention as the critical force that brings about action. The other causal model is for all other domains (for example, unintentional human behaviour as well as physical events), in which causes simply bring about effects – without any involvement of intentions. Malle discusses the importance of researchers distinguishing the different ways individuals explain unintentional and intentional behaviours, and how this has been ignored in most of the earlier attribution theories. Unintentional behaviours are explained by causes, for example, factors that automatically brought about the behaviour in question. This follows the traditional attribution theory assumptions. Intentional behaviours are explained by one of three modes, depending on what aspect of the intentional behaviour is in focus and what social function the explanation serves. The first mode of explaining intentional behaviour is reasons, which refer to the beliefs and desires the individual considered when deciding to act. This is the most common way individuals explain intentional behaviour. The next mode involves causal history of reason explanations. These may be, “factors that lay in the background of the agent’s reasons, such as upbringing, personality, culture, or in the immediate context” (Malle, 2004, p. 91). The final mode of explaining intentional behaviour is enabling factors, which specify what made it possible that the individual turned an intention into a successfully performed action. Malle observes that, “whether the action occurs may depend on factors beyond the agent’s intention and reasons-requiring, for example, skill and facilitating circumstances” (Malle, 2004, p. 109).

When discussing previous attribution theories, Malle mentions the work of Weiner in the area of achievement motivation, in particular, the emotions and motivations people have toward others who succeed or fail. He states that these studies, “deal primarily with explanations of and emotional responses to outcomes, which are unintentional events” (Malle, 2004, p. 21). The researcher believes that students involved in new learning experiences and the process of learning are involved in intentional events. Commonsense dictates that there are many varied levels of participation within the learning process but any involvement at all, indicates some level of intention to learn. It is the researcher’s belief that attributions made within the achievement motivation context, particularly in learning environments such as school,

involve the explanation/s of intentional behaviour. It is the researcher's hope to address this issue in the data analysis.

The potential for this theory to impact all educational contexts, including music education, is obvious but is not reflected in the amount of research done in this domain. Extensive research using Attribution Theory in other subject domains must be examined and the small amount of research in music education will be discussed in detail later.

Ability Attributions

An important dimension of Attribution Theory is ability which is believed to be a stable, internal and uncontrollable trait. This assumption has been examined in many studies, particularly from a child development perspective. Wittrock (1986) discussed the development of children's intelligence and their ideas of what makes a person 'smart'. At around six years of age, children do not distinguish between effort and ability. By eleven years, children begin to realize the independence of effort and ability and their causal relationship to achievement (Blumenfeld, Pintrich, Meece & Wessels, 1982; Nicholls, 1976). Stipek and Weisz (1981) confirm that while adults who attribute failure to lack of ability generally have low expectations for future performance, children may continue to hold high expectations for future success because they expect their ability to change" (p. 121). Graham and Weiner (1996) discuss "the importance of subjective perceptions of the meaning of ability" (p. 77). This leads to the idea of differing perceptions of ability. Schunk (1991) presented two differing perceptions of ability, fixed or incremental. Fixed views of ability suggest no change. Incremental views of ability suggest that effort and persistence enhances ability (Covington, 1983). Realistic perceptions of self-ability are important (Bar-Tal, 1978). Brophy (in Maehr & Pintrich, 1999) discusses the importance of teachers emphasising sufficient instead of high ability. How students perceive ability is crucial to the application of Attribution Theory in achievement.

Effort Attributions

The importance of effort attribution's internal, unstable and controllable nature has been studied by many because initial interpretation of the Attribution Theory suggested attributions of failure experiences made to effort were more likely to enhance future performance expectations. Dweck (1975) retrained elementary aged children who exhibited learned helplessness behaviour to attribute failure to lack of effort. Chapin and Dyck (1976) had similar results leading to more task persistence. Kleinke (1978) found that successful and unsuccessful performance can generally enhance persistence on similar future tasks if attributed to one's own efforts. Research also discusses the possible negative effects of students' failure being attributed to lack of effort. When a student tries very hard and fails, increasing effort on a future task seems useless (Covington & Omelich, 1983;1984; Schunk, 1984).

Covington and Omelich (1979) discuss the dual nature of the schooling process, which emphasises effort and ability. Some students are simply trying to avoid failure, so may reduce effort so that effort can be blamed for failure. Ability attributions and feelings of hopelessness associated with lack of ability are protected and reduced (Clifford, 1986a). The perception of lack of effort by others was also discussed. Teachers are more likely to spend more time with students who exhibit more effort or keep trying. Interesting to note is the cultural differences evident in effort attribution judgements. Different cultural beliefs about the relationship of effort to ability are quite significant to attributional tendencies (Chen & Stevenson, 1995; Stipek, Weiner & Li, 1989).

Marshall and Weinstein (1984) reported that teacher's ideas of ability, stable or incremental, directly affected the students' perceptions. Cooper and Burger (1980) found that teachers criticise students' failure experiences when the teacher attributes the failure to lack of effort. When attributed to lack of ability, sympathy and assistance is offered. These teacher "affects and behaviours may convey to students

that they failed because of lack of effort or lack of ability” (Weiner, 1980, p. 10). Teachers can have a powerful influence over students’ attributions.

Strategy Attributions

Attribution Theory is an ongoing theory, continually being developed and enriched with new ideas and findings. One particularly interesting development is the possible addition of another attributional dimension, less stable than ability and more stable than effort. Strategy attribution or, “the particular approach, tactic, or method one uses in attempting to achieve a goal or solve a problem” (Anderson & Jennings, 1980, p.394) has received a large amount of positive attention. Diener and Dweck (1978) found that the timing of an attribution may be relevant. The subjects involved in this study were asked to verbalise what they were thinking about while performing a task. Mastery-oriented children, where motivation for completing the task is in the task itself, engaged in self-monitoring and self-instruction. When unable to solve the task immediately, each failure was followed by a new idea. The learned helpless children made the expected attributions, but the mastery-oriented children made no explanations for their failures. The researchers propose that the mastery-oriented children simply did not see themselves as failing, continuing to problem solve using sophisticated strategies (self-monitoring and self-instruction). This study offers an exciting option. Anderson and Jennings (1980) deem strategy the “overlooked factor” (p. 393). Although Ames and Archer (1988) note that the term ‘strategy’ may be too broad, most of the research involving strategy attributions has been overwhelmingly positive. It seems common sense that it would be more beneficial to attribute failure experiences to ineffective strategy choice than to effort alone. Students with academic difficulties can be made aware of the benefits of combining effort with strategic knowledge when approaching tasks. Educators can show students *how* to succeed with more effort (Palinscar, 1986). Clifford (1986a, 1986b, 1990) and Clifford, Kim and McDonald (1988) found that effort and strategy are changeable, suggesting that they are both unstable. Subsequently, attributions to an inappropriate strategy can imply the need to develop a new strategy, or experiment selectively with other available strategies, thus giving strategy attributions more stability than effort.

The most significant issue regarding strategy attributions is the ability to change a failure situation into a problem-solving situation. By continuing to problem-solve, effort is maintained and failure fears due to low ability are decreased. This means that learning strategies must be taught in the classroom via specific evaluative feedback and learning strategy instruction. Weinstein and Mayer (in Wittrock, 1986) discuss the importance of teaching domain specific information and learning strategies simultaneously. Wittrock (1986) adds that teachers should have a strong idea of the students' relevant knowledge base before incorporating strategy instruction into lessons. Pokay and Blumfeld (1990) warn educators that when introducing new knowledge to students, domain-specific strategies should be taught and later more general strategies can be introduced. For students who exhibit learned-helpless behaviours or experience failure situations on a regular basis, "each occasion for strategy instruction is also an opportunity for retraining attributions" (Borkowski, Weyhing & Turner, 1986 p. 136).

Identification of learning strategies

Although there is a large amount of research in the area of strategies in academic learning situations, there is also a lot of confusion within this area. The terms motivational strategies, teaching strategies, instructional strategies, practice strategies and study strategies seem to overlap and intertwine within research studies. All studies emphasize the importance of strategies within the learning environment. The strategies that are relevant to the present study are reflected in the following definition: "a learning strategy is any behaviour, thought or action a learner engages in during learning that is intended to influence the acquisition, storage in memory, integration, or availability for future use of new knowledge and skills" (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p.12). As discussed earlier, student attributions to strategy choice or strategy use to explain failing and successful learning experiences, is prevalent in many of the current attribution theory models. In the previous study by the researcher (Henry, 2005) strategy attributions were evident in varying degrees. Therefore the

identification of strategy types and their affect on the learning process as well as the learning outcome are particularly relevant in this current study.

Over time, Weinstein and Mayer (1986), Weinstein, Goetz and Alexander (1988), Weinstein (1994) and Weinstein and Hume (1998) not only recognised the importance of learning strategies in the academic domain but also identified the learning strategies used by students in their attempts to learn new things. By outlining the characteristics of strategic learners, educators may find clues to assist struggling, non-strategic learners become more strategic in their learning process. Successful strategic learners must have the following five broad categories of knowledge that include,

(a) knowledge about different learning and study strategies and how to use them (strategy knowledge), (b) knowledge of themselves as learners (self-knowledge), (c) knowledge about different types of school activities and tasks and what it means to complete them successfully (task knowledge), (d) current knowledge in the content area (content knowledge), and (e) knowledge of the context in which the learning is taking place (context knowledge) (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 12).

Earlier research investigating the role of strategies in individual approaches to learning (Biggs, 1987; Entwistle, 1992; Schmeck, Geisler-Brenstein & Cercy, 1991), identified two types of strategy learners; surface learners and deep learners. Surface learners use strategies that involve rote memorisation and have little commitment to understanding the new knowledge. On the other hand, deep learners are not only intrinsically motivated to add new knowledge to existing knowledge to a level of personal understanding; they also have access to a “broad strategic repertoire to enable the motivational goals of learning to be achieved” (Cantwell & Millard, 1992, p. 4).

Weinstein and Hume (1998) describe three common categories used to describe learning strategies: rehearsal, elaboration and organizational strategies and how they apply to basic learning tasks and complex learning tasks. Basic learning tasks involve knowledge acquisition and comprehension and complex learning tasks involve knowledge application, analysis and synthesis. Rehearsal strategies for basic learning tasks are repetitive, rote activities used to store information in temporary memory until it is required and to create familiarity with the content. Such strategies “usually involve repeating key terms aloud, rereading, repetitive writing, or using mnemonic devices such as tunes, rhymes and pictures” (Weinstein & Hume, 1998 p. 24). Rehearsal strategies for complex learning tasks require the student to think more carefully about the content. Important ideas and main parts of the task are focussed on and, as with basic learning, repetition is used to create increased familiarity, understanding and memory. Examples of rehearsal strategies for complex learning tasks include, “taking selective notes, underlining important information, highlighting parts of a text, and copying material” (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 25). It is important to note that rehearsal strategies do not integrate new knowledge with existing knowledge. Connections between old and newly acquired knowledge are not made leading to less meaningful and less useful learning unless elaboration strategies are used also.

Elaboration strategies for basic learning tasks help students build meaning between what is being learnt and their existing knowledge. Examples of elaboration strategies for basic learning tasks would include forming a mental image or generating a sentence that connects two or more items. Elaboration strategies are most noteworthy when used for complex learning tasks. Students must be cognitively active, interact with the content being learned and their existing knowledge when using elaboration strategies. Examples of elaboration strategies for complex learning tasks include, “summarizing in one’s own words, paraphrasing, asking and answering questions about the material, teaching it to someone else, comparing and contrasting, and analysing the relationships among components” (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 29).

The final group of learning strategies, organizational strategies, are similar to elaboration strategies but more specialised. They involve the individual imposing a framework, new or based on previously acquired knowledge, to new material being learned. This often involves chunking or clustering the information into small groups, reducing the load on the working memory. Organizational strategies for basic learning tasks include, “classifying items into animal, vegetable, or mineral categories and identifying hierarchical relationships in mathematics” (Weinstein & Hume, 1998 p.33). Organizational strategies for complex learning tasks not only help to lessen the load on the working memory, but also increase meaning and connections between old and new knowledge. This increases the chances of the new knowledge being placed alongside connected knowledge in the memory, making it easily retrievable for future use. Examples include, “diagramming text, sorting new paintings into existing categories, creating a tree diagram to summarize the main ideas and interrelations from a class unit, and creating a conditional flowchart to explain a complex production process” (Weinstein & Hume, 1998, p. 33).

An important aspect of individual learning strategy use concerns the combined use of strategies from all three groups described. It is more common for students to employ various strategies when approaching a new learning task.

Weinstein and Hume (1998) continue to explain the general types of knowledge students need to acquire, select and use strategies well. Declarative knowledge allows students to not only know about different strategies but also their individual characteristics and uses. Procedural knowledge is the *know how* to use the different strategies and conditional knowledge allows the students to choose the correct strategy because of an awareness of individual strategy strengths and weaknesses.

Of particular significance to this study, is the recognition of strategies being used at different times throughout the learning process. Weinstein and Hume (1998) and Weinstein, Husman and Dierking (2000) identify possible strategy stages occurring pre-learning, during learning and post learning. Pre-learning process strategies would

include strategies that focus on the beginning of the task such as appropriate materials and resources close or creating a positive mind set. During learning strategies are concerned with the knowledge acquisition so, depending on the task, most of the strategies discussed previously would be appropriate in this phase. Finally, post strategies are concerned with understanding and comprehension of new learning.

It is important to recognise that cognitive strategies in academic learning situations do not occur in isolation. Strategic learning as a part of mastery-oriented/self-regulated learning behaviours is connected to other processes such as motivation and metacognition. But an awareness of appropriate strategies and how to apply them is not enough. Students must want to employ them and must similarly maintain the desire to do so throughout the learning task (Weinstein, Husman & Dierking 2000). It is the complex nature of strategy use in new learning experiences that this study plans to address.

Attribution Re-Training

The process of attribution re-training is an important product of Attribution Theory research. Programs that can modify maladaptive attributional patterns have the potential to change students' learning experiences for a lifetime. This is particularly powerful for students who have a history of underachieving and negative academic achievement experiences. As Berk (1994) states:

Attributional re-training is a simple, practical tool for helping teachers and parents replace destructive feedback practices (criticisms for errors, negative comparisons with peers, and unreasonably high expectations) with communication patterns that foster the fullest possible development of children's intellectual potential (p. 476).

Original research in attribution re-training dealt with the manipulation of ability attributions to effort attributions, specifically in failure situations (Dweck, 1975; Bar-Tal, 1978; Chapin & Dyck, 1976; Dweck, 1986). Results seemed extremely promising. Perry and Dickens (1984), Perry and Dickens (1988), Perry and Penner (1990) studied attribution re-training as a therapeutic method for reinstating psychological control over one's learning, preventing maladaptive attributions leading to learned helplessness behaviours. McIver, Stipek and Daniels (1991) discuss the importance of one's perception of ability and its relationship to effort levels on achievement tasks. Brophy (in Maehr & Pintrich, 1999) develops this idea, discussing the importance of strategy attributions. As mentioned earlier, strategy attributions protect the perception of ability and may encourage students to see how with increased effort and knowledge, ability may be increased. Anderson (1983) and Baer (in Levine & Wang, 1983) warn educators against teaching all students to attribute failure experiences to lack of effort. Physical limitations, unrealistic goals and inappropriate strategy choice may all lead to a failure situation that included a high level of effort on students' part. A lack of effort attribution in these cases could be extremely detrimental to a student's self-worth and self-esteem and actually encourage learned helplessness behaviours.

Frieze and Snyder (1980), Farmer and Vispoel (1990) and Farmer, Vispoel and Maehr (1991) found that children from first to twelfth grade exhibit situation specific causal belief structures. Causes of failure and success vary according to the academic context. The latter two studies are of particular interest to music educators, as music was classified as only an aesthetic achievement context, such as playing in a band. Attributions may well be different in classroom music achievement contexts.

Recently Weiner, who is recognised as the founder of attribution theory research in relation to academic achievement, commented on the success and continuing relevance of attribution intervention.

In sum, attribution intervention or reattribution training has resulted in behavioral change. This is in part because the interventions address the facts

that self-doubt (attributions of failure to the self and success to external factors) and stable beliefs about the causes of failure are important impediments to motivation, whereas unstable ascriptions for failure result in hope, which facilitates motivation (Weiner, 2010).

There is little opposition to attribution retraining/intervention and its value in the area of academic achievement motivation.

Attribution Theory and Music Education

All of the research done on the application of Attribution Theory to music education has focussed on effort and ability as success and failure causal attributions.

Reimer (1975) conducted one of the first studies using attributions and music education using university students. Free piano lessons were offered to students without previous formal music instruction. All subjects received feedback indicating their success attributed to either ability, effort, task simplicity, and chance. Subjects given instructions relating to internality of attribution (ability and effort) reported greater satisfaction with their success at the piano than those given external attributions (task simplicity and chance).

One of the most influential researchers in this area was Edward P. Asmus. Jr. Much of his research concerned children in school music situations. Asmus (1985) examined the views of sixth-grade general music students concerning why students succeed and fail in music. The responses were assigned to one of four attribution categories, ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. The majority of students selected ability (internal-stable attribution) and effort (internal-unstable attribution) as the major causes of success and failure in music. Asmus (1986a) expanded this study to include students from eight grade levels. From this study it emerged that as the students

progressed into higher grades the number of internal-unstable attributions decreased while internal-stable attributions increased.

Asmus (1986b) also conducted a study that examined students' perceptions of other's failures and successes in music. Tertiary music education or music therapy students were questioned concerning the possible relationship between the students' perceived causes of success and failure when talking about themselves and others. Success or failure was attributed to task difficulty when students were talking about themselves, and to effort when talking about others. In this study Asmus created the Music Attribution Orientation Scale (MAOS). Unlike Weiner's (1972) model, it uses a wider range of attributions and was designed with music education research in mind. It comprises thirty-five items divided into five different subscales (effort, background, classroom environment, musical ability and affect for music).

Austin (1991) found that elementary-aged band students who exhibited low music self-esteem, considered effort less important than ability attributions and this was magnified in a competitive learning situation. Thus positive achievement outcomes and success-oriented behaviours can be encouraged if they are associated with an unstable causal attribution, such as effort. Sandene (1987) found that instrumental students who persevere with their music studies have a greater internal locus of control and in another study Sandene (1997) reported that instrumental students exhibited high levels of self-esteem and more effort attributions than the students who ceased instrumental music studies.

Austin and Vispoel (1992) found that students attributed failure to the use of inappropriate strategies or insufficient errors rather than lack of ability. Pitts, Davidson and McPherson (2000) found strong evidence to support Weiner's original theory, with higher achieving students believing in ability and effort for success and less motivated students attributing success to luck and task difficulty. In another study, Austin and Vispoel (1998) studied the attributional patterns of early adolescents concerning success and failure in classroom music. They found that attributions to ability were strongly related to achievement test scores. So if failure

occurs on a music test, a low achievement student attributes it to a lack of ability. An interesting attribution for failure was family influence. Students on average blamed lack of ability and negative family influence for failure. This is disturbing for music educators. Ability attributes in music learning contexts are not uncommon, with low achieving students blaming lack of success on an uncontrollable-stable-internal attribution. But family influence may indicate that students view music ability as an inherited trait, another uncontrollable-stable-internal trait. These researchers suggest the importance of teachers using effort and strategy attribution feedback to counteract some of these negative attributional patterns. Strategy and effort attributions promote a more controlled achievement situation.

Legette (1998; 2003) examined the causal beliefs of elementary, middle and high school students enrolled in music classes who were administered Asmus's (1986b) MAOS. Legette found that students placed more importance on effort and ability as causal attributions for success and failure in music. This is encouraging, knowing that effort is an internal-unstable and controllable dimension. Contrasting results regarding child development differences in causal attributions were noted. Previous research by Asmus (1986a) noting children's attributions developmental change from effort-related attributions to more internal ability-related attributions was not supported by Legette (1998) who suggests that music educators consider giving more attention to effort than they do to ability. Legette (2003) discusses the role of teachers in the attributions students make concerning their music achievement. Demonstrating through different instructional strategies and thoughtful, discriminating evaluation, teachers can help students to attribute failure experiences to controllable dimensions.

With reference to singing, a recent study by Richards and Durrant (2003) found that the casual attributions of 'non-singers' could be changed in a choir situation. Before the choir, subjects attributed singing to ability (internal-stable and uncontrollable). In the choir emphasis was placed on effort and external factors such as a negative judgement from an authority figure. Attribution Theory was identified when explaining the results.

As has been discussed Attribution Theory in its original and evolved forms, has relevance in the study of educational motivation and music education.

Parents and Attribution Theory

There is a plethora of published research and anecdotal evidence supporting the significant role parents play in their children's academic achievement. The actual nature of this influence, particularly relating to motivational processes, has been examined in the realm of self-regulatory learning, which emerged from earlier research concerning self-control. A small but succinct introduction to the large base of research on self-regulatory learning will be presented in this chapter to provide a contextual basis, as much of the research involving the relationships between parents and their children's attributions is present in this area of study. Self-regulatory learning processes are a well-researched and established area of study in academic learning. Self-regulated learning refers to the process by which students activate and sustain cognitions, behaviours, and affects that are systematically directed toward the attainment of learning goals. It is a complex process that includes such behaviours as task concentration, sustained effort, resource identification and organisation, effective implementation of learning strategies, task management and pride (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). Research into these processes has revealed that students who are effective self-regulators are more successful learners than students who exhibit poor self-regulatory behaviours. With specific interest to this study, the motivational processes of effective and ineffective self-regulatory learners are relevant. Attributions are considered one of the motivators of self-regulated learning.

Theory and research substantiate the idea that attributions are important motivators of self-regulated learning, and in turn, the results of one's learning affect future attributions (Schunk, 2008, p. 246).

Consequently, a great deal of the self-regulatory research has included attributions, along with other self-regulatory processes. Zimmerman (2000) presented the widely

accepted premise of self-regulatory processes occurring in three separate phases: forethought, performance control, and self-reflection. The forethought phase, which precedes actual performance, contains self-regulatory processes involving task analysis and self-motivational beliefs. During the performance control phase, processes that occur during learning are present such as self-control and self-observation. The self-reflection phase occurs after the learning performance and involves processes related to self-judgement and self-reaction. Attributions are seen as key motivators in the forethought phase, as related to self-efficacy beliefs and a result of self-evaluation in the self-reflection phase.

Specific to this discussion, research involving the relationship between parents and children's attributions is relevant. Although the parent data presented in the following chapter provides a contextual basis for the preceding data presentation of the three children, previous work in the area of the parent's influence is significant.

There is a large body of research examining the role of parenting in children's self-regulated learning. McPherson and Zimmerman (2002) point out the important role in facilitating self-regulatory mechanisms that parents play and that this will eventually permit their children to gain control of their own learning.

Restraints were created by the nature of the present study. There is a great deal of research that examines the influence of cultural/ethnic differences (Baker & Stevenson, 1986; Cross, 2003; Lynch & Stein, 1987; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hong & Hong, 2005; Stright, Yang-Herr & Neitzel, 2009), family financial situations (Robinson, Burns & Winder, 2009; Mattanah, Pratt, Cowan & Cowan, 2005) and child age ranges before and after the High School years (Moss & Strayer, 1990; Deci, Driver, Hotchkiss, Robbins & McDougal, 1993; Neitzel & Stright, 2003; Robinson, et al., 2009). These will not be presented in detail in this paper as the research data presented in the following chapters of this paper did not identify culture/ethnic or family financial factors as significant. Also the current study presents data collected from High School aged children so the data relating to early childhood, primary and college aged students is not discussed in detail.

There is evidence that the gender of the parent can make a difference when making attributions for their children's academic learning outcomes. McGrath and Repetti (2000) reported that when fathers valued academic success, the girls expressed feelings of academic competence. This was not found to be the same with the boys in the study. Deci, et al., (1993) found that mothers who exhibited controlling vocalisations during joint problem solving tasks had children who exhibited lower intrinsic motivation than others in the study. Parents responses to their children's academic performance is reportedly varied. Alessandri and Lewis (1993) reported that both mothers and fathers make significantly more specific positive attributions to boys than girls. In this same study it was evident that fathers made more specific attributions than mothers.

Yee and Eccles (1988) investigated the parents' beliefs about their high school students' mathematics aptitude. Interestingly, they found that both mothers and fathers attributed their son's academic performances to ability and their daughter's performances to effort. Cote and Azar (1997) investigated the differences in parent attributions of their children's performance in several areas, including academic and social situations. They found that parents made stronger effort attributions in academic situations to explain both successful and unsuccessful behaviour than in social situations. The researchers argue that this may be an indication that parents feel effort is more important than ability in the academic domain. This is important to consider when investigating children's attributions of academic performance. The research in this area and other areas of educational achievement, present a strong case for parents influence in their children's academic beliefs and behaviours. The ways in which these occur are the focus of ongoing future research, with most researchers concluding there may be more subtle and indirect ways this communication occurs between the parent and the child (Pomerantz, Grolnick & Price in Elliot & Dweck, 2005). Phillipson and Phillipson (2010) explain that "Parents communicate their attributions or explanations for their children's achievement through their everyday interactions and behaviour with their children" (p. 626). Modelling and instruction serve as the main medium through which parents and teachers convey self-regulatory skills (Zimmerman in Boekaerts, Pintrich & Zeidner, 2000). There has been some

research focussed on the most beneficial aspects of parental involvement in their children's academic performance.

Examining the body of research, there is a common aspect of parental influence that is considered by the researchers as the most influential. In relation to academic achievement, the parent needs to provide a level of independence to the child. One of the first studies to explore the specific factors of parenting in relation to primary school children's self-regulation and academic competence was done by Grolnick and Ryan (1989). They discovered that parents who value and use techniques that encourage independence and autonomy rather than controlling techniques, contribute to their child's higher levels of self-regulation in classroom contexts, allowing them to understand that their learning behaviours and academic outcomes are controllable. Even though this research examined primary aged children, the findings are relevant to adolescents. It has been said that children's learning beliefs and motivational factors are internalised and become more stable over time (Wigfield, Byrnes & Eccles, 2006). The importance of parents providing structure and autonomy support is clear in the literature as creating high levels of self-regulated learning behaviours (Wigfield, et al., 2006; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Pomerantz, Grolnick & Price, 2006). The latter provide specific suggestions for parents' involvement. They suggest process-focussed practices which centre on the importance of effort and learning. In contrast person-focussed practices place importance on stable attributes, such as intelligence. This is significant for children's achievement attributions.

Because parents' use of process-focussed practices emphasizes the importance of effort and learning, children may come to view ability as something malleable, which may be improved by effort, and thus under their control. Such practices may also lead children to attribute their performance to hard work; consequently, failure may signal to them not that they lack competence, but that they need to exert more effort (Pomerantz, Grolnick & Price, 2006, p. 264).

As discussed earlier in this chapter, it is preferable for students to attribute unsuccessful learning experiences to something that is controllable, like effort. This way they have the choice of changing an aspect of their learning behaviours with the potential for future success. If they attribute an unsuccessful learning experience to a stable factor, such as ability, they have no hope of success in the future with a similar task. As discussed previously, this can lead to detrimental learning beliefs such as learned helplessness.

A particularly pertinent recent study conducted by Khodayarifard, Brinthaup and Anshel (2010) examined the extent to which parents' and children's general attributional styles converge and affect student's academic achievement. These authors state:

Parental attributions for their own successes and failures might be related to how parents interact with their children, how they model attributional styles, and how they help their children understand and respond to their school experiences (p.352).

As stated by the above researchers this has not been investigated by previous research in this area. This study employed quantitative research methods and of particular relevance is the sample group. One hundred and seventy-nine primary public school students enrolled in New South Wales, Australian schools were used in this study. The present study uses data obtained from three children enrolled in a public High school in New South Wales, Australia. The results showed a strong relationship between students' attributions and their academic performance to their parents' causal attributions of their own successful and unsuccessful outcomes. The present study may provide more evidence to support this study.

The literature presented demonstrates that parents can significantly influence the learning behaviours and motivational factors of their child. Although much of the research is focussed on self-regulated learning behaviours, it specifically relates to children's learning attributions as attributions are an established aspect of self-

regulated learning theory. If children make effective achievement attributions, they are more likely to be exhibiting higher levels of self-regulated learning behaviours.

The following chapter will provide a rationale behind the research design of the research. The method of selection of participants and the parameters of the study will be discussed. The methods of collecting the research data will be examined and relevant issues regarding the research explored. Finally the method of data collection, analysis and coding procedure will be described. The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data will also be explained in detail.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the methodological underpinning behind the design of the research. The methods of collecting the research will be examined and relevant issues regarding the research explored. Finally the method of data collection, analysis and coding procedure will be described. The use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data will also be explained.

Research Design

Rationale

As stated in chapter one, the main purpose of this study is to analyse the attributions students are making during new learning experiences in the natural environment of their music school classrooms. The focus of the research was how students attribute their successful or unsuccessful learning experiences in the school music class. The nature of the research problem suggested that the focus be on the thinking and judgments being made by the students when learning. The perspective of the individual student throughout the learning process was extremely important. It is in this detail that the attributions of the students could be identified. Therefore it was decided that it would not be appropriate to consider a large sample and quantitative methods but rather to consider, in detail, different issues that arose in selected individuals. Having considered a number of research strategies, a qualitative approach

seemed to be the most likely to reveal this kind of information. It was reasoned that this would enable the researcher to explore student thoughts and decision-making efforts from the perspective of the individual students. With the focus on sibling participation, a smaller study group provided a more manageable amount of research while still retaining a breadth of information. Larger scale survey approaches were considered but rejected due to the anticipated difficulty in finding more than two siblings involved in High School music study. This also supported the decision to use a smaller number of participants allowing for rich data and in depth analysis. In consideration of all the previous points, the decision was made to employ a qualitative multiple case study research design.

The frame of the study

The frame of the study was to use individual case studies of three students who are siblings; all enrolled in compulsory or elective High School music classes in the Newcastle area. Newcastle, situated in New South Wales, is one of the largest cities on the East coast of Australia. The individuals were chosen between the age range of twelve and eighteen and were all involved in extra-curricular music study. These students were chosen because they know that there is music learning available outside of the school and because they are at an age where they can verbalize their thoughts more accurately, having more skill in language than younger students. This age was also chosen because this is when students begin to develop subject specific academic self-esteem, most likely due to the strong subject separation in High School that is not present in Primary School.

Qualitative research

Qualitative research is one of the two major approaches to research methodology in the social sciences. It involves an in-depth understanding of human behaviour and the reasons that govern that behaviour. Unlike quantitative research, which assumes that

there is a single, objective reality that can be measured, qualitative research assumes there are, “multiple realities represented in participant perspectives, and that context is critical in providing an understanding of the phenomenon being investigated” (McMillan, 2004, p.256). Put simply, qualitative research describes phenomenon in words while quantitative research describes phenomenon in numbers. Another important difference between these two research methods is the role of the researcher. Researcher bias is a threat to the internal validity of quantitative research, however qualitative research acknowledges these biases and treats them as factors that need to be understood and used when interpreting the data (McMillan, 2004). This study is qualitative due to its emphasis on descriptive analysis and recognition of the interpretative role of the researcher.

Although there are many terms associated with qualitative research, general characteristics can be identified. Not all qualitative methods have every one of these characteristic. Some may only have a combination of a few. As found in McMillan (2004) the characteristics are as follows:

1. Natural settings. Most qualitative research is done on the natural environment, where the behaviour is actually happening. As in this research, the learning journals are completed in the school classroom and are recording behaviours within the natural setting in which they occur. Qualitative researchers strongly believe that behaviours are affected by the situational context in which they occur and cannot be accurately studied if the characteristics of the setting are not taken into account.
2. Direct data collection. Data, whether in form of an interview, journal or artefact, is collected from the source, the subject.
3. Rich narrative descriptions. Every detail is valued as it contributes the entire situation in which the behaviour occurs. This makes it possible for qualitative researchers to accurately reflect the complexity of the behaviour being investigated.
4. Process orientated. The process through which the behaviour occurs is more important than the outcome or measurable product. This emphasis on the

process allows researchers to explain the reasons for outcomes, not just the outcome.

5. Inductive data analysis. Data is collected without a pre-determined hypothesis or theory. It is the researcher's job to work with the data and find connections and make generalisations.
6. Participant perspectives. The goal of qualitative research is to explore the experience from the perspective of the participant, the individuals' account of what is happening. This characteristic of qualitative research is particularly prevalent in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, which is the analysis methodology chosen by the researcher for this study and will be discussed in further detail in this chapter.
7. Emergent research design. Qualitative researchers have a draft plan or design for conducting research but, unlike quantitative researchers, they do not begin with a precise research design. It is only through the process of involvement in the study and the setting, that their research design becomes more specific. A full account of the methods is given after the data collection stage because the design develops during the act of researching.

Within the area of qualitative research there are several recognised and widely used methods. Case study research will be implemented as a holistic organization of various data collected on individual subjects and phenomenon.

While research methodologies are part of an hierarchical classification system, at times they do not fit uniquely into a specific category, for example, basic or applied research or qualitative or quantitative research. It may create a dichotomy with an emphasis on orientation, for example, ethnographic research is usually considered qualitative but an ethnographic study may require some qualitative procedures. Survey research is generally considered quantitative, however various procedures associated with surveys can be included in ethnographic or historical study. Such is the case when the procedure is interviewing. This will be demonstrated as appropriate for this study in this chapter when a detailed description of the methodological design is set out.

Due to the nature of the research questions being asked in this study, ethnographic research has been identified as the general methodology classification system used. Within this qualitative study, various procedures will make up a case study. Case studies are used quite extensively in qualitative research, especially when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Tellis, 1997b). The various case studies within this study will draw upon a range of procedures such as semi-structured interviews and student journals.

Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophy that was initiated by Edmund Husserl at the beginning of the twentieth century (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). At the same time, psychology was beginning to become established. One of the most significant differences between these two disciplines is based on setting. Modern psychology, in an attempt to seek secure knowledge, used the experimental laboratory. Situations and variables can be controlled in a carefully planned environment. The move out of the laboratory and into the therapist's room occurred when psychoanalysis was established. This new setting allowed for another type of knowledge to be collected but is not yet fully accepted by mainstream psychology as a true science.

Phenomenological research, "aims to remain as faithful as possible to the phenomenon and to the context in which it appears in the world" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 26). Therefore, the setting in which the experience occurs is of vital importance to the phenomenological researcher. Quantitative psychological research emphasises the opposite by trying to, "reduce a phenomenon to a convenient number of identifiable variables and control the context in which the phenomenon will be studied" (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003, p. 26). It is the lifeworld of the participant and the lived experiences of the participant within this world that interests the phenomenologist. As Johnson and Christensen (2004) explain, "When conducting a

phenomenological research study, a researcher attempts to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon” (p. 46). Most important is the perspective of the individual and how they make meaning of their own experiences. The researcher’s job is to record and interpret the personal lived experiences of the research subject (Radnor, 2001).

The aim of this study is to create a window into the event of authentic learning of actual students in the context of the school classroom. The philosophy of phenomenology resonates throughout the purpose, literature and research methodology implored by the researcher. Through the eyes of a phenomenologist, the researcher believes many new areas of the learning experience, particularly the use of attributions in new learning, may be illuminated. This benefit will also address some of the shortcomings of previous research.

Case study research

A case study is the collection of a large amount of descriptive and detailed data about one entity. They can be conducted in a naturalistic environment and also used in more formal studies. Case studies are preferred when “how, why or what questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context” (Burns, 1995, p.313). The purpose of a case study strategy is to illuminate variables, phenomena, processes and relationships that deserve more intensive investigation, using multiple sources of data.

Case studies are also multi-perspectival analyses. The researcher is not only concerned with the case study subject but also with the interaction and relationship of other relevant subjects within the context. As Tellis (1997b) points out, “They give a voice to the powerless and voiceless” (p.2). This allows for a holistic examination of the learning phenomenon. It is particularly significant to this study as the focus is the

individual's learning process, which occurs within a holistic classroom context. As found in the pilot study (Henry, 2005) aspects of the learning environment affect the way an individual judges their own attempts to learning.

There are several case study designs identified by Yin (1993):

1. Exploratory case studies. These are commonly used as pilot studies because the data is collected before a research question or hypothesis has been created. It is through working with the extensive data that the researcher refines the research area to be addressed. This explanation of exploratory case studies is similar to the explanation of descriptive case studies given by Merriam (1998, p.38), "Whatever the area of enquiry or inquiry, basic description of the subject being studied comes before hypothesizing or theory testing."
2. Explanatory case studies. These are used for conducting contributory and underlying investigations.
3. Descriptive case studies. The investigator must have a descriptive theory before beginning to use descriptive case studies as a research strategy. As Tellis (1997a) surmises, "It must cover the depth and scope of the case under study" (pp.7-8).

As case study research design has progressed, more definitions have surfaced but the underlying characteristics of the case study remain constant.

Case studies can be designed around a single subject or more than one, known as multiple case designs. Multiple case studies follow replication logic, with identical data collection sources used for each individual case study. Even though a single case study could be investigating a regional group of schools, each case study within a multiple case study design, "consists of a whole study, in which facts are gathered from various sources and conclusions drawn on those facts" (Tellis, 1997b, p. 4).

The use of multiple case studies is a strategy used by researchers to increase the external validity of the findings (Merriam, 1998).

Validity and reliability

Common to all forms of research design and strategy, consideration must be given to determine validity and reliability. Validity implies the ability to be verified. It involves two concepts simultaneously; these are internal validity and external validity. Wiersma (2000) states that, “Internal validity is the extent to which results can be interpreted accurately, and external validity is the extent to which results can be generalised to populations, situations and conditions” (p. 4). The use of various sources of evidence is a way to ensure validity (Yin, 1994). This current study involves the use of multiple sources of evidence in the form of semi-structured interviews and participant journals. It is also possible to compare data collected with information from previous work conducted by the researcher (Henry, 2005), with particular interest paid to the four participants who are also involved in the present study.

The present research study employed a multiple case study design and qualitative analysis. The focus of the research was how students attribute their successful or unsuccessful learning experiences in the school music class. The initial task was to collect a general music learning history in the form of a questionnaire. The nature of the research problem suggested that the focus be on the thinking and judgments being made by the students when learning. It is in this detail that the attributions of the students could be identified. Therefore it was decided that it would not be appropriate to consider a large sample and quantitative methods but rather to consider, in detail, different issues that arose in selected individuals. Having considered a number of research strategies, a qualitative approach seemed to be the most likely to reveal this kind of information. It was reasoned that this would enable the researcher to explore student thoughts and decision-making efforts. A smaller study group provided a more manageable amount of research while still retaining a breadth of information. The decision was therefore made to employ a qualitative multiple case study research design.

The frame of the study is to use individual case studies of three students; all enrolled in compulsory or elective High School music classes. The individuals were chosen between the age range of twelve and eighteen and were all involved in extra-curricular music study. These students were chosen because they know that there is music learning available outside of the school and because they are at an age where they can verbalize their thoughts more accurately, having more skill and experience with language than younger students. This age was also chosen because this is when students begin to develop subject specific academic self-esteem, probably because of the strong subject separation in High School that is not so present in Primary School.

Research format

Case study research involves the collection of data from varying sources, in an attempt to create a holistic picture of the participant's experience. The devices employed in this research are:

1. Journals
2. Semi-structured interviews

The main body of data was collected in reflective journals during an eleven week public school term and two separate semi-structured interviews. These methods of data collection were used to develop a comprehensive guide to each person's thoughts and experiences during the research time frame in comparison to their musical background. However, the reflective journal did rely on the participant to provide adequate information and the researcher was limited to this response, unless the student spoke about a specific learning experience in their individual semi-structured interview.

Method of participant selection

The research did not solicit public participation in this study due to the need for a small research group. The researcher had a current teacher/student relationship with them at the research time period. All students reported in this study were private music students of the researcher throughout the research data collection period. The researcher had never taught any of the participants at the High School they attended and the participants are commenting on learning situations that are occurring in a completely separate learning environment and context. The intention of IPA is to interpret the lifeworld experiences of the participant and the researcher believes that relationship between the researcher and participants will allow for a safe context where honest and detailed descriptions of the personal and often vulnerable thoughts and processes involved when attempting a new learning experience, can be expressed easily. Ethical approval for the study being gained, students were selected on the criteria of willingness, availability to commit to the research time frame, their age, their involvement in any extra curricular music study, enrolment in compulsory or elective music at their current school. The students were not selected as special cases, nor is it claimed that they represent all students within the frame. They do represent particular cases of student attributions in relation to new learning experiences in the school music classes and how different students see similar situations very differently, therefore affecting the attributions made by the individual student. All identifying information has been altered to maintain confidentiality.

Reflective journals

Journals or diaries have a long history as a self-generated form of text. Due to this, its purpose has changed and evolved throughout the ages. Currently there are many different forms of journals, mainly due to their different purposes. One of the most significant differences in purpose is the audience of the text. Journals have been public and private texts. As referred to by Autrey (1991) the commonplace book was an ancient Greek journal, where individuals recorded observations, thoughts, ideas,

with the purpose of, “self-mastery and self-understanding” (p.75). These were not a private text but would be used in discussions of shared cultural knowledge and values. The purpose of the second type of journal was to reflect on the individual self to enhance self-understanding. Examples of this type of journal are the ancient Greek dream diaries and Christian spiritual writings (Autrey, 1991). Originally, journal writing was a male dominated activity, as in many cultures, women were not taught to read or write. Seaward (1997) suggests that the word diary became associated with women who kept journals, and states that this gender association still exists today. Although the definition of journals and diaries are interchangeable in present times, the term journal will be used throughout this study.

There is a great deal research to support the psychological benefits involved in keeping of a personal journal. In discussing music therapy research, Aldridge (1998) states, “Not only does the diary bring the minimal element of formal structure to observations, it is culturally acceptable as a way of setting down thoughts and recording what is happened” (p.121). The use and implementation of journals in the educational context has additional benefits. Fulwiler (1987) describes many different uses for journals across the disciplines. “Human beings find meaning in the world by exploring it through language- through their own easy talky language, not the language of textbook and teacher” (p. 1). Here, the personal language of the individual is used, as thoughts are recorded. This is considered to be one of the strengths of the journal text form. Because the writing is personal and reflects the thoughts of the student, writing conventions such as spelling and grammar are not essential. Eastman (1997) explains, “If students are encouraged to practice writing that makes fewer demands on them, such as journal writing, they may produce more interesting and creative writing because the focus has been on the idea, not the mechanics” (p. 17). The safe, non-threatening and non-confrontational nature of journals gives all students, particularly reluctant individuals, an audience and an environment for their thoughts, reflections and self-analysis.

The use of academic or learning journals within the classroom setting is widely accepted as not only a learning tool, but a pedagogical and assessment device as well.

Educators can be provided with a window into a student's individual learning world. Invaluable information concerning the effectiveness of teaching content, strategies and evidence of actual learning can be found. Just as important, a student's struggles with learning, that may have been hidden or unobservable, and the specific nature of these problems, may be identified.

Sá (2002) discussed the significance of diary writing as an interpretative research method, particularly in the classroom environment. Due to the spontaneous and individualised nature of learning in the classroom environment, students thoughts, attitudes, feelings and perceptions about their learning are a rich source of data for educational researchers. Most of these processes are not observable and yet are of intrinsic importance to the learning environment as a whole. This data takes into account the holistic nature of teaching and learning.

There have been several criticisms concerning journal use in an educational context. As identified in Kerka (1996) three key concerns exist:

1. Asking students to write in a journal does not mean that they will write reflectively or critically.
2. The open ended nature of the task meant that students do not know what to write leading to the potential of no writing occurring.
3. The teacher student relationship, particularly if the journal is assessed can affect the content of the journal. If the student has no rapport with the teacher, then the journal responses may be guarded and self-protective in nature. If the teacher evaluates the journal, responses may be less truthful and written based on the students' assumptions of what the teacher expects.

Due to these concerns, Kerka (1996) identifies the importance of guidelines when using journals in the learning environment. These have also been addressed in this study. The researcher is interested in a specific part of the learning environment; the learning process that occurs when a student attempts to learn something completely new. Each learning journal is a small exercise book and has a set of guidelines stapled

to the inside cover. These questions lead the student through the logical progressive nature of the process of learning. The guided questions are also intended to guide students away from negative comments about peers, teachers and the school. As well as being convenient to carry in their school bag, the journals offer the student the opportunity to reflect on their learning experiences almost immediately after the event. This reduces the reliance on memory errors and loss of detail. Due to the analysis method chosen by the researcher, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, journals were also chosen for their appropriateness to obtain data suitable for IPA (Smith, 2003; 2004; 2008).

In the present research study, participants were asked to keep a record of four new learning experiences in school music classes. Because the researcher wanted the participants to reflect on specific areas of their learning, such as how they felt about successful or unsuccessful experiences, a set of guiding questions was stapled to the inside of each journal. Progressively the questions asked students to describe each particular learning experience, discuss whether they felt they had succeeded or failed, whether they tried again, what actions they initiated in an attempt to learn and how the learning experience had left them feeling about their music learning at school. The journal was hand written in one exercise book, supplied by the researcher. The music learning journal was given to the participants at the beginning of Term three 2006. At the end of the term, the music learning journals were returned to the researcher (Refer to Diagram 3.1 below).

The actual experience of active new learning is different for every person. A classroom teacher may introduce what is thought to be a new area of learning, but it may be known to some students, or some aspects might be known. This becomes a revision or extension lesson for these students. Learning does not always happen at the same time for every individual and aspects like these add an extremely complex and unpredictable nature to this area of research. The use of reflective journals allows the participant's to create a reflective text, that is, a journal entry, after they have experienced a new learning experience. This also allows for the differing rates of learning experienced by the participants of the study. Because the participants may or

may not be practiced in the area of reflecting on their thinking during or after learning, a list of guiding and progressive questions was issued with the journal to help them reflect upon the area of interest to the researcher (refer Appendix 4). The use of reflective journals also seemed to offer a possible solution for another area of attribution study that concerned the researcher. Learning and the attributions connected to them are a spontaneous phenomenon, With participants given instructions to write as soon as possible after a new learning experience, the journal, a small exercise book chosen for its convenient size and weight and designed to be carried in the school bag of the participants during the entire research period, offered a possible solution by counteracting the distance of time between the actual event and the participant's actual reflection of it. With the subjects varying in age and school location, adding to this the very spontaneous and unpredictable nature of learning itself, it would be near impossible for semi structured interviews to occur every day, to allow for more accurate recollections of the actual experiences. The very nature of a journal and the importance of portability considered by the researcher, allowed for individual participants to record their experiences within a very short time after the experience had occurred. This was hoped not only to improve the detail of the reflection but the accuracy of these details when recounting not only learning situations but the attributions made by the participant during these situations.

Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing is thought to be the most widely used method of data collection for research. When investigating or trying to find answers and explanations, particularly in sociological areas of enquiry, the most instinctual method is to just ask a question (Gilbert,1999).

There are many different forms of interviewing. Most are differentiated by the amount of structure forced on its design. Structured, also known as standardised interviews, are used mainly in quantitative research with large numbers of subjects. The questions are set, with the interviewer/s asking the questions exactly as written, in the order they

are written. It is argued that this increases the validity of the data collected by controlling the possibility of different responses extracted by different interviewers. The main advantages of the format are recognised as greater control, reliability and speed (Smith & Osborn, 2003). At the other end of the spectrum, unstructured interviews are just that, conversational and free-flowing.

Semi-structured, also known as semi-standardised interviews, allow more freedom than structured interviews. Questions relating to the area of enquiry are planned, but the interviewer has the freedom to alter the sequence and probe for more information. The questions are a guide rather than a rigid formula. This form of interviewing also allows the interviewer the opportunity to change the language of questions, adapting to the level of comprehension and language experience of the subject. This is an important feature particularly when interviewing young people, as in the present study. This also allows the interviewer, “to handle the fact that in responding to a question, people often also provide answers to questions we were going to ask later” (Fielding in Gilbert, 1999, p. 136).

Due to these characteristics, semi-structured interviews tend to produce richer data. With the complexity of the learning process being the main area under investigation in this study, the more plentiful and comprehensive the data made available to the researcher, and the opportunity for subjects to introduce issues that the researcher may not have thought of, will only enhance the researcher’s chances of understanding the process from the perspective of the subject.

Due to the nature of qualitative research, emphasising the importance in finding the meaning of behaviours, the semi-structured interview can be a valuable method for discovery. Smith (1995) notes that, “Semi-structured interviews and qualitative analysis are especially suitable where one is particularly interested in complexity or process or where an issue is controversial or personal” (p. 10).

In this research the chosen strategies, journals and semi-structured interviews, are underpinned by a phenomenological understanding. Interviews were recorded and verbatim transcriptions were conducted on every interview, and although time consuming allowed for no loss of data that may later become significant. The use of semi-structured interviews aligns the research data collection method with the research analysis design. As will be explained in more detail, interpretative phenomenological analysis requires the researcher to immerse themselves in the data, making connections and identifying emergent themes directly through this interaction with the data text. Using semi-structured interviews, “you may even be able to adjust your guide for subsequent interviews to pick up on things your transcription reveals as unexpectedly important” (Fielding in Gilbert, 1999, p.146). Smith (1995) notes that there is, “a natural fit between semi-structured interviewing and qualitative analysis” (Smith, 1995, p.9).

Data Collection

The main body of data was collected using two data collection devices, reflective journals and semi-structured interviews, during two eleven-week public school terms. These methods of data collection were used to develop a comprehensive guide to each person’s thoughts and experiences during the research time frame in comparison to their musical and mathematical background. However, the reflective journal is a self-report device and relies on the participant to provide adequate information. In the previous study, the researcher was limited to this but to counteract this limitation, the researcher added two semi-structured interviews, one administered at the end of the first data collection point, one school term, and the final interview at the end of the research period. This was intended to enhance the validity of the participants’ responses within the journal text.

Data Collection Design

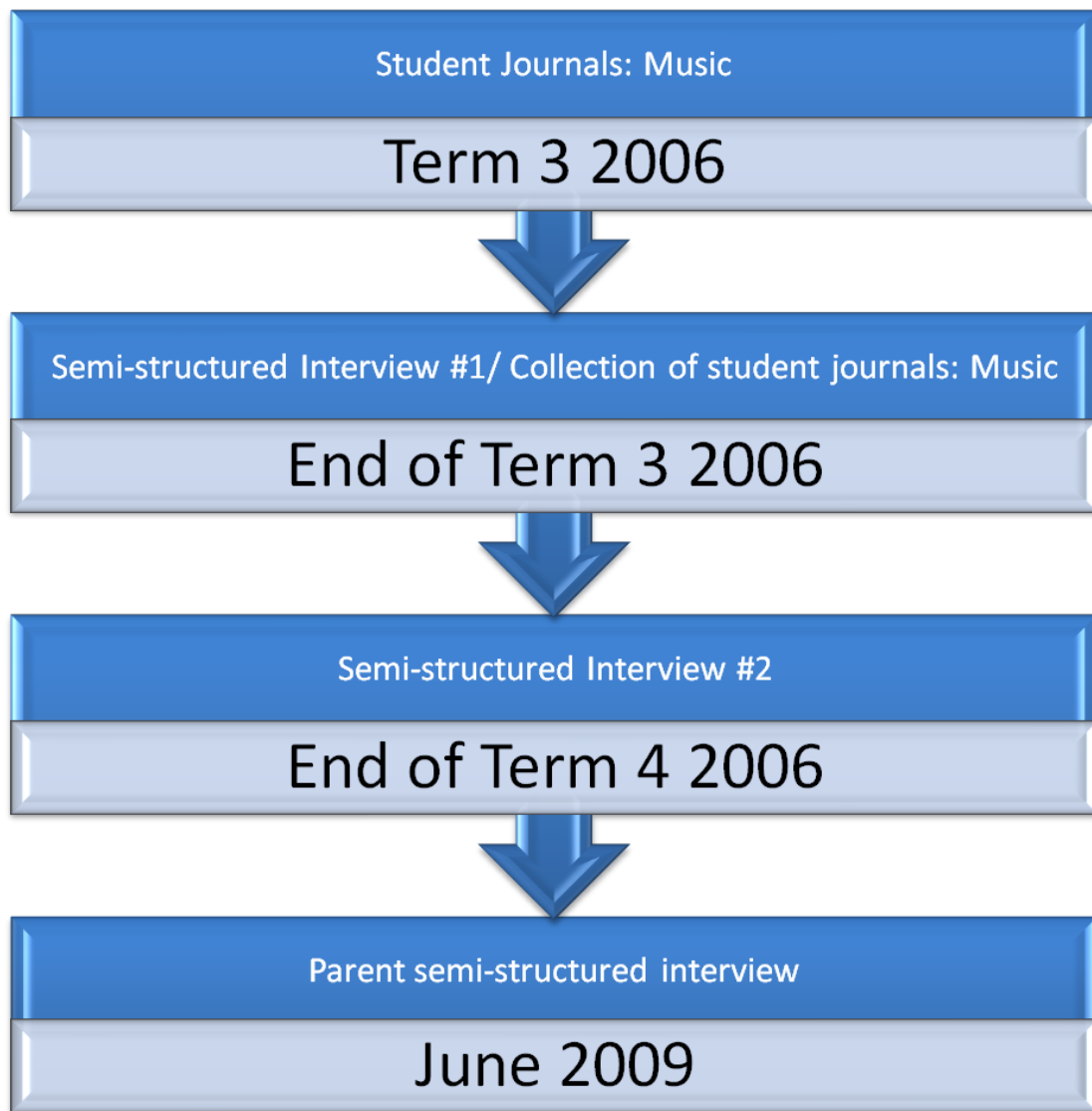


Figure 3.1

Ethical approval

Ethical approval for the study was gained from the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at Monash University (see Appendix 1).

Circumstances of conducting the study

The case studies presented are the outcome of analysing the data collected from one reflective journal and two semi-structured interviews of each participant. When willing and suitable participants were identified they were required to complete a minimum of four separate entries in a reflective music journal and take part in two semi-structured interviews. One semi-structured interview was conducted at the beginning of New South Wales State school term three 2006 and the final semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of New South Wales State school term four 2006. One parent of the siblings was required to participate in one semi-structured interview which was conducted in June 2009 (Refer to Figure 3.1).

As seen in Figure 3.1, the first semi-structured interview was conducted half way through the research data collection period, at the collection of the music learning journals. The final semi-structured interview was conducted at the conclusion of the research period. The parent semi-structured interview was conducted in June 2009.

Student participants were given a random pseudonym to protect their identities and for the same reason, the parent participant was assigned the name, Parent throughout the data presentation. Any other identifying names were changed for privacy.

Constraints

Due to the reflective nature of the learning journals, the researcher was restricted to the words and descriptions written by the students, when analysing the data. The semi-structured interviews allowed for the individual students to revisit a new learning experience reported in their learning journals, if they wished and the semi-structured interview question prompted it. Revising new learning experiences mentioned in the learning journals was not initiated by the researcher.

The Analysis Method

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

When studying how individuals think, the general areas of psychology considered relevant are cognitive psychology and social cognition. How and why individuals think certain ways in certain situations is of great interest to researchers because many believe these cognitions directly affect the way an individual acts. The judgments made during learning situations and the potential effect on future learning in similar situations is addressed in Attribution Theory. Therefore, Attribution Theory, as a study of metacognition, has usually been studied in the area of cognitive psychology and as such, the majority of research has been done using quantitative and experimental research methods. It is the actual experience of learning, and the cognitive judgments made within this experience, that are of significant interest to the researcher. Therefore a qualitative method of analysis was sought. It is also important to note, many of the studies of attribution theory have been carried out in separate environments than the usual learning environment of the student, the school classroom. Also, many of these studies have involved fabricated situations, with some asking participants to comment on the potential attributions of students, other than themselves. These have been discussed in detail in the following review of literature. There is a general consensus among educational researchers, including music education researchers, that more research needs to be done within the learning environment that is the school classroom. It is with these important issues in mind that the researcher sought a research analysis methodology that was not only qualitative in nature but allowed for flexibility of implementation. In the more specific area of achievement motivation in education, this research can potentially assist educators on course content and the importance of the learning environment in which individuals learn.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, known as IPA, is a relatively new qualitative research methodology, evolving from the philosophical branch of thought known as phenomenology and has previously been used in health psychology by its

acknowledged founder, Jonathan A. Smith. Phenomenology is primarily interested in the world as it is experienced by human beings in particular contexts at particular times, rather than sweeping statements about the world in general (Willig, 2001). One of the premises of IPA is the importance of the individual's experience and how the world appears to that individual (Eatough & Smith, 2006). The research is not to be generalized, but by using a close in depth look into the perspective of a research subject we can learn about that individual's experience. This in turn, must recognize the importance of the researcher's part in the interpretation of someone else's experience. IPA acknowledges the importance of the researcher in the interpretation of the subject's experience, noting that understanding requires interpretation. As Smith and Osborn (2008) point out, "The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world" (p.53).

IPA is aimed at exploring how participants experience their social and personal world and more specifically, how these experiences are given meaning by the individual (Smith, 2009; Eatough & Smith, 2006). In particular, IPA studies the participant's personal thinking and experience from their perspective. The emphasis is to empathize with the participant's perception and account of an event, experience or object, not to generalize about the actual event, experience or object itself. It's all about the participant's perception. It is this more detailed analysis of the insider's perspective, where the researcher attempts to understand the participant as he/she attempts to make sense of their world, that connects IPA to its phenomenological roots. The difference between discourse analysis is that IPA, "is concerned with cognitions, that is, understanding what the particular respondent thinks or believes about the topic under discussion" (Smith, Jarman & Osborn, 1999, p. 223). It is also the in depth qualitative analysis of participants experiences that separates it from more conventional methods of psychological study. As Smith and Osborn (2008) state, "IPA and mainstream psychology converge in being interested in examining how people think about what is happening to them but diverge in deciding how this thinking can best be studied" (p.54).

Phenomenological analysis is particularly relevant to the area under investigation because it is focused on the experience itself. In this case the area involves the cognitive decisions made by participants while they are actively engaged in new learning experiences. Karlsson (1993) comments that, “A phenomenological analysis of what thinking is would have to be done on the basis of the experience of thinking itself. It is through a reflection on experiences of thinking that the structure or essence of thinking would be revealed” (p. 17). It is the researcher’s personal engagement, with the experience recorded in the text, that leads to the interpretative aspect of IPA.

IPA does acknowledge the researcher’s own thoughts, assumptions and conceptions may influence the interpretation of the participant’s experience, but these are not seen as biases but as an important step in the understanding of another person’s experience.

In this process IPA works with any text that is generated by the participant. This could be semi-structured interview/s or personal accounts and diaries. As expressed by Smith and Osborn (2008), “there is no single, definitive way to do IPA” (p.54). The method is flexible and can be applied in varying ways, depending on the individual researcher and the nature of research being undertaken. It is the sustained engagement of the researcher with the text and the different stages of interpretation suggested by IPA, which allows for this flexibility. Examples of how the method has been used by the Smith and his colleagues and students, are given as a guide only.

In IPA, it is suggested that one case be looked at in detail first before moving onto other cases. The first stage of analysis involves detailed reading and rereading of the text. Comments about anything, likened to free textual analysis are written in the left margin. Smith et al., (2008) describe, “As you move through the transcript, you are likely to comment on similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying” (p. 67). Once this is done thoroughly, the researcher returns to the beginning of the text for the second stage of analysis, using the right margin to make comments on emerging themes. These more psychological terms and phrasing must still link directly to what was first observed in the initial stage of reading and the actual words of the participant. The third stage involves the

identification of connections between the emergent themes found in the second stage of analysis. Some themes will cluster together and some may be found to have a hierarchical relationship (Willig 2001; Smith et al., 2008; Smith, 2009). The fourth stage involves the creation of a summary table of themes and quotations from the text that illustrate each one. Because the most important matter is the participant's perception of the experience, the summary table should reflect the text, not the researcher's expectations. The first case being completed, the themes found can direct the following case analyses or each case can be analysed separately. It is important to note that the former must allow for new themes to emerge and the latter must be aware of repeating patterns. When writing up the findings of the case study analyses, the themes will be explained, nuanced and illustrated in a narrative form and interspersed with actual examples from the text for support (Willig 2001).

IPA is an appropriate analysis methodology for this study because its foundation is based on the belief that an individual, "as an experiencing, meaning making, embodied and discursive agent" (Eatough & Smith, 2006, p. 486). Attribution theory, in relation to achievement motivation, is based on the belief that individuals make judgements about their own, and others, attempts to learn.

This chapter described the methodology used in this research study. The following chapter will present the data analysis of the first participant. Using IPA, the emergent themes were identified and discussed.

Chapter 4

Case Study One: Bree

At the time of this research, Bree was sixteen years old and enrolled in year 11, the fifth year of High school for NSW students. This is classified as stage six in the New South Wales music syllabus (refer Figure 1). It is the year before the final year of High School and some academic marks count towards the final year grades. The last two years of High School are not compulsory but allow students to earn a Higher School certificate and a university admission mark. Year 11 and 12 students experience large amounts of pressure, both academically and emotionally and it is well known as a very stressful time for students attempting to do well. As described in chapter one, year 11 students are enrolled in Stage 6 of the school music syllabus (refer Figure 1). Students are not required to have completed the previous music elective in Stage 5 to enrol in Stage 6 music, but it is strongly recommended that these students have previous instrumental experience. Although external instrumental tuition is not required, this is also strongly recommended for students enrolling in Stage 6. This stage involves study in the areas of musicology, composition, aural and performance. In the final year of Stage 6, students must enrol in one of the following modules; Music 1 or Music 2. Music 1 enrolment requires the completion of the previous year's music elective in Year 11 and the course progresses in the areas of musicology, composition, aural and performance. Music 2 enrolment is open to students with substantial musical experience. All students are expected to be actively involved in extra-curricular instrumental study, also demonstrating a considerable history of music study. The course is more difficult including assessments in classical music and sight singing.

The first semi-structured interview was conducted in Term 2, the learning journal was completed throughout Term 3 and the final semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of Term 4 2006.

A schematised summary of responses offers an overview of Bree's learning strategies. Individual items in this diagram will be discussed in detail in the subsequent text. This format will be followed in all data chapters. Throughout the text, direct quotations from the participants are included and identified as I for Interview and J for Journal.

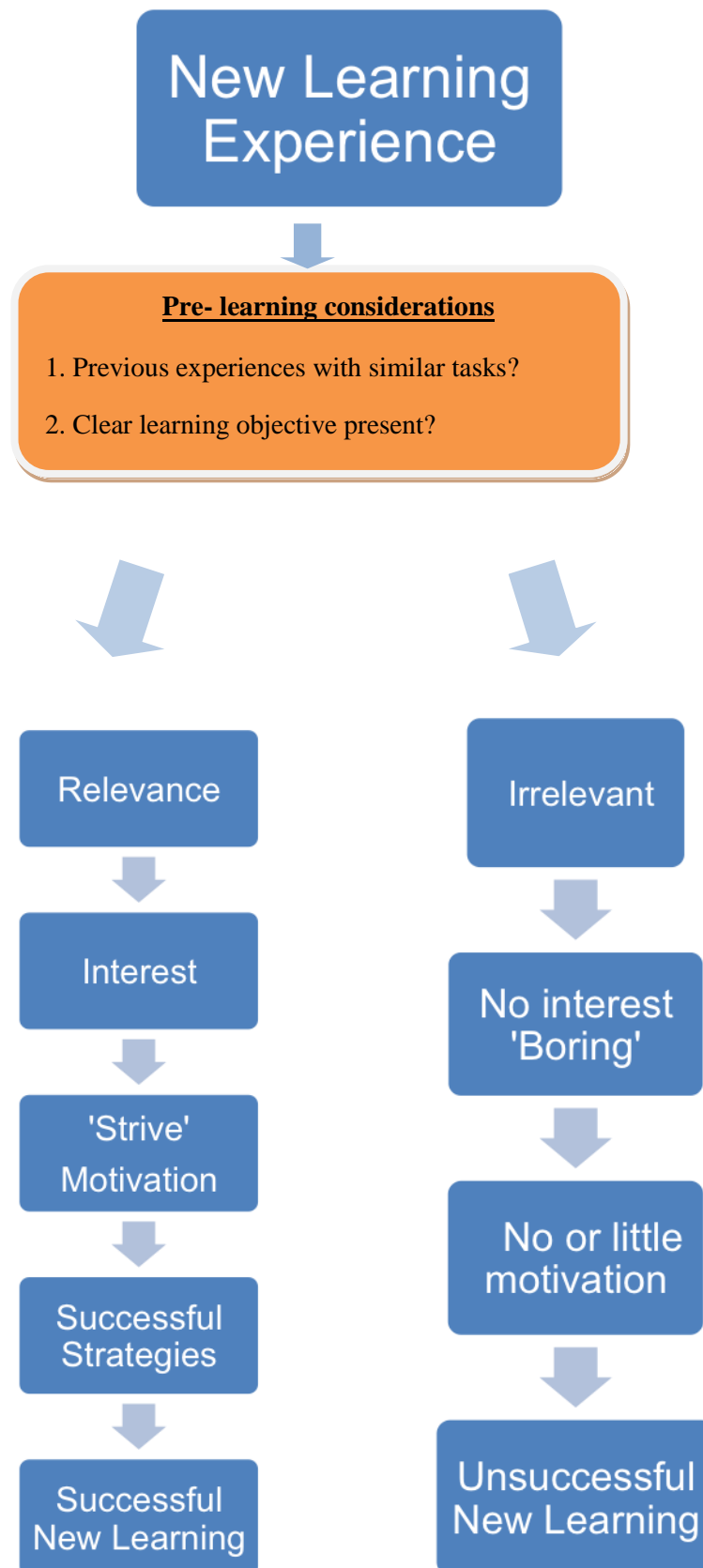


Figure 4.1 Bree's Learning Behaviours

Bree's Pre- Learning Considerations

When investigating the self generated text of Bree's learning journals, pre-learning considerations are consistently present. Pre-learning considerations are questions the student asks herself at the very beginning of a new learning experience. The answers to these questions determine if and how the student will proceed with the new learning experience from that point on. The semi-structured interview text provides detailed information about Bree's learning behaviours. The self-generated text from the journal provides more details about the learning processes, gathered from Bree soon after the actual learning experience occurred. When reflecting on new learning experiences, Bree does not recognise the pre-learning considerations that are consistently present in her learning journal entries. The semi-structured interview data was collected outside of school hours and the time between each interview was approximately two school terms; eleven weeks. This may explain the more reflective nature of the semi-structured interviews and the interesting inclusion of pre-learning considerations in the learning journal entries. These aspects of Bree's learning behaviour are significant and will be addressed here.

Two areas of significance emerged related to pre-learning; previous similar task experiences and clear learning objectives.

1. Previous similar task experiences

When presented with a new learning experience and before beginning her learning behaviours, Bree often mentions past similar learning experiences. The similarities to the new learning experience provoke these memories and Bree considers this information before beginning new learning. The data illustrates the negative impact as well as the positive impact this pre-learning consideration can have on the beginning of a new learning experience in the music classroom.

Negative impact

Bree provides several examples of the importance of previous experience with a similar task and its influence at the beginning of a new learning experience. This is present when beginning a group learning task where no one has previous experience

with something similar. “This task was made difficult because no one had had much experience with arrangement of a piece before” (J1).

Bree also discusses an instance where an entire group of students, including her, are pessimistic beginning a new task based on their unsuccessful experience previously.

“Because we did such a bad job at the arrangement last lesson our group weren’t too enthusiastic about trying it again for our next lesson” (J1).

She also discusses a new learning situation where her lack of previous experience made a new learning task difficult to achieve.

“I found this difficult because I hadn’t ever had to find one small point or an area to focus in such a huge broad topic” (J1).

Interestingly, Bree also brings up a learning experience that she begins with a negative attitude due to its similarity to another task she had just completed. Due to the time required and in depth analysis, she was not motivated to begin a similar task so soon.

“I found it easy but I went into it with a negative frame of mind because I’d spent so much time and went into so much depth analysing my 1st song that I was sick of analysing and didn’t want to do it again soon!” (J1).

Positive impact

Previous experience with a similar task can also provide a judgement of positivity towards new learning experiences.

Previous experience related to skills and abilities that are helpful in a new learning experience are present in the data, particularly the learning journal. Previous work with a similar task in the classroom provides a positive judgement such as, “I found it really easy to analyse because we had been working on analysing excerpts [sic] from songs in class” (J1) and, “We spent one third of our class time learning and discussing the concepts of music and so I went into the task quite confident” (J1). There is also evidence that previous experience with a similar task affects the positive judgements of her other class members in her music class.

“Everyone began to get a little more confident since we had already tried it before (J1).

When skills and abilities that were previously experienced are judged to be helpful with a new learning task, Bree's level of confidence increases. She is confident she will achieve.

"I found it easy because I had previously had guitar lessons for approximately 2 years, in which my tutors helped me understand how different chord shapes affected the sound of the chord and together we had previously come up with some pretty different sounding chords." (J1).

This pre-learning consideration can determine Bree's level of confidence when beginning a new learning task. She stated, "I've had plenty of previous experience" (J1).

This is in strong agreement within Attribution Theory research, which states that previous learning experiences can affect the expectation of success or failure of similar tasks in the future. Even when reflecting on a successful new learning experience, Bree recognises the important part previous learning experiences had in her eventual success.

When describing new learning experiences that were successful quickly, Bree describes learning a new instrument and the previous skills and learning experiences that helped her achieve success.

"Drums is to do with coordination and I did a lot of dancing when I was really young and also, again, because of my previous experience cause I'd been playing in my school band for 4 years then so I had a bit of rhythm from that as well" (I1).

This new learning experience was so successful that Bree began drum lessons outside of school and continues to play drums, privately and socially.

Bree does not always experience a positive expectation of future successful learning with a similar task in other areas of study. In the data Bree presents a very different expectation in the area of school mathematics study. When she experiences success, it is attributed to luck, not effort or ability as with school music study.

"It was pure luck, seriously yeah. It was like that all the time in maths. Sometimes I would just get something and I wouldn't understand why and

then sometimes I wouldn't be able to get something, and again I couldn't understand why" (I2).

This attribution to luck, an external, unstable and uncontrollable attribute, significantly affects her expectation of future success with a similar task. When asked about this, Bree replies,

"No, I don't think I would expect success in any of them." (I2).

This data correlates with Attribution Theory where successful achievement experiences that are attributed to external, unstable and uncontrollable causes, means that the outcome has no reliability and success cannot be expected with similar future tasks.

This data demonstrates that successful learning experiences in music where expectations of future success with similar tasks are present, does not imply similar expectations in other areas of school study.

2. Clear learning objective present

Before new learning can begin and the choice of effective learning processes can be decided, a clear learning objective must be present. Quite simply, the student needs to understand what the aim of the new learning experience is. The researcher stipulates that a clear learning objective will also allow the student to recognise if the experience is a new learning experience or not. This may explain why every new learning experience recorded in Bree's learning journal begins with a clear description of the learning objective. Examples such as; "Composition. Today I had to begin composing a song for my new topic popular music" (J1) and, "I had to research background information on my topic Jazz and form a point for my assignment" (J1) suggest the summation of the learning objective and an understanding of the learning goal.

There is also acknowledgement that some learning outcomes involve more than one learning objective. The following example mentions the previous learning objective and the current learning objective that has directly followed it.

“I have formed a focus point for my musicology and now I had to analyse 2 songs.” (J1).

Bree’s New Learning Process

The self-generated text presented in Bree’s semi-structured interviews and learning journal illustrate a consistent learning pattern, fuelled by her choice of and repeated use of specific learning behaviours during varying new learning experiences in the school music classroom. These findings are presented in Figure 5.1.

Bree’s data illustrates clearly that relevance and interest are both important aspects of her new learning process. Both of these areas are mentioned often and decisions made about relevance and interest directly affect following decisions about motivation towards a new learning experience. Since motivation proceeds judgements of strategy implementation, effort levels and all other aspects of Bree’s learning process, it is important to look at both these aspects separately.

Relevance

The flow chart (Figure 5.1) demonstrates the first judgement Bree makes about a new learning experience. This is relevance. This key judgement determines if Bree will be motivated to continue the learning process towards successful learning. If relevance of a new learning experience is not determined at the beginning, then all the following learning behaviours are significantly affected.

There are two distinct areas of relevance for Bree in the data; her life now and in her near future, and her life after school.

1. Current life and near future.

Bree’s judgement of relevance is directly related to the use of the new knowledge or skills in her current life or in her near future.

“I also did want to understand it in case I would be able to find it useful. Like I was determined to learn it one way or the other cause I knew I’d need to know it” (I1).

In the data Bree described a learning situation where she struggled slightly with a new learning experience but continued her high levels of motivation and effort to succeed because the learning experience was relevant.

“It was something else that I was able to do and bring into other performances and stuff, now that I have got that skill” (I2).

New learning experiences are judged relevant by Bree if she can use the new learning in other learning situations. There is also evidence that new learning experiences are judged relevant if Bree recognises the benefit for school examinations in the near future. She said, “I know that if I am doing it, it will make my exams easier” (I2).

2. Future lifeworld; after school and beyond.

Bree is also astutely aware of her future plans after the school learning environment has completed. She mentions her future on various occasions. “If I was able to play it, it would help me in the future” (I2).

The long term retention and use of this new learning is also relevant to Bree.

“If I do want to know it because I do think it is relevant to my future in some way, I am going to know it in a few years time” (I2).

Future study and career provide relevance for new learning in school music study.

“To my future, whether it be my uni courses or my career, or just what I want from life in general” (I2).

Bree states that relevance to her future life is a very strong motivational factor for new learning: “If it was to get me somewhere I needed to go I think I would just suck it up and do it” (I2). She goes on to state, “I think that alone would be enough motivation” (I2).

Although the role of relevance has already been shown to be an important judgment at the beginning of a new learning experience, it is most pronounced when Bree discusses new learning experiences that she has deemed irrelevant.

“I can’t see any relevance behind what we sort of are learning now because I know that most people don’t sort of use all these formulas and everything we’re doing now” (I1).

More detail is provided in the second semi-structured interview data.

“I wasn’t planning on doing it at school the next year and I definitely didn’t want to make it a career of any sort, ... so I just thought well I’m never going to use it, so I just don’t care” (I2).

These strong reactions to a judgment of no relevance are repeated in other areas of the data. For example, “It’s not relevant to me now and it’s not relevant to anything that I want to do” (I2).. There is also evidence of social and individual relevance:

“I just enjoy even listening to music, it is always going to be a part of my life” (I2).

This quote leads into the aspect of interest and its importance to Bree’s new learning experiences.

Interest

Relevance and interest in learning are separate issues to Bree.

“If it was easier I’d probably would find it, not so much relevant but more interesting and I’d probably enjoy it a bit more” (I1).

At this point, the position of relevance and interest judgments must be identified. Why has relevance been placed before the interest judgment in Bree’s new learning flow chart?

It can be seen that Bree does separate these issues when discussing her learning. There is also evidence of which decision is made first.

“I still find it interesting because music is a big part of my life, and I want it to be part of my future” (I2).

In this quote Bree explains that music study is still interesting due to relevance, in her current lifeworld and future life.

This is repeated when Bree discusses a new learning situation she did not judge relevant.

“My lack of interest, because I knew that in the bigger picture I wasn’t going to need it, so I didn’t want to put heaps of time into something that like in 10 to 20 years time I was going to look at and go damn, what a waste of time” (I2).

The data provides enough evidence for the placement of relevance before interest in Bree’s new learning process.

- Enjoyment

Enjoyment is a prevalent theme throughout the data. It seems to be a by-product of the judgment of interest.

“I am like that because I enjoy them, and even ones that I don’t enjoy so much, like English, I still know that in order to succeed I am going to have to” (I2).

For this statement to occur, Bree had previously judged English study at school as relevant and interesting, to some degree. Enough to progress through her learning process to the motivation level. Enjoyment is linked to other areas of Bree’s learning behaviour also. When asked why she continues to study music at school her first response is, “because I enjoy it” (I1).

This idea of enjoyment is linked to various aspects of her learning. These variables also affect each other throughout the data, overlapping throughout her descriptions of new learning experiences.

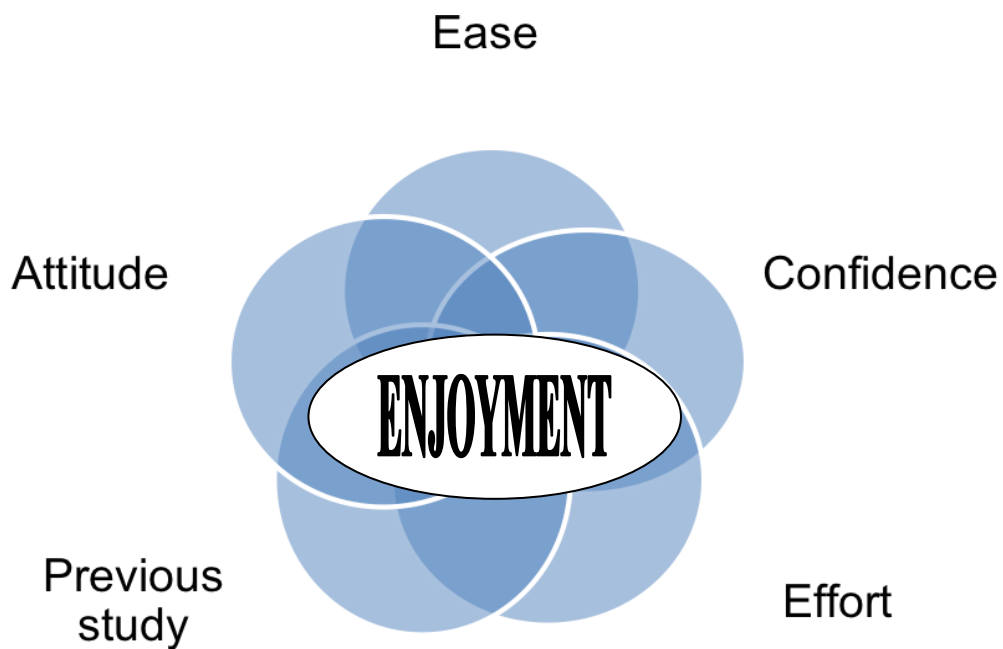


Figure 4.2 Bree’s variables affecting interest levels in new learning experiences in school music class.

- Ease

There are several references in the data to the relationship between enjoyment and ease. The quotes below illustrate that ease of new learning makes the new learning experience more enjoyable.

“I enjoy it and it’s something that I found I was naturally good at as opposed to other subjects” (I1).

“I found this really enjoyable because it was easy” (J1).

Again, Bree mentions the relationship between enjoyment and ease of new learning acquisition.

“It is something that I enjoy...[laughs], and yeah because I am good at it” (I2).

The opposite is true also. If Bree finds it more difficult to excel when learning, her enjoyment level decreases.

“I’d definitely find it a lot harder to excel and therefore I wouldn’t enjoy it as much” (I1).

As stated previously in the relevance section, when discussing mathematics study at school Bree states that if the subject were easier she would probably find it more interesting and enjoy it more.

- Confidence

Confidence is common in the data and is regularly related to enjoyment when discussing new learning experiences in school music. Bree expresses an overall confidence with new learning in school music class.

“I really enjoy it because I’m confident when I’m learning about it and things like that. It’s a class I look forward to” (I1).

Bree expresses confidence with specific areas of school music learning due to previous learning experiences, in and outside of school.

“I’m confident with aural and musicology type stuff, whether it be writing or talking about Music concepts and also performance. Because we’ve done so much of it in the past and because I do a lot of it outside of school as well like in my tutoring. A lot of it’s practical so I get more confident with that performance area and also with musicology I enjoy that and aural as well because I’m good at listening and being able to take things in” (I1).

Bree expresses less confidence with specific areas of school music learning due to lack of previous learning experiences.

“Composition and transposition because we haven’t done a lot of it in class. Not much time is put into that as opposed to the other things that we’ve done and I feel more confident with” (I1).

Class teacher and/or outside school tutors increase Bree’s confidence to learn in school music class.

“I feel confident in being able to go to the teacher or one of my tutors outside of school and figure it out with them which gives me a bit of extra knowledge and confidence which is always really useful in Music” (I1).

Bree also details specific qualities exhibited by her class music teacher and attributes some of her confidence in the subject to this teacher.

“I feel confident because my teacher, I know really likes to put in the time and she shows that she’s really interested in how we’re doing. It’s not, like just a profession. She wants to really get involved in it which is different to a lot of my other teachers which don’t want to put in the time. So that really encourages me in Music” (I1).

Bree recognizes that time, interest in the students and involvement are qualities of her class music teacher that make her feel confident about new learning experiences in the school music classroom.

Effort

There is evidence that enjoyment levels can affect the amount of effort Bree puts into new learning experiences in school music.

“I put heaps of effort into those, because again I just enjoyed it more” (I2).

Previous study

One of the reasons Bree refers to, on several occasions throughout the data, is her previous study of music and the skills and abilities that she has acquired, in comparison to other students in her class learning environment.

“I started it at such an early age compared to so many people that do Music at my school. So that’s given me a definite advantage over them. Since I’ve learnt it from such a young age it makes it easier to pick things up” (I1).

There is not only a comparison to her peers, but also to other subjects she studies at school.

“Because I enjoy it because I’ve done it for so long, like I find that my skills are much more developed in that, compared to pretty much every other subject” (I1).

Previous music study is an important reason why Bree believes she finds music study easier than other subjects.

“Without the experience I’d probably find it a lot more frustrating and a lot harder to sort of understand the concepts and things behind it” (I1).

Attitude

If Bree does not enjoy learning in a particular subject area, her attitude in class is affected in a negative way.

“They just know from my attitude in class that I don’t really enjoy it as much” (I1).

Motivation

The theme of motivation follows closely from the previous discussions of relevance and interest and the influence of enjoyment on both of these themes. If the new learning experience is judged as relevant and interesting to Bree, she begins the learning process with the expectation of enjoying the learning experience and these positive judgments create motivation for Bree to begin to strategise. Bree’s motivation can be considered under several headings – interest, metacognitive knowledge, incremental success and extrinsic sources.

- Interest or want to learn something new.

The following quotes demonstrate that Bree has a desire to learn. Motivation to learn new things in school music comes from her own desire to achieve.

“I think it makes you more determined to want to understand what you are learning” (I2).

“I wanted for myself” (I2).

This strong desire to learn manifests itself in a strong determination to succeed. Bree often uses the word determination to describe herself when speaking about motivation.

“I was determined – I am too stubborn to let that sort of beat me” (I2).

When discussing her role in her education, Bree expresses her own motivation to achieve.

“I know that I want something more from it” (I2).

- Metacognitive knowledge of her learning style and its strengths.

Bree acknowledges previous learning experiences and how persistence leads to success. She uses this knowledge about her own learning to motivate herself to continue, even when the task is difficult.

“If it did look difficult, I would still have a go anyway, and if I couldn’t get it, knowing that in the past I have had to do things which I didn’t get straight away, but just knowing that eventually I did so I could just keep working at it and I would eventually get it” (I2).

If there is previous experience with a similar task this also increases Bree’s confidence when attempting the new learning experience.

“I would be a lot more confident going into it and I wouldn’t sit back and go oh someone else can have a go, because I would feel confident enough to do that” (I2).

The previous quotes also demonstrate Bree’s reflective nature when it comes to her learning.

“It does make you reflect, but I used to do that anyway, even just in my school diary and stuff like that” (I2).

She recognises that this reflective learning style has become a method of keeping her accountable for her own learning.

“You are putting it in your journal and stuff, so it is almost like it is keeping you accountable to your learning and stuff” (I2).

Determination is often used by Bree when describing herself as a learner. The data suggests she sees this aspect of herself as a learner in a positive way.

“More than anything probably just determination, like I just want to learn it and want to get it over and done with” (I2).

This learning strength has been a reliable learning strength for Bree for some time.

“I have always been pretty determined, with most stuff, but yeah especially music” (I2).

Bree’s motivation to learn also comes from a strong learning belief that achievement is possible. When asked how she feels about new learning experiences Bree replies,

“Positive because I know that if I want it enough that I will work hard enough for it and I will eventually achieve the outcome that I want to achieve” (I2).

This strong belief in attainable success underlies much of the data and fuels her motivational stamina, particularly when new tasks are not easy.

There is also evidence of a competitive attitude that provides motivation when presented with new learning experiences.

“I have always been really stubborn and I haven’t liked to let other people beat me” (I2).

Importantly, when discussing motivation in relation to new learning in her school music classroom, Bree mentions the social aspect of the subject content.

“I think the motivation as well comes from the fact that when I do leave school, although I don’t want to be a musician and I may not even have a career in music, it is something that I always want to do on the side whether it be just with friends or at church, playing in the church band, and that sort of stuff” (I2).

This can also relate to the previous section on relevance and suggests it has an affect on motivation towards new learning.

Interestingly, Bree notes a situation in her learning journal where her motivation to complete a learning objective is affected negatively. The task is a repetition of one recently completed. The task requires a large commitment of time and due to the

recent completion of a similar task, her motivation to complete the current task is greatly affected.

“I went into it with a negative frame of mind because I’d spent so much time and went into so much depth analysing my 1st song that I was sick of analysing and didn’t want to do it again soon!” (J1).

The outcome was affected by this dramatic drop in motivation.

“My analysis wasn’t as good as my first song because it wasn’t as detailed or in depth as the other because I spent far less time on it” (J1).

Bree acknowledges that the negative impact on her motivation levels directly affected her learning outcome and reflects on this as a new learning opportunity to change her management/time strategies for similar future tasks.

“Through this I’ve learnt to spread my work over a larger period of time so that I don’t have to do a lot of analysing in a short period of time and get bored and therefore do a rushed job. I have also learnt that possibly next time in a similar task I should try analysing only one song instead of 2, so that I can take my time on it, do it really in depth and not get sick of it and still have one other song left to analyse” (J1).

This is a reflection on her time management and task management strategies.

Bree considers learning difficulties, even low levels of motivation to complete the learning objective to a high enough standard, as an opportunity to analyse her own ways of learning and adjust these strategies for a more successful learning outcome with a similar task in her future. This demonstrates metacognitive knowledge about her own learning.

- Incremental success

Bree exhibits strategy based learning behaviours, which will be discussed in detail further in this chapter. One of these behaviours is task management, which allows her to break large new learning objectives into smaller more manageable sections. As she successfully progresses through these sections, she experiences incremental levels of

success towards the learning objective. These successful experiences fuel her motivation to continue towards the learning objective.

- Extrinsic sources of motivation

The class music teacher provides Bree with a consistent source of extrinsic motivation.

“My teacher was like nah you can do that, you’ll be fine with it” (I2).

When asked why her class teacher motivated Bree to continue new learning experiences she replied,

“Because she has been my teacher for three or four years now, something like that, so she knows my strengths and weaknesses”(I2).

This build up of trust, knowledge of Bree’s skills and abilities, and past history create a motivational source for Bree.

Marks towards the higher school certificate also provide a source of motivation.

“If it was something that I want to do for a HSC performance or something, that alone would be the driving force, well at least if I can do this, it will help my marks and that sort of stuff as well” (I2).

Bree also feels a responsibility to other peers within the same learning environment, thus providing another extrinsic source of motivation in new learning situations.

“It was my job to accompany this other girl so I kind of couldn’t just go nah, I don’t want to do it. Well I could have, but I didn’t want to do that” (I2).

Learning strategies

The data illustrates that learning strategies are employed by Bree after pre-learning considerations, interest, relevance and motivation. When discussing learning strategies the data provides information related to the sources of the learning strategies. As learning strategies can come from a variety of sources, it is important to discuss and will be investigated in the following section.

- Learning strategy sources

1. Before choosing strategies, pre-learning consideration #1: Previous experience with a similar task in the past is present in Bree's mind.

“This task was made difficult because no one had had much experience with arrangement of a piece before” (J1).

Previous learning experiences provide successful strategies to assist Bree with similar future tasks and allow Bree to have positive expectations with new learning experiences.

“Next time we have to perform a similar task I will feel confident in my ability to successfully perform the task because of my success this time and as long as I keep revising and summarising my notes” (J1).

The previous example makes mention of future successful new learning relying on the use of particular successful learning strategies again. Bree also mentions the role of reflecting and how new strategies can be sourced from unsuccessful new learning experiences.

“If something doesn't work for you in class and you put that in your journal, you are able to go ok well why didn't that work and maybe even talk to the teacher about it, or just go maybe can we try this or can we try that as well” (I2).

It is important to note the role of the class teacher. Bree relies heavily on the class teacher as a source of learning strategies as well as a learning strategy in itself, and this will be discussed in detail further in this chapter.

2. During the various new learning experiences presented throughout the learning journal, Bree does not rely on many different strategies. Her main learning strategy is continued and persistent high levels of effort. As well as a learning behaviour, the researcher believes the data provides evidence that suggests that Bree also considers this a learning strategy. This will be discussed in more detail in the upcoming strategy based learning behaviours section.

3. Class teacher assistance.

Bree relies heavily on this learning strategy. After continued and persistent effort, teacher assistance is the next most common learning strategy present throughout the learning journal.

“With my teacher we tried going through it slower, and then when it came to changing with the different feels, rather than trying to play it all at once we practised the one feel until I had that right, and then just over and over again pretty much” (I2).

When queried where these ideas came from Bree states the classroom teacher.

Interestingly, it is not always one of her first strategy choices. In the fourth learning journal entry, Bree seeks out teacher assistance after attempting 3 other learning strategies.

“From here I went to my music teacher and asked her opinion on what might be the choice to focus the bulk of my assignment on” (J1).

When reflecting on this new learning experience, Bree ends describing teacher assistance as reliable strategy when all others fail.

“Because if all else fails I can ask my school teachers and tutors for help” (J1).

In the first learning journal entry Bree describes an unsuccessful new learning experience where she relies solely on class teacher assistance.

“And by the end of the lesson we had nothing,...because there were 3 other groups in our class which needed our teacher’s attention and there was not enough time for the teacher to see us all and help us” (J1).

Here no learning occurs in the entire lesson because her only learning strategy was class teacher assistance.

The following learning journal entry continues on with another lesson based on this learning objective. Even though she was pessimistic about continuing, the teacher provides strategic learning feedback, encouraging continued effort that will lead to

learning. No specific strategic learning information is given except to continue trying. Needless to say, learning did not occur.

“Our teacher insisted we try it again and that the more we tried to arrange songs the better we’d get... However, we didn’t get much more figured out” (J1).

The classroom teacher assistance is eventually provided, with indications that specific strategic learning information is relayed to the students.

“Then half way through the lesson the teacher was made available to help us. This was a huge relief to the group as our teacher was able to help direct us and give us lots of great ideas as she knew what each of us were capable of” (J1).

This strategic learning information provided by the class teacher was very effective because by the end of the remaining lesson time, the lesson objective was complete. Even though, Bree’s reflection of the learning experience mentions the importance of the teacher feedback, her final comment returns to the importance of continued and persistent effort.

“I now know that if I failed at first, if I keep trying I’ll eventually get it in the end” (J1).

This strong learning belief may be a reason why Bree can sustain her motivation levels through class lessons times when no learning achievement is occurring. Some students would not continue to try to complete a new learning objective, when they have little experience or knowledge about how to complete it. As well as maintain effort levels through one and a half lessons, before her chosen learning strategy is made available to her.

As stated in the literature review previously, attribution theory and strategy attribution theory both emphasise the need for teacher feedback to contain useful strategic information for future learning experiences, instead of relying solely on effort attributions. If a student continues to repeat the same strategy over and over again, their effort levels may be high but the opportunity to succeed does not increase.

Bree is aware of this feedback and values it highly. When asked how school music class could be improved to enhance learning she singles out this learning specific learning strategy.

“More one-on-one time with my teacher, because she’s the one marking me and stuff so the more feedback and the more time that I get for that feedback, I think it would make it heaps easier, and it would make me heaps more confident as well” (I2).

Bree repeats the use of this strategy consistently throughout the data.

“Like if I need help or I know that I don’t understand something I feel confident in being able to go to the teacher or one of my tutors outside of school and figure it out with them” (I1).

4. Tutors

As mentioned in the previous quote, Bree also relies on outside assistance as a regular learning strategy, not only her classroom teacher but outside tutors, who have expertise in specific areas of study. She mentions her singing teacher providing resources that were useful in a new learning experience described in her learning journal.

“I also found it easy because I borrowed a number of books and scores from my singing teacher which had pre-analysed parts of the song in the books and explained characteristics of the topic I was researching and analysing. The scores were a great help because they helped me visually see changes and repetition and techniques used in the song” (J1).

Bree also mentions her drum teacher.

“I’ve got a really good drum teacher outside of school that can play anything, and so far he has been able to teach me anything – I have to work at it, but eventually I get it” (I2).

When describing a new learning experience that was challenging, the role of the drum teacher is mentioned again.

“I went to my drum teacher as well, and with him I was able to get it” (I2).

Previous skills and abilities developed with guitar teachers were also helpful when completing a new learning objective.

“I found it easy because I had previously had guitar lessons for approximately [sic] 2 years, in which my tutors helped me understand how different chord shapes affected the sound of the chord and together we had previously come up with some pretty different sounding chords, because I didn’t want to use plain chords, as it was too cliché” (J1).

When reflecting on ways to improve her chances of being successful with a similar task in the future, Bree mentions the learning strategy of outside tutors.

“Try and seek more help from my music teachers and tutors which would hopefully make it easier” (J1).

When discussing the help she relies on out of school with new learning experiences in school music class, Bree comes to an interesting conclusion.

“The main way that I learn I think is out of school anyway” (I2).

This may be referring to her outside tutors and her ability to work out learning strategies on her own.

5. Herself

Bree believes that she is a source for learning strategies.

“I took the initiative to try something different, to go about it a different way rather than having that teacher yelling at us, like with the time and stuff, the time signature, just to sort of think of something myself” (I2).

Although this source is not mentioned often throughout the data, the above statement does suggest that Bree relied on herself as a strategy source in this new learning experience.

Access to resources so that she can learn herself is also mentioned.

“If there’s something that I don’t understand, for me to be more successful at it, things like the internet I can look it up there and try and figure it out for myself” (I1).

6. Peers in the same learning environment.

Referring to her class mates as a learning strategy source is common throughout the data.

“I tried to find my point of focus by discussing it with my classmates and getting an idea of what they were focussing on” (J1).

Bree also seeks out specific peers who have specific skill sets that are relevant to the learning experience she is attempting.

“I asked a guy from another music class, whose been playing drums for longer than I have, to help me out a bit” (I2).

Interestingly, Bree does state that seeking learning strategies from peers in the same learning environment is not as valuable as learning strategies from the class teacher.

“There wouldn’t be as many people to learn from in your class, but I think the teacher most of the time knows more than any of them anyway” (I2).

- Strategy based learning behaviours

“I have always tried new things, but I think being more determined it does make you want to continue to try new things” (I2).

The previous quote illustrates a strategic mindset to new learning experiences.

Evidence of specific learning behaviours that indicate and aid strategic learning will be presented and discussed.

1. Bree’s use of continued and persistent effort.

“It makes me feel more confident in approaching a similar task because I won’t fear failing because I now know that if I failed at first, if I keep trying I’ll eventually get it in the end” (J1).

This is a significant comment. Bree believes that continued effort will produce successful new learning, even after a failed attempt. There is no mention of learning strategies. This is based on inaccurate attributional judgements. Learning strategies,

though sometimes limited, are still present in the learning journal description but her strong belief that effort is the reason she eventually succeeds is inaccurate for most of the learning situations she describes in the data. All new learning experiences described in her learning journal involve at least one learning strategy. She does not always acknowledge these when reflecting on her successful learning.

“If it did look difficult, I would still have a go anyway, and if I couldn’t get it, knowing that in the past I have had to do things which I didn’t get straight away, but just knowing that eventually I did so I could just keep working at it and I would eventually get it” (I2).

Bree does not consider new learning a problem solving activity. It is a continuous hard labour until successful learning is achieved. This strategy is a successful one for Bree and she relies on it heavily when confronted with new learning experiences.

“I have to work at it, but eventually I get it” (I2).

There is evidence that Bree’s reliance on continued and persistent effort requires self talk when she is confronted with difficulty.

“If I didn’t get it the first time I played it, I didn’t just go oh it is too hard, stuff it. I just went oh well I’ll try it again, and then I did it and it was ok” (I2).

When asked if she tried anything different Bree replied, “Just kept going at it” (I2).

Bree does not question this learning belief because it works for her; she does eventually succeed with new learning. This is why the researcher believes that Bree considers continued and persistent effort as a standalone strategy. Even though there is evidence throughout the learning journal that effort is used with other learning strategies, she does not acknowledge it that way.

2. Use of repetition

Bree often uses the learning strategy of repetition as a way of succeeding with new learning experiences in school music class.

“Just over and over again” (I2).

3. Summarising

Bree uses summarising as a learning strategy when attempting new learning in her school music class. The following example illustrates the learning strategy was employed at home but related directly to a new learning experience in her music classroom.

“I also summarised my notes at home and this study technique worked to my advantage as it helped me to take in the information and to recall it for this task” (J1).

Bree acknowledges the success of this learning strategy and her confidence with a future similar task when using the strategy again.

“Next time we have to perform a similar task I will feel confident in my ability to successfully perform the task because of my success this time and as long as I keep revising and summarising my notes” (J1).

4. Lists

Bree uses lists as a learning strategy.

“I also wrote down as many points as I could think of for the topic” (J1).

5. Elimination

In conjunction with the list strategy, Bree also uses the process of elimination as a learning strategy in her school music class.

“I used a process of elimination to get a list of about 5 points that I was either particularly interested in thought would be an easier point to discuss” (J1).

6. Research

Research is used as learning strategy at the beginning of a new learning experience.

“I began by researching the characteristics of popular music and listened to a lot of popular music” (J1).

It is also a very useful learning strategy because it allows Bree to discover more detail about the specific area in music she is attempting to learn.

“The topic I was researching and analysing. The scores were a great help because they helped me visually see changes and repetition and techniques used in the song” (J1).

7. Task management

In several of the learning journal entries, there is strong evidence of task management as a learning behaviour.

“I began by researching the characteristics of popular music and listened to a lot of popular music to A). decide what characteristics I needed in my song and B). decide what approach and sound I wanted to have” (J1).

Even her description of the way she planned to complete this particular new learning experience is put into order with the use of “A” and “B”. This is evidence of thought and preparation before beginning the learning objective. The task at this point in the learning process, is then broken down into manageable sections. The reasoning behind this decision is based on the level of work she expects.

“Today I worked on the chordal accompaniment guitar part” (J1).

The instrument choice also affected as she continues to manage the learning objective.

“I wanted to keep the song very simple instrument wise to lessen my workload” (J1).

Another learning journal entry discusses the management of a larger learning task into smaller more manageable sections.

“I had to not only work out a melody and 2 harmony parts but notate a large majority of it too” (J1).

Although the last section was not successful, Bree progressed through the melody and the two harmony parts successfully. This also suggests that Bree experienced incremental success throughout the one new learning experience.

Another area of task management that features in the data is time management. Bree does not experience unsuccessful new learning experiences in her school music classroom, only variations in the time frame to reach successful learning. When asked if she always experiences successful learning in her school music classroom, Bree replied, “Yeah, sometimes like it would take a while to achieve that success” (I2).

Time management also seems to affect the class learning environment.

“If you are not getting that extra help, then you are not going to be improving as quickly as the rest of the class, and then it is just a burden on the class and on the teacher and we’re not able to move forward as quickly and to get things done as quickly and as easily” (I2).

Time management is also an individual learning behaviour that affects Bree’s learning.

“Practise more at home. I have other school subjects and I work and I do heaps of extracurricular stuff, so it is hard finding the time” (I2).

Bree explains the ease with which she experienced a new learning objective in the music classroom, was due to her investment of time at home.

“I spent a lot of time at home playing my guitar and playing with chords” (J1).

When reflecting on ways to improve her new learning experiences Bree often commented on her individual time management as a way of doing that.

“With class assessments and practical assessments I think I could spend a little more time on them. It’s sort of something like I know that I don’t really think about them till the last minute and quickly just get something together so I think if I was a little more organized, like with my time, that I could probably fit in a bit more practice and things like that” (I1).

Although previously in this chapter a connection between enjoyment and ease has been acknowledged in the data, the level of ease does not guarantee a successful new learning experience. In the following quote, Bree does not have a successful new learning experience because she does not effectively manage the new learning task, and as a result her motivation levels decrease and her effort levels drop significantly.

“It was easy because once again I had a lot of resources, the music concepts booklet and music books and scores from my singing teacher, but my analysis wasn’t as good as my first song because it wasn’t as detailed or in depth as the other because I spent far less time on it” (J1).

Her reflection of this experience examines more effective task management strategies, such as time and workload management. She acknowledges that task management strategies negatively affected her motivation and in turn lessened her level effort.

“Through this I’ve learnt to spread my work over a larger period of time so that I don’t have to do a lot of analysing in a short period of time and get bored and therefore do a rushed job. I have also learnt that possibly next time in a similar task I should try analysing only one song instead of 2” (J1).

- Ineffective strategy choice

In the learning journal data Bree describes a new learning experience where she relies solely on the class teacher as her learning strategy.

“And by the end of the lesson we had nothing,...because their [sic] were 3 other groups in our class which needed our teacher’s attention and their [sic] was not enough time for the teacher to see us all and help us” (J1).

Here no learning occurs in the entire lesson because her only learning strategy was class teacher assistance. This strategy was ineffective but Bree did not choose to employ another learning strategy.

- No failure

Bree believes that achievement is always possible and the following quote supports this.

“If I find anything that’s a bit difficult I’d be able to achieve it one way or another” (I1).

Active participation in the learning process

It should be noted, during the final two years of High School in New South Wales public schools, students are provided with scheduled study periods. These are organised time periods within the school day, where students have permission to work independently on their studies and assessments. Although students are encouraged to spend these study periods in the school library, many students use them as an excuse to leave school early, arrive late or socialise with friends in the playground. Class music lessons, where the emphasis is on individual practical performance work, allows some students to work as if it were a scheduled study period. This can be due to the lack of separate performance spaces and the demands on the class teacher to assist individual students, while others have to wait. Due to this element of the New South Wales stage six music learning environment, the researcher believes that the act of turning up to music class exhibits a level of active participation in new learning and needs to be noted in this section of data analysis.

Bree's high level of involvement in the learning process is a strong indicator of active participation in new learning experiences within her music classroom. Strategy based learners such as Bree are actively involved in their new learning experiences from the beginning of the learning process. Strategy choices, particularly her reliance on high levels of persistent and continued effort throughout the learning process demonstrate an active role in learning. Active learning requires the learner to believe that action is required during the learning experience. Education is considered a verb.

“If you have got no ambition and no motivation, it [education] can easily become something that is done to you” (I2).

“For me it [education] is something that I do” (I2).

Bree exhibits learning behaviours associated with active learning throughout the data and these will be discussed.

1. Control over her learning.

Bree uses a personal pronoun to describe her active role in her learning.

“I took the initiative to try something different” (I2).

Bree specifically mentions deliberate listening as a way of being an active participant in her own learning.

“I like to take the time to listen” (I2).

“I listen during the theory lessons” (I2).

Although Bree does not explain why listening is an important part of active learning, the researcher feels it may be something Bree does deliberately, if other peers in the same learning environment are not listening. Then listening would be something she has to deliberately focus on and engage in, when actively learning in the school music classroom.

Bree also states the importance of motivation in active learning and the level of control one can have over personal learning.

“I think the majority of what you learn comes from your determination and your motivation. If you want to learn you will put extra effort in, you will study more, you will do the work, you will go to class” (I2).

It is interesting to note that attendance is considered a level of participation by Bree. In a new learning situation where successful learning did not occur quickly, but did eventually occur, Bree uses the experience as fuel for her ongoing motivation to learn.

“I know that if I didn’t get something straight away, like if I just worked a bit harder or listened better or applied myself a bit more and like my teacher was willing to sort of go a bit slower and make sure that we all understood it, that made me more confident that in the future if I find anything that’s a bit difficult I’d be able to achieve it one way or another. Even if it did take a little bit more time” (I1).

In this quote there is optimism for future new learning experiences that are not successful quickly. There is also a list of her own strategic learning behaviours; such as worked harder, listened better, applied myself more, that could have been enhanced during the lesson. This is also a strong indicator that Bree is an active participant in her own learning and recognises her level of control in the learning process.

2. Classroom environment and subject content affect active participation in new learning.

As discussed previously in this chapter, Bree does attempt to learn new things on her own. The classroom environment and subject content in her school music class may allow for this level of active participation on occasions.

“Sometimes you have to think for yourself and you have got to think on your feet as well, and so I think there you are teaching yourself... you have to use your initiative” (I2).

There is also evidence that the subject content allows Bree to exert control over certain aspects of the teaching/learning activity, allowing for a higher level of active participation in the learning process to occur.

“We did musicology assignments and I put heaps of effort into those, because again I just enjoyed it more and I got to be analytical and you are using words, you are not playing with numbers and formulas and stuff – instead it is more creative” (I2).

Bree suggests that the subject content allows for more creative input from her.

“In music you have still got those rules, like you can’t play this note in this chord because it is not going to sound good, but you can bend the rules a bit more” (I2).

Having greater control over the teaching and learning activities presented with new learning experiences in the school music classroom, allowed Bree to exert some control in her own learning and increase the level of active participation in the learning process.

“I know we didn’t have rules, but we had a list of things that we should have, that should be evident in our compositions and stuff. But in the end it was still your choice whether you use them or not, like it could work without them” (I2).

3. Sources of active participation in new learning

Bree was asked where these beliefs about active participation in new learning came from, she mentions the role her parents and older friends in establishing her beliefs about active participation in her own learning. Interestingly, she specifically states that her teachers have not played a role in this belief.

“Mostly people that have gone before me, whether it be parents; not teachers, but like friends that have already done school, older people that I talk to and stuff, they all tell you the same thing that you just have to do what you have got to do to get where you want to go to” (I2).

Discrepancies with relative research.

Bree not only acknowledges the role of active participation in new learning experiences, she exhibits behaviours that clearly demonstrate that she actively participates in new learning. Malle (1990) published work which briefly acknowledged achievement attributions. He described achievement attributions as explanations of something that has occurred. Therefore they did not involve individual intention. The data in the present study does not correlate with that statement. From the beginning of a new learning task, Bree demonstrates the intent to learn and this is achieved by her active participation in the learning experience. Active learners intend to learn and therefore initiate effort towards the goal of learning at the beginning of the task and throughout the learning process. It can then be said that active learners exhibit intent to learn. The opposite would be passive learners, who do not view learning as a verb. Learning is something that happens to them without active participation in the process. Passive learners would fit Malle's explanation of achievement attributions void of intent. As stated in the present study, active learners, such as Bree would not fit Malle's explanation.

Successful New Learning

How new learning is judged successful is very important to discuss. This research is phenomenological, where the emphasis is on the individual's own experience of their life world. The individual students have very strong ideas of whether their new learning experiences in the school music classroom are successful or not. It is important to explore their own ideas of successful new learning. Therefore Bree's judgements of successful or unsuccessful new learning are presented.

- Emotional response

At the end of the learning process Bree makes judgments about the success or unsuccessful learning outcome. In several instances, Bree reports an emotional response to these judgments, such as "Relieved" (I2). The researcher believes that Bree's emotional response of relief when successful new learning occurs is mainly due to her continued reliance on the learning strategy of continued and persistent effort. By not using many different learning strategies and maintaining large amounts of effort for a long period of time, successful new learning would be accompanied with a great sense of relief. The following quote also suggests the uncomfortable or unpleasant emotions associated with new learning when it does not occur immediately as Bree states she feels better when she does succeed.

"I felt a lot better and it made me feel more confident" (I1).

The previous quote also illustrates the increase in confidence Bree experiences when successful new learning does occur in her school music class.

Bree does not have the same emotional response when she describes successful new learning in another subject area, mathematics.

"I didn't really care, because I didn't really care about anything" (I2).

"Even the stuff that I was successful at, I didn't really care though" (I2).

This suggests that Bree's emotional response to successful new learning in other subject areas can significantly vary.

- Personal ownership of new learning

Bree ascribes her successful new learning to herself and her application to the task.

“I think a lot of it’s just to do with yourself and whether or not you can apply yourself to pick it up straight away” (I1).

She can also pinpoint what she was actively doing that assisted her to learn. In the following example, she identifies her deliberate listening.

“But I think it also had to do with the fact that I was willing to listen. Some other people in the class that weren’t and didn’t care, or thought well I don’t understand so I’ll sort of switch off, didn’t end up getting it where as people like me who more determined to learn what she was teaching and wanted to really know about it and understand it, picked it up a lot quicker” (I1).

As stated previously, new learning experiences in school music increase Bree’s level of confidence in the subject area, which will in turn affect the attitude she conveys when approaching new learning experiences in school music. Bree provides evidence in her learning journal entries that supports one of the fundamental beliefs of Attribution Theory. Attributions made at the end of successful or unsuccessful learning experiences can affect the expectation of similar tasks in the future. This can affect the attitude, including the level of confidence, with which students begin new learning experiences.

“I would definitely feel confident performing a similar task in the future” (J1).

“Next time we have to perform a similar task I will feel confident in my ability to successfully perform the task because of my success this time” (J1).

When Bree experienced difficulties with a new learning experience, she expressed an increased confidence if asked to attempt a similar task in the future.

“If we were asked to do this activity again in class I, along with the rest of the group, would be a lot more confident in successfully completing the task. I think that because we were unsuccessful to begin with, but eventually understood what we were doing it makes me feel more confident in approaching a similar task” (J1).

There is also evidence that an unsuccessful new learning experience also affects the expectation of a similar task in the future.

“Because we did such a bad job at the arrangement last lesson our group weren’t too enthusiastic about trying it again for our next lesson” (J1).

When reflecting on a successful or unsuccessful new learning experience, Bree often uses the level of difficulty or ease she experienced as a judgement of how successful her new learning experience was.

“If I was given another task like this I think I would find it easier to complete” (J1).

“I would definitely feel confident performing a similar task in the future because although it took me a long time the work wasn’t difficult because of the resources that were made available for me. This task has made me feel more confident about music because I find it fairly easy” (J1).

- Class teacher and outside school tutor

Bree also credits her successful new learning to her class music teacher.

“When she sort of changed her method and took it from the beginning and took us step by step, each step I was able to pick up straight away. So by the end of it I had it” (I1).

In this instance, Bree continued to exert effort towards learning but it was the class teacher who changed her teaching strategy that led to Bree’s successful new learning experience.

“I did want to understand it in case I would be able to find it useful for things like that. Like I was determined to learn it one way or the other cause I knew I’d need to know it” (I1).

Here she recognizes the role her class teacher played in her successful new learning experience.

“My teacher because she changed her way of teaching so that we could understand it, like the class and myself could understand it” (I1).

This directly relates to Bree's reliance on teacher assistance, whether from class teacher or outside tutor, as a regular learning strategy choice during new learning experiences in school music class.

There is also evidence of shared credit for one of Bree's successful new learning experiences in school music class.

“Shared between me and my drum teacher and my school teacher, but probably mostly my drum teacher, because we were able to work on that like one-on-one” (I2).

- How new learning is judged successful.

I. Herself

“Myself because I took the initiative to try something different, to go about it a different way rather than having that teacher yelling at us, like with the time and stuff, the time signature, just to sort of think of something myself.

In my case I used the songs, other songs and stuff to play along with, and probably because if I didn't get it the first time I played it, I didn't just go oh it is too hard, stuff it. I just went oh well I'll try it again, and then I did it and it was ok” (I2).

Bree has her own beliefs about what success in school music class entails. Although marks and grades are important, she acknowledges the different elements of the music syllabus and concludes that success comes from achievement across these areas of music study, not just performance.

“To me I think to be a well-rounded musician and to achieve good marks, because it does mean that you are successful in all areas of music” (I2).

II. Comparison to class peers

The following quote illustrates Bree's ideas of success as a music student. She acknowledges that most of her class peers think performance is the main element of success in school music. Bree believes that all elements of music study assist in the development of a well rounded musician which is her idea of success in school music study.

There is also mention of class ranking in particular areas of the music syllabus but again, Bree believes that success is based on skills and abilities in all areas of school music study.

“I think for a lot of people in my music class, music is just about playing the instrument, whereas I like to take the time to listen to constructive criticism from my teacher and from my music tutors outside of the school and stuff like that. And I listen during the theory lessons and stuff as well, because I think once you have got that sort of knowledge of the concepts of music, it helps heaps more in your performances and stuff. So I think being a successful music student isn’t just about topping the class in musicology and oral, or topping the class in performance, but it is being a well-rounded musician” (I2).

The strong belief that success in school music study is judged on how skilled the student becomes in various areas of music study, not just performance is repeated again in the data. Bree feels the aim of school music study is to help her become a more skilled musician.

“I know some people would say that the most successful musician is the one that’s in the band that gets the most gigs, but I don’t really think that’s got anything to do with it” (I2).

III. Marks awarded by class teacher

Bree feels the marks awarded by the class teacher are a way of judging successful learning.

“As far as your marks go I want to succeed and I am determined in that, so that’s motivation I am motivated to do it because I want to succeed” (I2).

Bree recognizes that she is a successful student in her school music class.

“Every assessment I always do well and I always excel” (I1).

As mentioned previously, Bree believes that successful learning in her school music classroom is not reliant on performance skills alone. This shows an awareness of the marking criteria of the school music syllabus.

“I think so much focus is placed on the performances, but again it’s only 25% of your mark in school assessments” (I2).

Bree seems to have a very sound knowledge of where her marks are coming from in her school music syllabus and this informs her beliefs of what success is.

“That’s where your marks come from. It doesn’t come from one area of music, it is a combination of all of them and they’re all worth, all the different parts, like musicology, oral performance and composition, they are all worth equal marks, so in order to be the successful musician that gets good marks in school and to achieve, you have got to do well in all of the different topics” (I2).

As presented in this case study, Bree presents a complex learning process that is successful for her. Although she uses limited learning strategies, her reliance on teacher assistance and continued and persistent effort always lead her to eventual successful new learning in her school music class. She is a self-regulated learner, who not only employs pre-learning considerations before new learning begins but actively participates in the learning process from her initial judgements of relevance and interest through motivation levels, choice of learning strategies and finally judgements of successful or unsuccessful new learning. Interestingly, Bree benefited from the reflective nature of the learning journal. This leads to the researcher to surmise the added benefit of additional content specific learning strategy instruction which would offer more choices during new learning experiences in her school music class and lessen her increased levels of stress that results from a continued reliance on high levels of effort for long periods of time. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter eight.

Chapter 5

Case Study Two: Lara

At the time of this research, Lara was fourteen years old and enrolled in year 9, the third year of High School for NSW students. She is in stage four (refer Figure 1). This is the first year High School students are given more choice about the subjects they study. Although there are compulsory Mathematics, English and Science subjects, students can elect to choose from the remaining subjects offered at the individual school. At this stage, students who are expecting to continue onto the Higher School Certificate make choices based on the subjects they expect to study in their final years. This does add a certain amount of pressure to the elective process. In the New South Wales public education system, the elective module in Stage 5 (years 9 and 10), assumes that the student has completed the mandatory music module in Stage 4 (years 7 and 8). This can be seen clearly in Figure 1, chapter one. Previous learning experience with simple composition, musicology and performance is assumed at this level where the previous skills are built on and expanded. At this level, as with previous stages, the varying abilities and skills of the students enrolled can differ greatly.

The first semi-structured interview was conducted in Term 2, the learning journal was completed throughout Term 3 and the final semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of Term 4 2006.

A schematised summary of responses offers an overview of Lara's learning strategies.

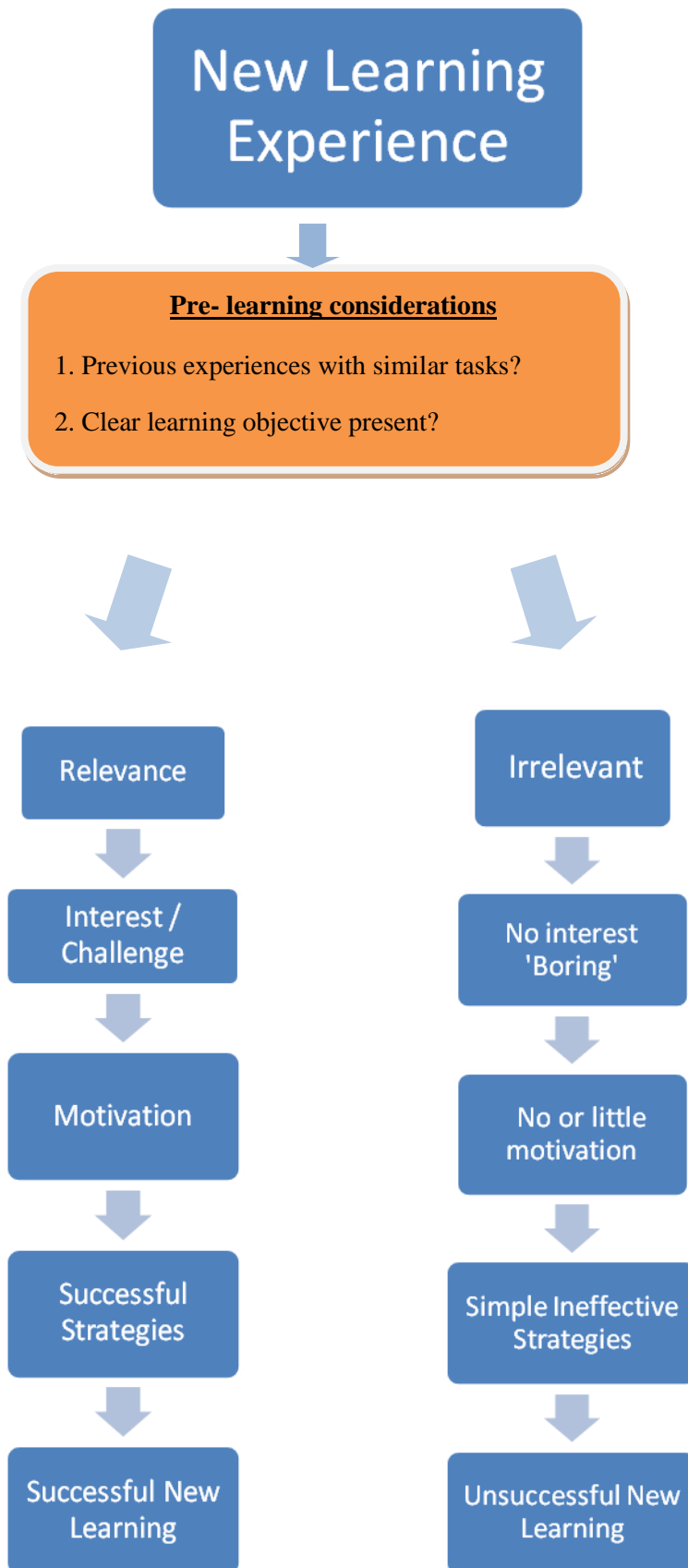


Figure 5.1 Lara's Learning Behaviours

Lara's Pre- Learning Considerations

When investigating the self generated text of Lara's learning journals, pre-learning considerations are consistently present. Pre-learning considerations are questions the student asks themselves at the very beginning of a new learning experience. The answers to these questions determine if and how the student will proceed with the new learning experience from that point on. The semi-structured interview text provides detailed information about Lara's learning behaviours. The self-generated text from the journal provides more details about the learning processes, gathered from Lara soon after the actual learning experience occurred. When reflecting on new learning experiences, Lara does not recognise the pre-learning considerations that are consistently present in her learning journal entries. The semi-structured interview data was collected outside of school hours and the time between each interview was approximately two school terms; eleven weeks. This may explain the more reflective nature of the semi-structured interviews and the interesting inclusion of pre-learning considerations in the learning journal entries. These aspects of Lara's learning behaviour are significant and will be addressed here.

Two areas of significance emerged related to pre-learning; previous similar task experiences and clear learning objectives.

1. Previous similar task experiences.

When presented with a new learning experience and before beginning her learning process, Lara often mentions past similar learning experiences. The similarities to the new learning experience provoke these memories and Lara considers this information before beginning. Lara has recall of successful strategies from similar past learning experiences to assist in the new current learning situation.

“I now know what strategies work and which didn't” (I1. 22:35).

This allows Lara to feel positive about the new learning experience, with more control over the upcoming learning process.

The data provides a more detailed example of the role previous experience with a similar task can have in Lara's learning experiences. The following example illustrates Lara's immediate reservations when presented with a new learning experience.

"I wasn't very happy to know that we had to have such a large group because this means it will be hard to find a time where we can all practise together and since [sic] there is so many of us that means there is a lot of people that have to agree on the same thing" (J1).

This information shows that Lara has remembered a previous learning experience involving a large group activity and the problems that she experienced in the past. This information is considered by Lara and due to her strategy learning behaviours, she attempts to plan around these previous problems. By choosing another instrument, different to the one she usually performs, she can relinquish the organisational and controlling role of the task which has caused her a large amount of stress in previous learning experiences. This strategy provides her relief as she begins this learning experience.

"I am playing drums for our assessment [sic] which is good, usually I sing for assessments [sic] so it will be good for me to do drums and not have to be the person that's 'controlling [sic]' the songs"(J1).

"I'm looking forward to letting someone else 'run' the assessment [sic] because that is usually my job" (J1).

Another example of previous experiences with similar tasks is present in her journal entries. At the end of one of her journal entries, Lara writes about a future new learning task that was mentioned by the class teacher at the end of the lesson. She immediately reflects on previous similar tasks and the difficulties she experienced.

Learning/teaching task organisation is her main concern with her first comment full of hope for an individual learning activity, not a group learning activity.

"I am hoping [sic] we can do it on our own, not in a group" (J1).

In detail, Lara then considers the difficulties she has experienced with similar group learning experiences in the past. These include frustrations based on lack of efficient

time use due to distractions, varying opinions, task choice to suit all members of group (emphasis on age of students having a direct effect on task choice). and a quantity of members within the group not knowing what to do.

“I can work more efficiently [sic] due to no distractions and usually I have a pretty good idea of what I want to do but in a group you have to figure out something that suits everyone which can take a while for year 9 students. Also in group assessments [sic] there are people that don’t really know what to do (eg. singers).” (J1).

Also evident is the expected frustration based on Lara’s acknowledgement that she can use her learning time more efficiently if given an individual task. 2. Clear learning objective

The second pre-learning consideration involves the presence of a clear learning objective. Before Lara can move into her new learning process, it is very important that the objective of the new learning be understandable. This is for the most part, obvious in her journal entries.

“We are in the 3rd week of the topic and all we have done is listen to some small ensemble music and then [sic] after she [the teacher] talked about them but no one really listened [sic] to her (mostly because no one knew what she was talking about).” (J1).

In this example an overall pessimistic attitude to the new learning is apparent and there is an obvious absence of a clear learning objective. Lara cannot move into her strategy based learning behaviours if she is unsure of what she is being asked to learn. If there is no clear learning objective then Lara does not begin to actively participate in the learning process by beginning to move through her learning process.

Another journal entry begins with confusion due to the lack of a clear learning objective. At the end of this entry Lara searches again for a clear lesson objective but to no avail.

“It may have been relevant [sic] for the musos (instrument players). to do this song but it wasn’t relevant [sic] to us as singers, and if it was relevant [sic] to us then [sic] she didn’t explain how!” (J1).

By revisiting this question, it shows the importance of a clear learning objective to Lara's learning style. If the learning objective is not clear at the beginning of the lesson, Lara cannot begin to strategize her learning. Therefore the lesson has not engaged her as an active learner from the start.

Pre-learning considerations are thoughts that occur before the new learning process begins. They do not affect whether she learns or not but they do affect the way she approaches the beginning of her new learning process. Lara will still continue her learning process if she feels that she has previous learning experience with some aspect of her new learning experience, but this may provide information that strengthens her decision of relevance or irrelevance and will most definitely affect her initial learning strategy choices. This is also evident with the pre-learning consideration of a clear learning objective. Strategy-based learners plan the best strategic route towards successful new learning and this would be much more difficult if the new learning task does not include a clear objective. Lara will still progress through her new learning process but her decisions throughout will be affected if she does not have a clear idea of the end goal/s of the task. It is because of these reasons that the pre-learning considerations are separate from the main new learning process presented here.

Lara's New Learning Process

The self-generated text presented in Lara's semi-structured interviews and learning journal illustrate a consistent learning pattern, fuelled by her choice of and repeated use of specific learning behaviours during varying new learning experiences in the school music classroom. These findings are presented in Figure 5.1.

Relevance

The flow chart (Figure 5.1). demonstrates the first judgement Lara makes about a new learning experience. This is relevance. This key judgement determines if Lara will begin the strategy based learning behaviours towards successful learning. If relevance

of a new learning experience is not determined at the beginning, then all the following learning behaviours are significantly affected.

“If I don’t see a relevance in something then I lose interest immediately, and that brings me down” (I2. 50:08).

As seen in Figure 5.1, once the initial judgment of relevance is determined, then interest to learn is evoked. Lara is now actively participating in the learning process. This then provides the motivation to learn something new and strategy based learning behaviours begin. All of these behaviours then lead Lara to successful learning outcomes. After relevance and interest are determined, continued motivation throughout the learning process, even when difficulties occur, is fuelled by successful expectations, strategy based behaviours and previous learning experiences. The initial judgement of relevance when presented with a new learning experience is extremely significant to Lara’s subsequent learning behaviour.

Interestingly, Lara recounts a situation where the judgement of relevance was changeable. A previous irrelevant learning experience developed into a relevant new learning experience. When describing news broadcasts as irrelevant and boring in her past, Lara describes how a new debating class changed her initial judgement and she was able to learn. Lara acknowledges the changeable state of relevance.

“I think it actually changed a tiny interest of what becomes interesting and what becomes irrelevant to you” (I2. 49:20).

She goes on to explain,

“My subjects at school have become heaps more relevant to me and I’ve become - I think I’m getting better as school goes on because I know that things are going to be more relevant to me” (I2. 49:26).

Lara’s entire learning behaviour model is dependent on the initial judgement of relevance when presented with a new learning experience in her school music class. With strategy based learners like Lara there is an opportunity for classroom teachers to present new learning experiences in a different way. New learning experiences could be presented in a way which allows students like Lara, enough freedom with the learning activities to make the new learning objective relevant. In Lara’s case, new

learning experiences which allow for this guarantee relevance, active participation and the implementation of strategy based learning behaviours throughout the learning process.

When Lara determines a new learning experience as irrelevant, no or little motivation is employed, simplistic ineffective strategies are chosen and unsuccessful learning experiences eventuate. This suggests that Lara would benefit from content that is presented with demonstrated relevance. The data provided by Lara indicates that such methods of presenting new learning experiences would have assisted her to find relevance where she could not find it herself. With Lara, relevance leads to successful new learning.

Interest

The second judgement Lara makes about a new learning experience is interest. Although relevance and interest were difficult to separate in some areas of the data, the researcher feels there is enough evidence to not only separate these themes but also present relevance as the most commonly found first judgement made by Lara in new learning situations.

Lara feels more confident when approaching new learning in her music classroom when the content interests her. In the following quote interest is mentioned without reference to relevance, as in previous quotes.

“Something that I know is going to be of my interest” (I2. 41:42).

Lara also feels that interest is important to how she and her other peers learn more effectively.

“If we learn something that’s relevant to us and that we’re interested in then we learn a lot better” (I2. 1:30).

In this quote relevance and interest are both mentioned as separate issues, indicating that Lara sees them both separately. Lara’s separation of these two areas of her learning process reinforces the decision of the researcher to discuss them separately.

During one of her journal entries, Lara describes an unsatisfactory new learning experience in her music classroom. When describing her and her peer's behaviour during the lesson, she writes,

“We weren't [sic] interested in singing the song so we talked the whole lesson” (J1).

Clearly interest in the new learning experience is important for Lara and seems to be important to her peers who share the same learning experience and environment.

- Challenge

A significant finding within the data sources is the importance of challenge within the new learning experience. This is specifically related to Lara's interest levels. If the task is challenging, Lara is interested in learning. Challenge within a new learning experience can involve several aspects.

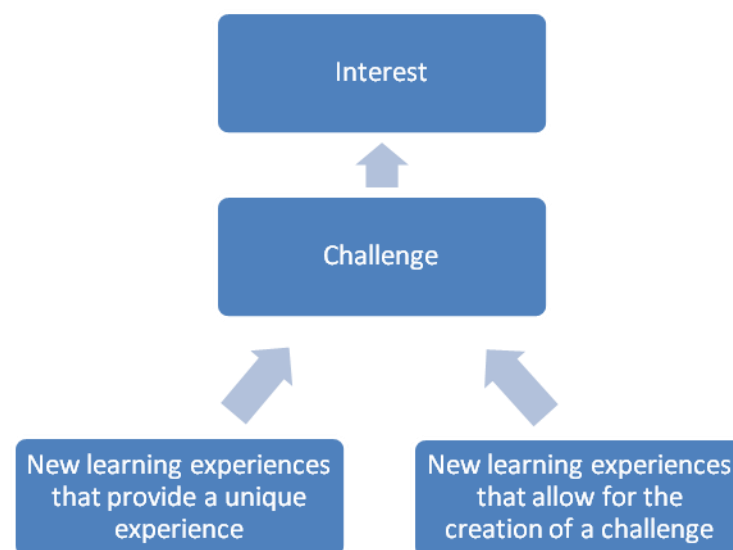


Figure 5.2 The relationship of challenge to interest when attempting a new learning experience in school music class.

The first aspect is new learning that provides an unique experience. Lara describes a new learning experience where her group were asked to compose a traditional Aboriginal style song, telling a story with body percussion and a limited number of untuned percussion instruments. The composition was to be notated in symbols. This was a very positive new learning experience for Lara.

“I liked this task because it wasn’t something [sic] we really get to do in classes and outside of classes” (J1).

In another journal entry, Lara reacts immediately to a new learning experience that involves a challenge by writing,

“I have never done a slow song before so it will be good for something [sic] different” (J1).

Challenge is a positive aspect of new learning for Lara.

The second aspect concerns new learning experiences that allow Lara to create a challenge within the teaching/learning activity.

“Today our teacher also told us that next lesson we will have to compose a new version of ‘Breakaway’(popular song).. We are going to do a slower version and we are going to make it acoustic” (J1).

This comment made in her learning journal demonstrates how this new learning experience was flexible enough to allow Lara to create a challenge for herself. As seen in this example, Lara not only intended to adjust the tempo but also the arrangement. The teaching /learning activity provided for this new learning experience was flexible enough to allow Lara to cater to her level of competence and then create a more challenging activity.

This is mentioned again in the learning journal data when describing some classroom teacher feedback. Suggestions were made by the teacher but the final decision was up to the group of students. Lara reflects on this positively and writes,

“Because it was our performance we could do what we wanted to do” (J1).

This allowed Lara to add or adjust aspects of the teaching/learning activity creating a challenge within the learning experience.

Lara also describes a situation where she created a challenge within a new learning experience where there was none present.

“A couple of weeks ago we were told to do - most of the guys in the class were asked to do a guitar piece. So we didn’t have much to do in that time. We were just asked to practice our assessments. So mine was pretty much down pat so I decided to try to join in with what the guys were doing. So I learnt guitar for a couple of weeks, and that was quite difficult. I didn’t have a teacher, I just had one of the guys in the class trying to teach me but that was incredibly hard” (I2. 1:50).

Lara is determined to create a challenge for herself, so that her need for interest is catered for in new learning experiences in the school music classroom. Even to the point where she picks up an unfamiliar instrument and begins to learn to play it.

Importantly, Lara describes an unsuccessful new learning experience within the school music classroom and much of her critique involves the lack of challenge presented in the teaching/learning activity. When describing the teaching/learning activity she writes,

“I had 2 lines to learn that weren’t at all challenging that I had to just keep repeating all through the song. We worked on the piece [sic] for 4 periods (2 hours and 40 mins in total). which is a whole week of music” (J1).

Not only does she summarise the activity as unchallenging, she explains why it was not challenging. The teaching/learning activity was not challenging because the task content involved too little content, it was too simple, repetitive and the time frame for completion of the learning objective was too long. Her final reflection on this new learning experience is specific.

“I thought this exercise [sic] was pointless because everyone just had 2 lines to do and it proposed [sic] nothing of a challenge and it wasn’t fun” (J1).

Interestingly, when the teaching/learning activity was not challenging it was also not fun. This suggests that Lara finds challenge within a new learning experience fun. The researcher also believes that Lara is interested in a new learning experience when there is a challenge involved. The presence of ability to create a challenge creates interest

for Lara and also makes the experience fun and enjoyable. As stated previously, interest is an important judgement Lara makes in her learning process. This judgement can affect how she proceeds through the learning process.

Even task assessments are judged in a positive way when challenge is present.

“Usually theory tests in music are either pointless or really easy but this one was good. It was challenging [sic] and can actually be useful [sic]” (J1).

Lara’s belief that difficulty can create a challenge is also mentioned in a positive way when describing the progression from one year of school music study to the next.

“I’m guessing that next year music is going to be a lot harder, but that’s good, you know, bring it on” (I2. 19:23).

Difficulty, whether in an assessment task or future music learning creates challenge which then creates a positive reaction to new learning for Lara

Motivation

The theme of motivation follows closely from the previous discussions of relevance and interest and the influence of challenge on both of these themes. If the new learning experience is judged as relevant and interesting to Lara, whether a challenge is created by Lara herself or is a part of the teaching/learning activity presented by music classroom teacher, these positive judgments create motivation for Lara to begin to strategise.

“I wanted to learn how to do it really well and it was really exciting when I got something right, and that was the thing that was pushing me to do it. To keep going” (I2. 2:56).

When these judgments are more negative towards the new learning experience, she is less optimistic about the task and begins to judge the teaching/learning activity, as seen in the previous sections and the following quote,

“So there wasn’t much of a strive to learn something new” (I2. 18:41).

Analysing the learning journal data, motivation to learn is demonstrated by the beginning of strategy choice. When looking at the semi-structured interview data, Lara discusses motivation in a more reflective way.

Noticeably in the data, Lara does not use the term motivation, but does repeatedly use the term, strive. This is found when describing positive and negative motivational experiences. Analysing the data in its entirety, the researcher believes that the definition of both terms are the same to Lara.

“Science I hate it and so that gave me no strive” (I2. 45:00).

When discussing all new learning in any environment Lara states,

“You need to have some form of strive to do it” (I2. 47:12).

Lara is aware of the importance of motivation in new learning experiences. She is motivated to learn by several following reasons – the desire to learn something new, her metacognitive understanding, how she values new learning, her awareness of incremental success and extrinsic factors. These will be considered in turn.

- Desire to learn something new.

As discussed previously Lara needs to make a judgment about the interest she has for the new learning experience presented by the music classroom teacher. If the judgment is positive, this motivates her to continue through her learning process.

“I wanted to learn how to do it really well and it was really exciting when I got something right, and that was the thing that was pushing me to do it. To keep going” (I2. 2:56).

Lara also uses the term, want. In this example the data immediately following relates the term to interest levels.

“If you don’t want to do something then I don’t feel a strive to do it” (I2. 49:00).

When speaking about motivation during the semi-structured interviews, Lara also acknowledges the importance of her desire to learn music as a motivational factor as well.

“I think my passion towards music was helping it a bit” (I2. 48:08).

The use of the term, ‘passion’, is a strong word suggesting more than simply an interest or want and so is mentioned separately here. Lara exhibits a strong desire to learn.

- Metacognitive knowledge of her learning style and its strengths.

Due to Lara’s participation in a previous research study, Henry 2005, she has recognised one of her successful learning behaviours.

“During my music classes when I don’t get things I get kind of frustrated but I remember with previous research that I’m a strategy person. I didn’t actually realise it but apparently I’m pretty good at the strategy thing and now that I’ve actually thought about it, when I kind of get frustrated with myself I can think back and like hold on, is there any other way that I can do this that may make it easier, or someone else can help me, or anything that can help me do better pretty much, and if I actually think about it I can come up with some pretty good strategies to help me, which I wouldn’t have really thought of because I was too frustrated” (I2. 12:38).

Another mention of her knowledge of successful strategising behaviours is evident later in the data.

“I’ve kind of thought about that on the spot and been like, okay, there’s got to be another way to do this” (I2. 17:21).

These examples are particularly important because Lara now uses the knowledge of her own successful strategy use, as a strategy to fuel on-going motivation and continued strategy based learning behaviours. The act of focussing on her successful learning behaviours has created another way of increasing motivational stamina during new learning experiences.

- New learning experiences

Interestingly, a learning environment that does not contain new learning experiences decreased Lara's motivation levels.

“Last year we weren't all on learning new things. It was pretty much just everyone play the instrument that you're learning at the moment and we'll play this song this week. So there wasn't much of a strive to learn something new” (I2. 18:34).

This correlates with previous data stating that learning new things is a motivational factor for Lara. She was asked if lack of something new made her feel as successful and as good about learning, and she stated,

“Not really because we didn't learn as much” (I2. 19:00).

Not feeling as good about learning suggests Lara experienced a negative emotional response when new learning was not present in her school music classroom. Referring to previously reported data, this finding correlates with the opposite occurring where new learning experiences evoke a strong and positive emotional response.

When discussing motivation and new learning experiences in her school music classroom, Lara conveys a strong positive emotional response.

“I wanted to learn how to do it really well and it was really exciting when I got something right, and that was the thing that was pushing me to do it. To keep going” (I2. 2:58).

This example also demonstrates that the strong positive emotional response to new learning is a motivational factor for Lara.

- Incremental success

Incremental success throughout the learning process also provides on-going motivation.

“There's always been a time where I've had trouble with something but I have always achieved something with it” (I1. 21:55).

Examples of this are also found in Lara's learning journal.

“I’ve been finding them hard but I think I am starting to get them” (J1).

Immediately following this comment, Lara implements an adjusted strategy from the initial stages of the learning process. This demonstrates that Lara was motivated to continue due to the small incremental success she had experienced so far in the learning process.

On another occasion, Lara was asked why she continued to try to successfully learn something new when success was not instantaneous, she stated,

“Well because actually I found it really fun, and when I did get something right it was really exciting” (I2. 2:20).

This indicates a strong emotional response to small, incremental successes within the same learning experience. This fuelled her motivation to continue with the task until completed successfully. This motivational factor can also be identified as intrinsic.

- Extrinsic motivation

Lara does mention one example of extrinsic motivation in new learning. It is significant that the extrinsic motivator is the class teacher, but not in a typical way, such as an award or concrete reward. It is Lara’s trust in her class teacher.

“I think because my Music teacher knows what I can and can’t do and she’d obviously set it to me , like, “Lara find a harmony?” and I said, “I’ll try” and obviously she had some reason to think that I would be able to do it and I didn’t want to give up on that. Obviously she thought I could do it so I wanted to keep trying” (I1. 20:33).

Lara had trust in her school music class teacher’s judgment of task achievability. Although this is an extrinsic motivational factor, it is not a typical extrinsic motivation and therefore significant to Lara’s learning.

Learning Strategies

The data illustrates that learning strategies are employed by Lara after pre-learning considerations, relevance, interest/challenge, and motivation. When discussing learning strategies the data provides information related to the sources of the learning strategies. As learning strategies can come from a variety of sources, it is important to discuss and will be considered in turn as learning strategy sources, strategy based learning behaviour, and active participation in the learning process.

- Learning strategy sources.

1. Before choosing strategies, pre-learning consideration #1: Previous experience with a similar task in the past is present in Lara's mind.

“When we learn something new ..., usually the first time it's not that great. With a lot of our compositions we found them pretty hard in our first ones because we hadn't done anything like that before, but after we did a couple it got easier and more natural” (I2. 21:06).

Previous learning experiences provide successful strategies to assist Lara with similar future tasks and allow Lara to have positive expectations with new learning experiences.

“The first one, well if I was good at it to start with and I got it the first time then I'd be confident that I could do it again and then with the thing things that took longer, um, I did get it eventually so I now know what strategies work and which didn't” (1. 22:20).

2. New learning experiences provide new learning strategies.

One of the data collection devices used in this study for self-generated text was a new learning journal. Lara explains that this learning activity has helped her reflect during and after new learning experiences in the classroom. This has had a positive affect on her new learning experiences allowing for deeper self analysis and further reflection of new classroom learning experiences and her learning behaviours.

“Because through my journaling I have been able to reflect, and now I think about it more when I'm actually doing it, and that helps me” (I2. 17:00).

3. Peers in the same learning environment.

Lara indicates in the data that other students in her class provided a safe strategy resource if problems occurred in her own learning. She also recognises that other peers participating in the same learning experience provided learning strategy examples, purely by observation as well (I2. 3:15)..

4. Class teacher.

When Lara was asked if there were people around her that she could seek immediate assistance from if she experienced any problems during new learning experiences, she replied,

“Yeah, definitely. There was a teacher and she was actually quite stoked [excited] that I was trying to learn something on guitar rather than bludging off [stop working]” (I2. 3:30).

When Lara has not met her performance expectation in a new learning experience she will seek solutions and new strategies to improve her performance with similar tasks in the future.

“I will confront the teacher after about it and say you know, what was it that brought my mark down and I’ll see about fixing it up” (I2. 20:10).

- Strategy based learning behaviours.

Evidence of specific learning behaviours that indicate and aid strategic learning will be presented and discussed.

1. Clear learning objective required for strategy based learning behaviour.

The data indicates that a clear learning objective is required for Lara to begin strategy based learner behaviour.

When given a learning task that she did not understand, Lara exerted a small amount of effort. The class teacher,

“was trying to explain it to me but she can’t play drums so it was kind of hard for her to try and interpret to me what exactly she wanted me to do, and I didn’t understand” (I2. 4:20).

Lara blamed the unsuccessful new learning experience on, “bad communication” (I2. 5:02).

When asked who was responsible for the unsuccessful outcome, Lara stated,

“I think me and my teacher pretty much, because I wasn’t understanding and I don’t think she was explaining as well as she could have because she wasn’t a drummer. So both of us” (I2. 5:26).

This new learning situation did not allow Lara to begin her learning process as a strategy based learner. When recalling this learning experience no emotional responses are mentioned. This may have occurred because she had not begun to personally involve herself in the learning experience. Lara expressed an expectation of success with a similar task in the future.

“The following week I did another piece and she got me to do another composition and that one went all right, so that was good” (I2. 5:39).

2. Lara’s use of continued and persistent effort.

This is a very prominent behaviour and learning belief that occurs throughout all the data collection devices. This is consistent whether Lara is talking about a previous learning experience or about learning in general. Lara produces evidence that she has used this learning strategy in the past with eventual success.

“I just kept going over it pretty much. Like, there’s nothing much that I could have done except for keep practising it over and over, and eventually I got it” (I2. 2:33).

Lara also indicates that she plans to use this strategy again with a more current new learning experience.

“Over the next couple of weeks I will practice it until I get it” (J1).

This is not always described as a pleasant learning experience but it is a successful strategy that works for Lara and so she continues to employ it.

“I had to keep going a lot of times. It was really hard” (I2. 2:45).

The researcher believes that Lara uses continued and persistent effort as a learning strategy. In general effort levels are associated with a particular learning strategy, not

as a stand alone strategy. The data indicates that Lara uses continued and persistent effort as a stand alone strategy as well as a behaviour that accompanies another strategy choice. The following example taken from Lara's learning journal demonstrates that continued effort was applied in a group learning activity but unlike the data of her older sister in the previous chapter, there is a limit to the amount of time this strategy will be employed if new learning does not occur with enough success.

“we are going to practice it a bit more and if she is still uncomfortable with it then [sic] we will change the song” (J1).

As with other strategy choices, a judgement about their effectiveness is made during the learning process and strategies are continued, adjusted or replaced by more effective strategies.

“because it is important for her to be comfortable with the song she is performing or so she doesn't [sic] damage her voice and so it sounds good, because if she doesn't [sic] do well neither do I” (J1).

Even though Lara has spent a lot of time and effort planning, strategizing and throughout this particular new learning experience, she is willing to completely change the performance piece due to the difficulties her partner is experiencing. Her reasoning is mature, responsible and recognises the learning objective. The four reasons given show evidence of instrument knowledge and care, levels of comfort, overall sound and the role her partner plays in her final grade and the level of success experienced with this learning experience.

In most learning situations Lara believes that continued and persistent effort always leads to successful new learning.

“If you don't make an effort to do something then you're not going to do well. If you want to make an effort and you want to stick things out then yes, you will learn” (I2. 43:15).

Lara believes that learning can be successful if you, “Keep trying”(I2. 36:28).

This belief is validated in her own learning experiences.

“I was determined to get it and I think I was the one who stuck with it and in the end we got it” (I1. 20:05).

These comments apply to both continued and persistent effort as a stand alone strategy choice and as a behaviour accompanying another strategy. Lara’s perception of active participation in the learning experience is also relevant to this strategy based learning behaviour and will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter.

3. Use of repetition

There are some many circumstances throughout the data where Lara talks about her strategy use of repetition.

“Keep practising it over and over” (I2. 2:33).

“I had to keep going a lot of times” (I2. 2:44).

“Going over and over and over and over again” (I2. 3:50).

“When you learn new things in maths you need to go over it and get it stuck in your head. Same with music” (I2. 42:18).

Repetition is mentioned throughout the data and can be considered as a regular strategy choice for Lara. As Lara judges how successful strategies are during and after the learning process, it can be assumed that their repeated use indicates that this strategy is predominantly successful.

“Keep going over it and you’ll get it in the end” (I2. 36:30).

4. No limit of strategies.

Lara believes that there are an infinite number of strategies available for learning. When she chooses a strategy that is not effective, she believes there is always another strategy to employ, all the while moving closer to the successful completion of the learning objective. This belief creates a problem-solving basis for new learning.

“I think there was always something different that we tried. There’s many different ways to do things and, yeah, there was always something new we could try to help” (I1. 18:24).

When asked by the interviewer, “Has there ever been a situation where you have run out of different strategies?” the subject replies,

“I don’t think so, no, cause there’s always something new to try and even if we’re trying something new that no one knows how to do there’s always the opportunity to ask some one who does know what they’re doing. Even they can help us with it so there’s always an opportunity to try different strategies”(1. 18:44).

This belief has been a part of her learning behavior for a long period of time.

“Keep it in your mind that there’s something else I can do. I’ve been doing it for ages now, for years now, so there’s always been different ideas about what I can do help” (1. 19:17).

Lara has been using this learning behaviour for a long time in her learning and has never experienced a situation where it has been challenged. Due to this, Lara does not expect a challenge to this belief in her future.

“I think if I got a piece and couldn’t do it, like tried pretty much everything I could, it’s very unlikely that that would happen” (1. 23:22).

5. Failure does not exist in Lara’s learning process.

Lara exhibits a very strong belief that failure does not exist for her when discussing new learning experiences.

“I think just past experiences of f., not failing but trying and they didn’t work” (1. 19:10).

When Lara discusses unsuccessful strategies she is describing the problem solving process of finding effective strategies. Strategy-based learners do not make a decision of failure during the learning process. They make decisions about the effectiveness of their strategy choices and adjust or change these strategies throughout the learning process.

As seen clearly in the above quote, Lara can not even use the word ‘failure’ when describing her learning experiences. Failing is not a part of the vocabulary of a strategy based learner.

6. Ineffective strategy choice.

Lara does not always make effective strategy choices. Persistent effort does not always lead to successful learning. This is illustrated in the data when Lara describes an unsuccessful learning experience in her school Science classroom.

Her level of effort was high.

“I got 64% and I worked really hard for that 64%” (2. 44:15).

“I spent heaps of time doing something I didn’t like and didn’t get a great result” (2. 44:28).

Lara states that the only place she could use strategies in her science learning was at home, while she was studying.

“At home when I was studying I’d write - go through my book, write down all the things that I needed that were relevant and wrote them down. After writing them down, I’d look through them continuously, like a couple of times a day” (2. 45:41).

She did not think that her school science classroom was a place for strategy based learning because,

“When you’re in [science] class there’s not really much you can do but listen and do the work” (I2 45:45).

Furthermore, looking at Lara’s strategy choice for home study illustrates the limited use of simple strategies. She states only three simple strategies; rewrite, summarise and read over (repetition).. In this situation, Lara does not find the successful learning she expects from persistent effort. Effort and simple strategies are not enough. As Lara recalls the disappointing outcomes experienced in Science learning, some very strong emotional responses are evoked.

“annoyed” (I2. 44:10).

“angry” (I2. 44:15).

“frustrated” (I2. 44:48).

“I hate it” (I2. 45:00).

These emotional responses appear to become more intense as she recalls the situation. As a strategy based learner, Lara could become increasingly frustrated with a specific learning experience because her usual strategizing does not lead to success in the subject area. This learning experience appears to need memorising strategies.

“Science is pretty much a thing that I can’t remember everything that we’ve got to know” (I2. 46:30).

“It didn’t stay in my head” (I2. 45:21).

“It’s not sticking” (I2. 45:24).

Lara does not exhibit a wide range of memory strategies and it may be helpful for her to be introduced to more as well as strategies that are more complex. This would alleviate the building frustration, providing more strategies to try. Built up frustration with no new strategies introduced can lead to content judgements such as,

“Science I hate it” (I2. 45:00).

“This is boring” (I2. 45:21).

“I’m not interested” (I2. 46:36).

6. Difficulties and frustrations are part of the Learning Process.

Continued strategy based learning can be difficult, particularly if initial strategy choices prove ineffective.

“I had to keep going a lot of times. It was really hard” (I2. 2:45).

Strategy based learning behaviours can also create frustration during the learning process.

“Sometimes I do get frustrated and give it up. I will come back to it but I get frustrated with myself and I’m not happy, but if I was a little bit more patient then,”
Lara could be more successful in school music classes in the future. (I2. 8:24).

Lara states that her belief that difficulties and frustrations are part of the learning process, derived from watching how her father learns new things.

“Even if dad knows that it’s going to be incredibly difficult and he knows he’ll get frustrated with it, he still does it, and that’s the same with me. Even if I don’t, even

if I know it's going to be incredibly hard, I still try and take it on. Sometimes it gets frustrating but I still try and do it anyway. So that's something I've definitely got from my dad" (I2. 48:25).

Affective responses during learning occur but do not interfere with continued strategy selection.

"After spending a lot of time on something and not being able to get it, it's frustrating. In the end we got it and it was really good [giggle]." (1. 19:36).

Ultimately, despite the difficulties and frustrations that can occur, Lara experiences enjoyment because of the strategy based learning process.

"It does get stressful but I enjoy it" (2. 38:10).

- Active participation in the learning process.

Lara's high level of involvement in the learning process is a strong indicator of active participation in new learning experiences within her music classroom. Strategy based learners such as Lara are actively involved in their new learning experiences from the beginning of the learning process. Strategy choices and evaluations throughout the learning process demonstrate an active role in learning. Active learning requires the learner to believe that action is required during the learning experience. Education is considered a verb.

"Education is definitely something that you do. It is provided for you but it's provided for you to do" (I2. 47:30).

As a strategy based learner, Lara exhibits behaviours associated with active learning throughout the data.

1. Lara confronts her class teacher when her results do not reflect her expectations of a particular learning experience.

"If I get a bad mark, then obviously I'm not doing something so well and I will confront the teacher after about and say you know, what was it that brought my mark down and I'll see about fixing it up" (I2. 20:10).

If learning was an activity that Lara did feel she participated in, she would not seek assistance after the learning experience was over. This statement indicates that Lara has not learnt the task to her standard and so her effort continues as the learning experience continues. It is not mastered to her satisfaction, hence the learning experience continues. Lara is the person continuing the learning experience, no one else. She is actively pursuing her learning.

2. Control over her learning.

When asked if she felt she had any control over new learning experiences, Lara replies,

“Yes I do. Most of the time if we get told we’re doing something new I’ll be like okay, you’ve got to do it, sit down, try and get it” (I2. 42:45).

Lara demonstrates control over her new learning by actively pursuing and participating in the learning process.

3. Classroom environment and subject content affect active participation in new learning.

“Definitely depends on the subject, and sometimes the teacher. If the teacher is frustrating then you don’t even want to make an effort because they annoy you. I’ve had that before. I shouldn’t but I do” (I2. 43:32).

Interestingly, Lara’s final comments demonstrate an acknowledgement that allowing class teacher behaviour to interfere with her active participation in new learning is not acceptable. Yet she has done so in the past and continues to in the present. This comment also indicates that Lara’s level of participation in the learning process can vary depending on the subject and the teacher. In this example she illustrates a negative effect on her level of participation.

4. Sources of active participation in new learning.

Lara was asked where these beliefs about active participation in new learning came from.

- Parents.

“Mostly from my parents” (2. 48:10).

When explaining in more detail, specific mention is again made of her father.

“Dad is very ‘bring on the new things’. He’ll take on anything and I think I got that from him” (2. 48:13).

Lara not only acknowledges the role of active participation in new learning experiences, she exhibits behaviours that clearly demonstrate that she actively participates in new learning. As discussed in the previous chapter, active participation in the learning process is not compatible with Malle’s (1990) explanation of achievement attributions.

As stated in the present study, active learners, such as Lara would not fit Malle’s explanation

Successful New Learning

How new learning is judged successful is very important. This research is phenomenological, where the emphasis is on the individual’s own experience of their life world. The individual students have very strong ideas of whether their new learning experiences in the school music classroom are successful or not. It is important to explore their own ideas of successful new learning. Therefore Lara’s judgements of successful or unsuccessful new learning are presented.

At the end of the learning process Lara makes judgments about the success or unsuccessful learning outcome. In several instances, Lara reports an emotional response to these judgments.

“When I did get something right it was really exciting” (I2. 2:26).

“Really good. It was exciting” (I2. 3:41).

“When I got it right it was really exciting. It was a new thing that I got to learn” (I2. 6:06).

“It’s really exciting when I get [new things]” (I2. 7:47).

All of these quotes were included to show the strong emotional response Lara has to successful new learning judgments. ‘Exciting’ is a strong emotional identification and even

the use of the word “good” is preceded by the adverb, ‘really’. When Lara judges new learning to be successful, her emotional response is strong.

- Personal ownership of successful new learning.

When asked who was responsible for the successful new learning of a difficult task, Lara replied,

“Myself, going over and over and over and over again. It was good” (I2. 3:46).

Her immediate response, naming herself responsible for her success indicates personal ownership of that success. She then describes the successful strategies she used to obtain this success, repetition and continued effort, and ends her answer with a positive emotional response. This indicates that Lara feels her strategy choices were the reason for her success, therefore her strategic decisions made her successful. This allows her to personally feel good about the new learning experience, ending with a positive emotional response.

Lara credits the successful learning outcome to her own learning behaviours and experiences a positive affective response.

“I don’t want to sound big headed but I think it was myself. No one really knew what they were doing and I think I had to think up the strategies. A lot of the people in the end were like, we can’t get it so lets not do it but I was determined to get it . My Music teacher had set it for me so obviously she thought that I would be able to do it, so I was determined to get it and I think I was the one who stuck with it and in the end we got it” (I1. 19:46).

This positive emotional response to her personal ownership of the successful new learning is also present in the learning journal data.

“Our teacher listened to what we had prepared for the song and she liked it but she did make a couple of suggestions to change some things. Having her making [sic] suggestions was good because she said we could use them or leave them” (J1).

When seeking feedback from the teacher Lara notes that suggestions were given but not instructed. This allowed her to feel ownership of the task outcome and also to feel like the student opinion had value in the learning environment. Lara reflects on this in a positive way. The same journal entry also suggests that the learning task allowed for student choice,

creating positive reinforcement for Lara's ownership and responsibility for the learning task.

"Because it was our performance we could do what we wanted to do" (J1).

Lara judges successful new learning in several ways. First, relies on her own judgement when deciding if a new learning experience has been successful.

"For me I pretty much kept trying them all just because I knew that they were all just going to be good in the end, that I'd be able to do it" (I2. 7:56).

Second, she compares herself to class peers.

"Actually got one of the top marks in the class. So that was pretty good" (I2. 7:18).

Although this comment acknowledges the mark awarded by the teacher for the new learning experience, this is referenced specifically with a direct comparison to the results of her class peers. This demonstrates that Lara use her position in the class, using the teacher awarded mark, as a way of judging the degree of learning success she has accomplished.

Third, Lara is aware of the marks awarded by class teacher.

"I do pretty well in them. For two assessments this year I've got full marks" (I2. 6:42).

"So pretty much if I get a good mark then that's when I kind of know that I'm doing well and if I get a bad mark, then obviously I'm not doing something so well" (I2. 20:00).

These marks awarded by the class teacher for new learning experiences provide Lara with a 'yard stick' to compare with her self-assessment.

"So if we think we've done pretty well there might be something better that we could have done" (I2. 21:00).

As an active learner, Lara uses discrepancies between her self-assessment and the marks awarded by the class teacher as an opportunity to ask for strategies to improve similar future tasks.

“I will confront the teacher after about it and say you know, what was it that brought my mark down and I’ll see about fixing it up” (I2. 20:15).

Fourth, Lara actively compares the amount of effort she has exerted during the learning process and the grade awarded by the class teacher. This comparison can support her reflection of the learning experience as in the following quote.

“I got 64% and I worked really hard for that 64%” (I2. 44:03).

It can also support her reflections of an unsuccessful new learning experience.

“I spent heaps of time doing something I didn’t like and didn’t get a great result” (I2. 44:21).

There is evidence of Lara comparing the amount of effort expelled and the resulting marks awarded in various subjects of learning.

“I worked less hard and got better marks in other subjects” (I2. 44:11).

The data suggests that Lara uses comparisons to support her judgements about successful and unsuccessful new learning experiences.

Summation

Lara’s data presents a self-regulated, mastery-oriented student who employs complex and varying learning strategies in her school music classroom when attempting new learning experiences. The importance of a challenge in her new learning experiences, whether presented as part of the task or an allowance for Lara to create a challenge within the task, is prevalent in the data. She is actively participating in her new learning experiences. The data also suggests that Lara makes attributions about her new learning experiences in her school music class and these affect her expectations of future success with similar tasks. Lara is a strategy learner, exhibiting a resistance to failure outcomes. In regard to new learning experiences Lara replaces failure with a problem-solving mindset, which in turn, leads to continued strategising learning behaviours. These learning behaviours have lead to successful new learning and a positive attitude to future new learning in her school music class.

Chapter 6

Case Study Three: Todd

At the time of this research, Todd was twelve years old and enrolled in year 7, the first year of High School for NSW students. He is enrolled in New South Wales music syllabus stage four (Refer Figure 1). It is the first time in students' educational experience where subjects of study are separated, not only by time but also by teacher. It is considered a challenging year for many students, as they leave their well known Primary school and attend another location for High School with students coming together from many surrounding Primary schools. Students entering Year 7 have a mandatory module of music study. Students are expected to have participated in previous music study in the Creative Arts K-6 syllabus throughout their Primary years of schooling. Unfortunately, many Primary schools do not have the funding for specialist music teachers, so many students enter the mandatory music subject in Year 7 with little or no experience learning music. Music learning experiences are provided in the areas of performance, aural, theory, musicology and composition, at a very simplistic level.

The first semi-structured interview was conducted in Term 2, the learning journal was completed throughout Term 3 and the final semi-structured interview was conducted at the end of Term 4 2006.

Summary of responses follows.

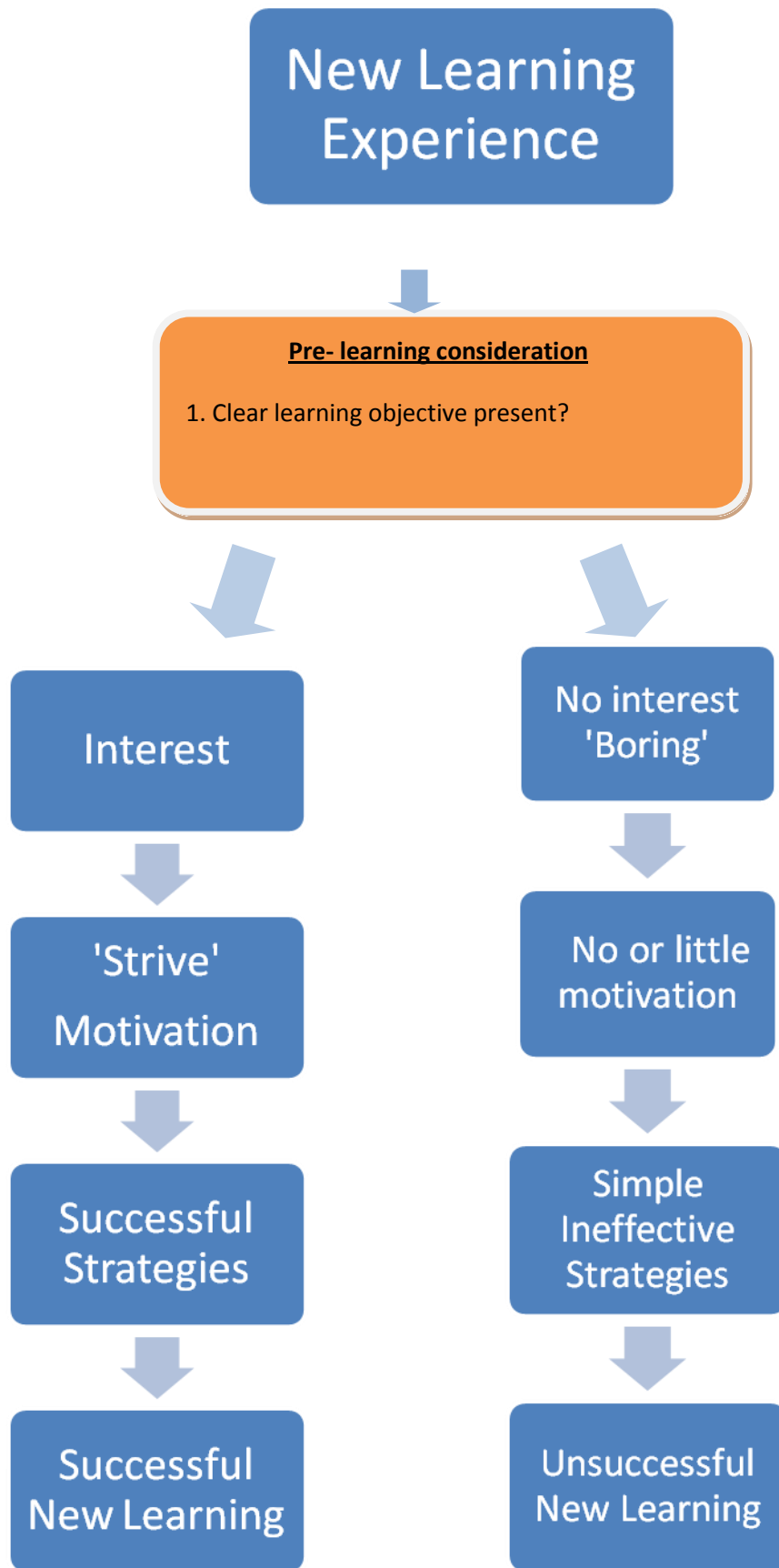


Figure 6. Todd's Learning Behaviours

Todd's Pre-learning consideration

Clear learning objective present

When investigating the self generated text of Todd's learning journals, one pre-learning consideration is consistently present. Pre-learning considerations are questions the student asks themselves at the very beginning of a new learning experience. The answers to these questions determine if and how the student will proceed with the new learning experience from that point on. The data presented in the learning journal indicates that a clear learning objective is present at the beginning of a new learning experience which leads to strategy based learning behaviours. The task has been retold by Todd in a very simplistic way, but this may indicate that he understands the learning objective enough to be able to summarise it in his own words. It should be remembered that, at the time of the interview, Todd was 12 years old.

All of the learning journal entries present a clear learning objective in the first sentence. This may also provide evidence demonstrating that Todd only recognises new learning experiences when the learning objective is clear from the onset.

Interest

Todd's interest level in new learning experiences in school music is prevalent within the data. It is always mentioned before any other learning process has begun. Therefore it is important to various aspects of interest that affect Todd's future decisions within his new learning process.

In general, Todd enjoys learning in his school music class.

“It's fun” (I2).

He also indicates that future music study at school has positive expectations attached.

“I look forward to it” (I2).

Todd's interest in school music study is complimented by his extracurricular instrument study.

“I do it outside of school as well” (I2).

Intriguingly, Todd states in the data that one of the reasons he continues to participate in school music study is because it assists with his extracurricular music learning.

“It helps me with my outside of school Music” (I2).

The connection of school music study to his outside school interest of instrument study is an important one.

Todd enjoys learning music in his school music class because he experiences composition opportunities.

“I like the composement [*sic*] of the Music and the way they can make it flow together as one” (I1).

Todd feels that studying composition in school music class is exciting.

“I find it exciting... the way composers can make it sound as one” (I1).

“I want to learn how to put Music together” (I1).

There is also mention of the positive aspects of high school music study compared to music study in Primary school the year before. Todd really enjoys the class time spent using different instruments.

“We get to play lots more instruments and you don’t do as much theory” (I2).

Todd believes music study allows for individual self-expression and that has value to him.

When asked if he intends to continue music study through high school he answers yes and explains why.

“I think Music can let out the spirit in you” (I1).

“(Freedom). to create and like you can make up Music that shows who you are” (I1).

“Cause I was determined to get it” (I1).

“Cause I was determined to get it” (I2).

“I don’t like to leave stuff not done” (I1).

The repetition of comments relating to the value of music study throughout Todd’s data may indicate the strength of Todd’s interest. Value enhances the level of interest, and interest is a key aspect of Todd’s learning process.

Todd has only been enrolled in high school music class for 2 terms when the first semi-structured interview was conducted. This is illustrated by the small variety of music class room learning content he describes.

“I feel excited when we’re doing something good but I don’t feel very good when it’s boring” (I1).

When asked to clarify what learning content is exciting Todd states, “playing instruments” (I1). When asked to clarify what learning content is boring Todd states, “body percussion and clapping” (I1).

These two areas of learning content also correlate with the two he feels confident with and less confident with, respectively.

When asked what they had been learning in school music class, Todd clarifies the situation by stating only two areas of learning content have been introduced so far.

“We only play instruments and clap so that’s about it” (I1).

In the data there is little mention of Todd’s need or desire for challenge in the learning content of his school music class. While discussing what he enjoys about it, he was also asked to identify possible improvements; suggestions that would increase his enjoyment of school music learning. Interestingly, Todd brings up the area of challenge. Due to the comments being made in direct relation to increasing interest, these have been placed in the interest theme of the case study.

Todd’s interest could be increased if the content became more complex.

“Make me do more complex stuff in class” (I2).

When asked to clarify, Todd explains the difficulty level of class work needs to be increased.

“Do trickier things. Make us learn trickier things” (I2).

This suggests that his first year of learning experience in high school music is not creating enough of a challenge for him and he does not wish to be bored. Todd is seeking learning opportunities that create challenge for him in his school music class.

Motivation

The theme of motivation leads closely on from the last areas of pre-learning consideration and judgements of interest. If Todd can identify a clear learning objective and has judged this to be interesting to him, he will be motivated to begin his learning process. The data presents several areas of motivation and will be discussed under the headings, Future music study, Incremental success, and Competition.

- Future Music Study

Motivation is also derived from the expectation of continuing music study throughout his high school future.

“I might follow it [music study] up to Year Twelve and also do it outside of school as well” (I2).

His long term attitude to learning music could also be affected by his belief that new learning in school music assists him to be a better musician, which in turn assists with his future study plans.

“It can broaden my understanding of music” (I2).

- Incremental success

Although absolute successful new learning does occur throughout the data, even when successful learning is not absolute, Todd continues to derive motivation from smaller successes.

“Now I feel more confident about music classes because now I can sort of compose a rap song” (J1).

This incremental success is also present when reflecting on the incident. A balanced analysis allows Todd to feel some personal achievement but still acknowledge the areas of the task that are yet to be completed successfully.

“I feel the same about music class because I achieved something and didn’t do well in something” (J1).

- Competition with class peers

There is evidence that Todd gets motivation from his class peers who are involved in the same new learning experience. When the other groups seem to be succeeding, this motivates Todd to continue his level of effort.

“We wanted to try again because all the other teams were going fine” (J1).

I. Metacognitive knowledge

Todd does mention some metacognitive knowledge about how he learns.

“I lose concentration very easily” (I2).

When asked by the researcher how he could improve his chances of successful new learning in the future Todd refers back to the previous knowledge about himself as a learner.

“Because I’m not patient enough and I need to be more patient so I can concentrate better” (I2).

This knowledge is also related to the upcoming section on learning strategies. Todd reveals one of his successful learning strategies is focusing on a particular section of the task. Focus can lead to new learning success in his school music class and he is aware of this.

i. Extrinsic Motivation

Marks awarded by class teacher

Todd’s motivation to continue strategizing through new learning experiences in his school music class comes from a strong need to earn good marks.

“I want to get good marks in it” (I2).

“I tried[sic] again because I am always determined to get good marks in music” (J1).

There is also evidence that Todd is motivated by future marks in school reports. These are only done twice a year.

“I wanted to get a good mark in my report” (I2).

There is also evidence that Todd feels his success in school music class is accountable to one of his sisters and his father. This provides extrinsic sources of motivation throughout the new learning experience.

“My sister, she makes sure you learn something” (I2).

This comment is followed very closely with a similar one about the role his father plays in his learning.

“Yeah, he’s pretty much the same but he has a lot more power” (I2).

To clarify, the researcher asks if his father’s power can make Todd learn and Todd confirms this. Although a description of what this power entails is not present in the data, the researcher believes the accountability of learning Todd feels towards his sister and father provide motivation to continue new learning experiences in his school music classroom and support his strong need to earn good marks in this subject.

Learning Strategies

The data illustrates that learning strategies are employed by Todd after the pre-learning consideration, interest, and motivation. When discussing learning strategies the data provides information related to the sources of the learning strategies. As learning strategies can come from a variety of sources, it is important to discuss and will be investigated in the following section.

II. Learning strategy sources

i. Previous learning

Todd states that previous learning to play of instruments assists with learning to play new instruments in school music class.

“From guitar and school and stuff I’ve learnt to play instruments and it kind of comes on other instruments” (I1).

When describing a quick successful new learning experience Todd refers to a previous experience with playing drums in his house. Both of his older sisters have weekly drum lessons and there is a drums set in the family house.

“We just had to start copying with our feet, tapping our legs and stuff. But I already knew how to do it from before” (I1).

When asked who he attributed the successful new learning experience to, he states his parents.

“Cause they bought the instruments” (I1).

Todd feels successful in particular subjects because,

“They’re exciting and the teachers are good” (I1).

What makes a good teacher?

“a bit of humour [and] they’re not too strict” (I1).

ii. Sister

Todd mentions in the data that learning strategies for a music class learning activity can be sourced from one of his older sisters.

“At the start I was going to make a drum but [Bree] said to make an instrument that has a cardboard strip on the bottom and tins and things like that” (J1).

iii. Outside Tutor/s

When describing the implementation of a successful strategy during a new learning experience, Todd refers the source of this strategy to his singing lessons. Due to the specific source acknowledgement, Todd attributes the success of this new learning experience to his parents, as they provide resources and the financial assistance that led to his success.

“Once again they bought the instruments and paid for lessons and stuff so that’s how I learnt to make up the words to fit in” (I1).

The importance of outside music tuition to Todd’s success in his school music class is echoed when he is asked how he could become even more successful. He feels that more outside music lessons with more instruments would enhance his chances of being more successful. This strategy was successful so Todd feels it will be successful with similar situations in the future.

“Get more Music lessons with more different instruments” (I1).

Todd also feels that the education he receives from the outside tutor/s would also enhance his chances of successful new learning in his school music class.

“Learn more techniques from my guitar teacher and singing teacher” (I2).

This makes sense as his source of successful new learning strategies for school music class have come from outside tuition and experiences outside his music classroom. This also suggests that Todd’s learning in school music relies heavily on external teaching.

iv. Peers in the same learning environment

The data presents evidence that Todd uses peers in the same learning environment as a source for new learning strategies.

“I made sure my hand was going directly over the, the hand with the beater was going directly over the note I was meant to hit” (I2).

When asked where this strategy came from, Todd explains that he saw other peers doing it.

“Other people, I saw other people doing that” (I2).

This strategy source is repeated in the data, suggesting that it is a regular learning strategy for Todd when he attempts new learning experiences in his school music class.

“I tried different techniques off other people. I was looking at other people’s work. I wasn’t getting the answers, I was looking at how they were working the answers out” (I2).

Todd relies on a very small group of learning strategies as discussed previously; outside tuition, home/family, his own knowledge and skill base from previous learning and his class peers. In the classroom environment his only strategies are previous learning and his class peers. In the data Todd describes an interesting situation that occurs when a substitute teacher takes his music class. Due to Todd speaking to one of his class peers, the substitute teacher uses a discipline technique requiring Todd to move to another seat.

“He moves me where there is no one else around”(I2).

When asked if he learnt as much in that class, Todd is confident that he did not learn anything.

When asked why no learning occurred, Todd’s reasoning returns to his metacognitive knowledge related to his distractibility.

“Because I get distracted way too easy because I am really bored” (I2).

For Todd, removing him from his class peers during a new learning experience stops him using one of his most relied on learning strategies. If he does not possess any previous knowledge that can help him strategize, then he would have no other strategies to rely on in this learning situation. He would quickly become bored and distracted from learning.

III. Strategy Based Learning Behaviours

Evidence of specific learning behaviours that indicate and aid strategic learning will be presented and discussed under the following headings; Todd’s use of continued and persistent effort, listening, memorising, repetition task management, substitution, focus, ineffective strategies and no failure.

i. Todd’s use of continued and persistent effort.

To be a strategy based learner, continued and persistent effort throughout the new learning process is required. The data provides evidence of this.

“The reason I got it the 5th[sic] time is because I memorised the parts of the song that I had trouble with” (J1).

To continue to attempt a new learning experience five times over, using 3 different learning strategies, demonstrates a high level of continued and persistent effort. This is not only used in conjunction with other learning strategies, such as focussed listening and memorisation, but as a standalone strategy. The researcher believes Todd uses continued and persistent effort as an individual learning strategy as well as an accompanying strategy with other learning strategies. This has also been evident in the other two participant’s data.

The data shows that after Todd chooses a learning strategy and implements it, a judgement about its effectiveness is made during the learning process and a strategy is continued, adjusted or replaced by a more effective strategy.

“First I put a tin and skewes [sic] to make a simblel[sic] but the lid was too heavy for the skewes[sic]. So to hold them up I cut rubers[sic] up to put in the bit of the skewer that lent in but the glue didn’t hold so I duck[sic] tape but that streched[sic] and didn’t hold the skewes[sic]. Then I tried masking tape and that worked” (J1).

Strategy based learners view a new learning experiences as a problem to be solved. Strategies are chosen, implemented and judged. Then continued, adjusted or replaced during the learning process.

Attributions related to strategies are also present at the end of a new learning experience. In the following example, Todd acknowledges the difficulties of performing with another peer, at the same time.

“If I had to do it again I would do it alone because the other person puts you off” (J1).

A positive new learning experience attributed to continued and persistent effort and effective learning strategies leads to a positive expectation of new learning in future similar tasks in school music class.

“It makes music classes better now I know that I can do anything if you try” (J1).

As well as a positive expectation of future success with a similar task, the following quote suggests that an expectation of success with a similar task in the future is also accompanied by an emotional response. The statements “I feel a lot better” in the following quote suggests that in the initial stages of the described new learning experience, Todd did not feel confident but after success, this emotion has positively changed.

“I would feel really confident to do a similar task now. I feel a lot better” (J1).

ii. Listening

The strategy of focused listening is employed by Todd in new learning experiences.

“I listened to it for a while and finally [*sic*] got it right” (J1).

iii. Memorising

One of the learning strategies employed by Todd in a new learning experience in school music class is memorisation. In the following example, Todd explains that this strategy was employed after another had been used without complete success.

“I memorised the parts of the song that I had trouble with” (J1).

iv. Repetition

Todd uses the learning strategy of repetition as a way of succeeding with new learning experiences in school music class. Repetition is continuing to use the same strategy over and over again. It is not always a successful learning strategy choice, as in the following example, where the employment of another learning strategy may have been helpful.

“I tryed[*sic*] it again to try and master it but it was to[*sic*] hard” (J1).

v. Task management

There is evidence in the learning journal entries of task management strategies, where Todd breaks a larger new learning task into smaller more manageable pieces.

“I thought up some lyrics but I couldn’t think of a jingle to fit in with it so I got out my Ipod and looked for a song I could use for the advertisement and I

found, It's a Long Way to the Top by ACDC but I didn't know how to play that on guitar so we decided to not have any music to the lyrics but still keep the beat. Instead I played James Bond opening theme song during the acting, before the song" (J1).

The following example illustrates how Todd manages his way through a difficult group composition learning experience. He found inspiration in a previously heard song, composed the remainder of the song and organised other group members in performance aspects. BY doing this he demonstrated task management skills.

"I thought back to tv show and it had a good rap so I put it in our rap and then I thought of another two verses and then I made up a chorus and the other two people were practising beat boxing" (J1).

vi. Substitution

When describing a new learning experience involving body percussion, Todd describes implementing the learning strategy of substitution which proves to be an effective choice in this learning experience. He substituted words into difficult rhythmic body percussion phrases, which aided his new learning.

"I made up my own words to it that fit in" (I1).

vii. Focus

Todd seems to use the skill of focusing during new learning experiences as a standalone strategy. This correlates with his metacognitive knowledge acknowledging his lack of patience and need to enhance his concentration during new learning.

This learning strategy is mentioned when he describes a successful learning strategy sourced from his peers, who are participating in the same new learning experience in the school music classroom.

In his new learning journal data Todd also describes the role of focus in relation to a new learning experience that eventually becomes successful. At the beginning of this new learning experience, Todd acknowledges why he is experiencing difficulty.

"We were talking a lot instead of thinking heaps for a rap to do" (J1).

When the task was successful, he returns to the original attribution to explain his success.

“We got it this time, we got it because we focused on the task” (J1).

viii. Ineffective strategies

Attributions related to ineffective strategies are learning behaviours of a strategy based learner. This relates to the previous section Continued and persistent effort, because attributions made throughout the new learning process require high levels of continued and persistent effort. The data presented in previous section also supports attributions to ineffective strategies during the learning process.

ix. No Failure

Todd is certain that he has no experiences of failure in school music class. When asked why this has never happened, he provides a very definite reason; confidence.

“Cause I’m pretty much confident about my Music playing so I don’t feel worked up if I don’t get it” (I2).

Active Participation in the Learning Process

Todd’s high level of involvement in the learning process is a strong indicator of active participation in new learning experiences within his music classroom. Strategy based learners such as Todd are actively involved in their new learning experiences from the beginning of the learning process. Varying strategy choices throughout the learning process demonstrate an active role in learning. Active learning requires the learner to believe that action is required during the learning experience. Todd exhibits learning behaviours associated with active learning throughout the data and these will be discussed.

I. Class teacher

The behaviours of the class teacher can significantly affect the level of Todd’s active participation in the learning process.

“You get a boring teacher in music, you can get really distracted easily which doesn’t lead to good marks” (I2).

Further in the data, Todd describes inactive participation in some subjects at school.

“In all the boring subjects it’s like I get tired, and I fall asleep and then all the stuff goes in one ear and out the other” (I2).

When asked by the interviewer what makes a subject boring, he answered confidently.

“The teachers” (I2).

When this was queried by the interviewer, to allow for other factors that may lead to Todd judge a subject as boring, he confirms his first reply.

This shows that the level of active participation Todd engages with when attempting to learn new things at school relies strongly on the class teacher of the subject, not the content of the subject.

“No, just the teacher” (I2).

As discussed previously in the learning strategy sources section, class teachers need to have some humour and leniency in their teaching style.

Todd does not always feel like an active participant in his new learning.

“Depends on the subject” (I2).

When asked to explain this Todd refers to boring subjects. As stated above, Todd’s reasoning for a boring subject is the class teacher. So Todd’s level of active participation in new learning experiences does not depend on the subject but on the class teacher who is teaching the subject.

It has already been established that Todd exhibits a strong interest in music study. The researcher believes that Todd’s high levels of interest may compensate for a less than desirable class teacher in this subject. As previously stated, Todd’s motivation in school music class is also fueled by his desire to learn music that assists with his outside school music activities. The presence of these two important factors may allow Todd to continue motivation levels throughout new learning experiences in

school music. The absence of one or both of these motivational factors may also explain why he does not continue motivation levels in other subjects of study.

II. Classroom environment

Todd is an active participant in new learning experiences in his school music class due to the teaching and learning activities implemented, specifically the lack of theory activities.

“Music is more hands on. Because in maths it’s just all theory. In music it’s like only a terms worth out of four terms, theory” (I2).

III. Control over his learning

Throughout the data, Todd expresses differing views related to level of control he exerts over his own new learning.

When asked directly, he takes one hundred percent responsible for controlling all of his own learning.

“All of it” (I2).

When asked about outside school new learning, his answer varies.

“Yes. It’s up to me. Probably 75%” (I2).

When queried about the remaining twenty-five percent, Todd answers,

“Your friends and family” (I2).

This reference related to family support, including financial, and friends support.

Todd demonstrates a strong role in his new learning experiences. When discussing education in general, Todd believes that it is an equally shared between himself and the educational provider.

“About half and half” (I2).

As a new learner in his first year of High school, these beliefs about new learning and his role in that process may become more specific with time and experience.

Successful New Learning

How new learning is judged successful is very important to discuss. This research is phenomenological, where the emphasis is on the individual's own experience of their life world. The individual students have very strong ideas of whether their new learning experiences in the school music classroom are successful or not. It is important to explore their own ideas of successful new learning. Therefore Todd's judgements of successful or unsuccessful new learning are presented under the headings; emotional response, how new learning is judged successful, unsuccessful new learning experiences and positive expectation of success with similar tasks in the future.

I. Emotional response

When successful new learning occurs, it is often accompanied with an emotional response. Todd's emotional response to a successful new learning experience in school music class is pride.

"I felt proud" (I1).

Even though the success was attributed to his parents, the above quote suggests that he accepts some personal ownership as well.

When discussing his emotional response, Todd regularly refers to his feelings of happiness and confidence.

"I felt happy and confident" (I2).

"I feel happy and I feel confident if I get it" (I2).

There is also evidence that specific teacher feedback related to new learning can create a positive emotional response.

"I feel better about music because my teacher likes my musical ability" (J1).

II. How new learning is judged successful

- i. Todd describes himself as a successful student in school music class based on his amount of knowledge of the content area.

“I know how to do a lot of stuff in Music” (I1).

There is also evidence that Todd believes that success in school music class is directly related to the acquisition of new learning.

“Because my teachers, in and out of school, have made me learn new things” (I2).

Due to his previous learning and the acquisition of new skills Todd also believes that success in school music class can be judged by how easily he succeeds with class work. If it is not difficult, then he is successful learner.

“I don’t struggle with the class work” (I2).

- ii. Marks awarded by the teacher

One of the most significant ways Todd judges his success in his school music class is by the marks awarded by his class teacher.

“Because I get good marks on my tests” (I2).

“Aces it” (I2).

This is also demonstrated in the following quote, where Todd talks about the frustrations of working in a group with class peers who are not as successful as he is.

“When we do group work, instead of getting bad marks in the group work because the other people are not very good at it, we could all get good marks” (I2).

Marks and grades awarded by the class teacher are obviously a strong indicator of success for Todd in relation to his school music class.

II. Unsuccessful new learning experiences

Although Todd experiences both complete and incremental levels of successful new learning throughout the data, there is one example of an unsuccessful attempt at a new learning experience. As with his successful new learning experiences, Todd makes judgements about why this was unsuccessful. The data reveals that reasonable attributions about unsuccessful new learning experiences are being made during the learning process.

“Our teacher drew up a tab on the white board and then showed us how to play the tango on the xylophone. I plactised [*sic*] it but I didn’t get it. I think it was to do with all the other people in the class because I couldn’t hear what I was playing” (J1).

This unsuccessful attempt at a new learning experience is attributed to the noise of peers in the same learning environment, attempting the same learning task. This attribution seems reasonable and potentially accurate, particularly to any music teacher who has taught with xylophones and a music class.

When describing a new learning experience involving singing solfege for the first time, Todd makes another reasonable and potentially accurate attribution during the learning process.

“I think that my tounge[*sic*] couldn’t get around the words” (J1).

Although this experience does become successful, the data shows that attributions throughout the learning process occur, both with difficult new learning experiences and with the successful new learning experiences.

III. Positive expectation of success with similar tasks in the future

Successful new learning experiences in school music class, even those that were not successful straight away, follow with a positive expectation for future success. When asked why, Todd states, “because I’ll take the skills from that to make do that sort of thing” (I1).

Summation

Todd is a motivated student who shows a level of immaturity when approaching new learning experiences in his school music class. This is expected at this stage of his academic experience. Factors of gender were not prominent in the data and are therefore not be discussed any further in this research. Todd is the youngest of the siblings in this research and the researcher feels this may have contributed to his more immature learning behaviours, specifically when held in contrast to his elder sisters. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 8. Despite his immaturity there is clear evidence that Todd employs learning strategies when attempting new learning. He makes attributions which seem accurate and rational when considered in the new learning contexts he describes. Also surprising is that Todd can express specific details of his learning process, both verbally and by writing in his learning journal. Todd recognizes when new learning occurs and makes judgments of success. Todd's attributions affect his expectations of future success with similar tasks. He is an active participant in his own learning experiences and has the potential to develop more effective learning strategies as he continues his learning through High school.

The emergent themes presented from Todd's data have been presented and discussed in this chapter. The following chapter will present the emergent themes identified in the Parent data. These will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 7

Case Study Four: Parent of Sibling Participants 1, 2 and 3

To contextualise the three preceding chapters, it was decided to interview the parent most frequently cited by the three siblings. As this research is data driven the parent interviewed was the father. While discussing new learning experiences the siblings referred to their father and not their mother, even though they were not asked specifically. The father has been in a stable marriage to the mother of all his children since before they were born. Both parents have run their own separate successful businesses. The father has postgraduate qualifications in marketing and is continually involved in sports coaching courses. He is also a long time tri-athlete, competing in many organized competitions locally, nationally and internationally. As will be shown, his understandings and attitudes have influenced his children significantly and in varying degrees.

The parent was not asked to maintain a reflective journal but was interviewed. The Master Themes identified by IPA were: Learning Philosophy 1- Learning permeates all areas of life, Learning Philosophy 2 – All learning is valued, and Learning Philosophy 3 – Learning is a problem-solving process oriented towards life experience growth. These are presented in a schematized Chart below and contain bi-directional arrows. These emphasize the strong relationship the three learning philosophies exhibit within the data analysis. Due to the complex nature of learning, the learning philosophies outlined in the Parent's data overlap. Some areas discussed in one learning philosophy will also be relevant to another or both remaining philosophies.

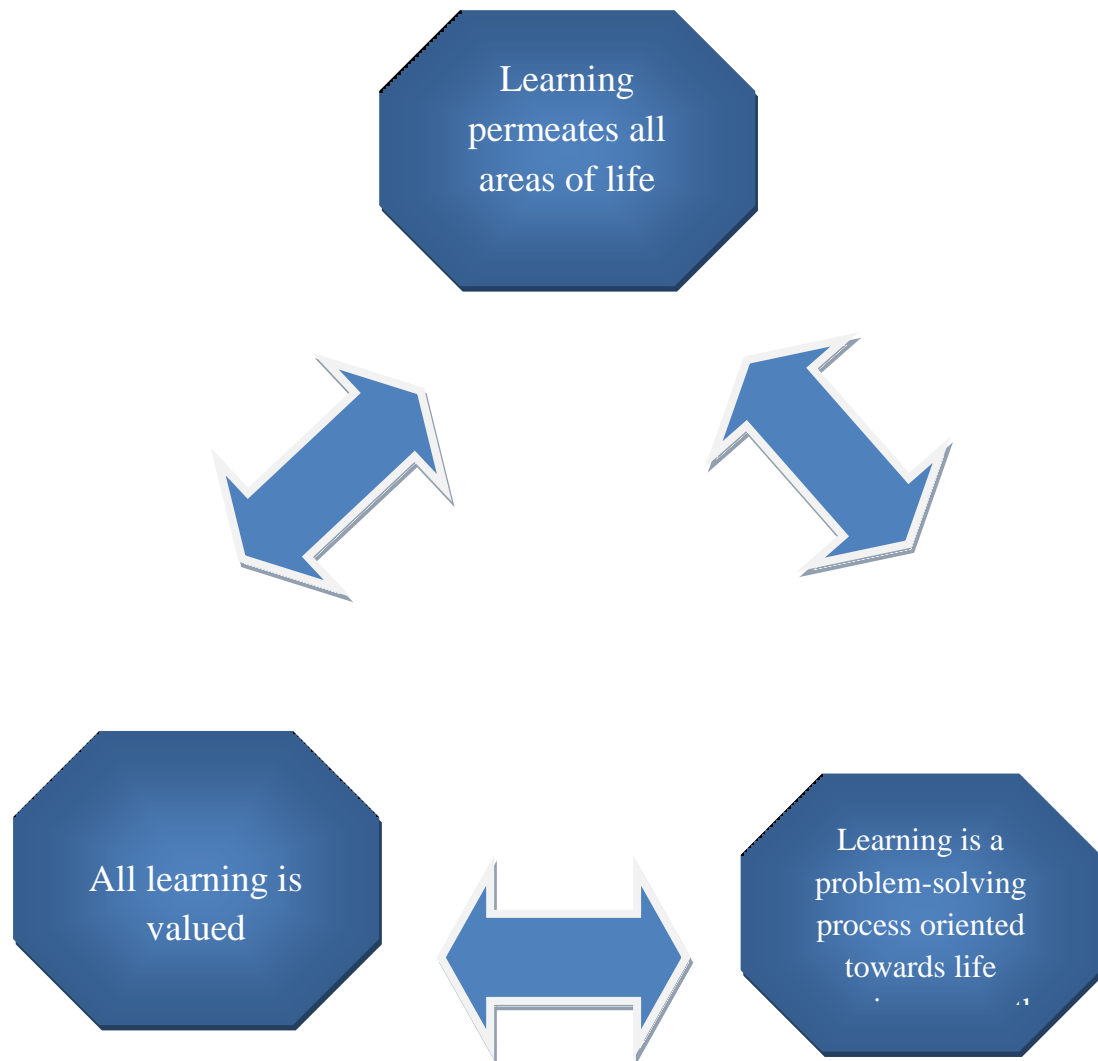


Figure 7.1 Parent's Learning Philosophies

The following is a summary of the semi-structured interview data which will be discussed under three headings; Learning permeates all areas of life, all learning is valued, and learning is a problem-solving process oriented towards life experience.

(i) Learning Philosophy 1 – Learning Permeates All Areas of Life.

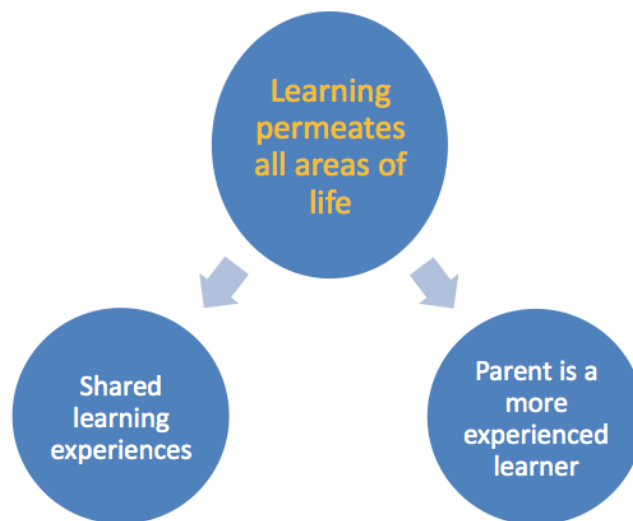


Figure 7.2 Learning Philosophy 1

Throughout the interview data, the Parent conveys a strong philosophy supporting the value of shared learning experiences. The first emergent theme to surface in the interview data is shared learning experiences between parent to child, child to parent, and child to child.

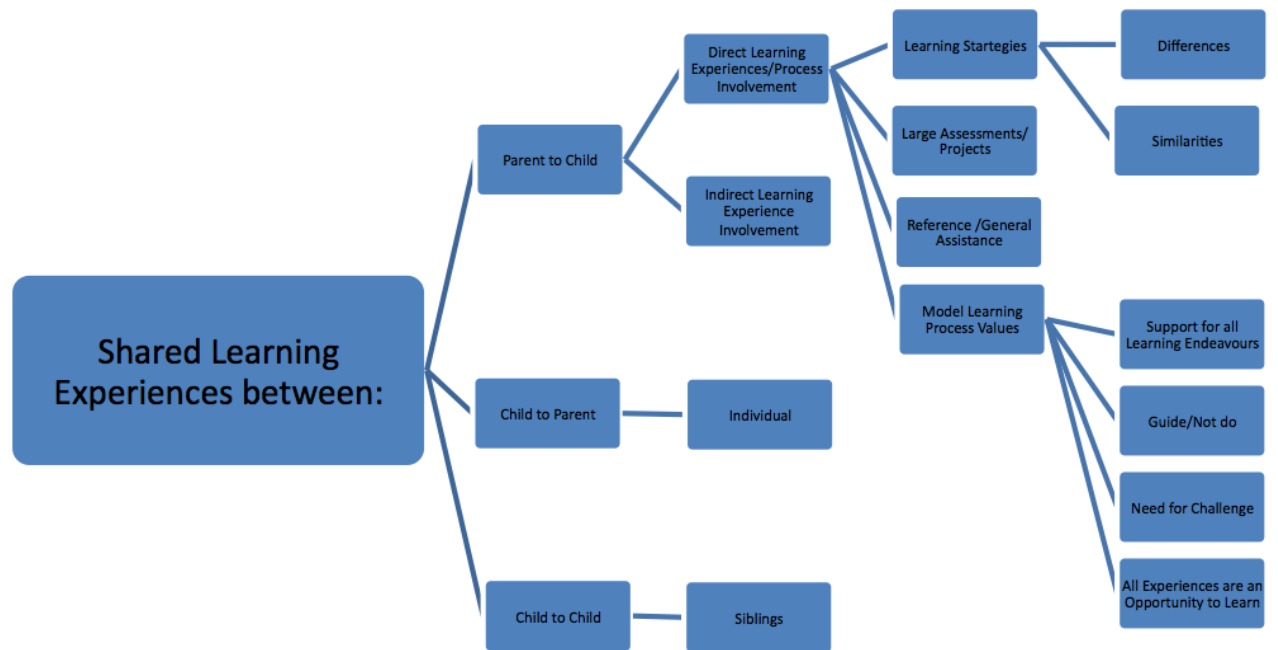


Figure 7.3 Shared learning experiences

Within the area of shared learning experiences between Parent to child, two individual areas emerged. These were direct learning experiences/process involvement and indirect learning experience involvement.

Direct learning experiences/process involvement.

The data provided several areas within this area. They were as follows:

a. Learning strategies.

Different strategies used to learn were apparent, particularly when looking at the differences between generations. The data provided examples directed towards learning strategies for studying;

“Get in there, shut your door, summarise, revise, and summarise and revise, and summarise and revise. Dad taught me that I suppose and it’s one of the things that I’ve tried to pass on to our kids, which is that there are some things in life you simply have to endure, not everything is meant to be enjoyed” (8:49).

Parent did not only provide general strategies for studying, but specific strategy instructions were also evident. These are strategies successfully used by the Parent in the past.

“Make the most of the opportunity to summarise when you’ve got a series of notes. So if ever you go to study stuff you don’t have to read through the lot. And practice it. Practice summarising, practice reading through the summaries and re-summarising. When I was at uni I’d write up a summary of a particular chapter of a textbook and it might be four pages. And then I’d take the four pages, and put it into one page. And then I’d take one page and put it into three or four key notes. And I try to get the kids to do the same sort of thing” (59:16).

Also provided were learning strategies for learning in the classroom environment;

“Look, the fundamental platform’s the same now as it was when I was going through school. The most important thing is to listen. If you don’t understand, ask a question, and if you’re asked a question and you don’t like the response, challenge, don’t be afraid to challenge your teacher, but do that in a way that preserves the dignity of the teacher” (58:51).

Generational differences between learning strategies was also noted.

“They don’t teach it the way they used to teach it when I was at school”
(11:12).

More detail concerning this statement and others like it, will be discussed later in this within the area of strategy attributions.

b. Large Assessments/Projects

Direct learning experience and involvement in the process were present during parent to child learning experiences involving large assessments/projects. The parent described big projects that he considered as contributing significantly towards assessment which he pointed out was “probably more a high school thing than a primary school thing” (15:08). The parent identified different alternatives that might suit the individual talents of his children including how they might find resources and organize their time. He would then, “have a little bit of a conference to define which of the projects ...might be the most appropriate.” (15:52).

The data illustrates the Parent also provides general assistance with learning tasks such as homework;

“Limited help with homework. If they get really stuck on an issue, I don’t know whether they come and tell me or whether I’ll ask questions and find out about it, I still don’t know how it happens. But somehow I find out about it, and I’ll give them some assistance with it.” (10:14).

and as a reference point during the final stages of the learning task when he would request that the child bring the report to him so he could read it and check the spelling and grammar. There is also evidence that the Parent took the role of a reference point during the learning process.

“Q. So you were always a reference point.

A. Yeah, pretty much.” (18:29).

Shared learning experiences between the Parent and child also provided opportunities for the Parent to model learning process values.

Evidence of the Parent's support of all learning endeavours is modeled throughout the semi-structured interview. Learning endeavours can include any topic brought home from school, but also includes driving a car, planning a European holiday, buying a new guitar and coaching a rugby team. The constant support is there for the children but it is conditional.

“I think kids have got to understand that parents are there to support their activities, but not necessarily do it for them. Because there's a stack of stuff that they're going to have to do in life that I'm there to support, but I just won't be able to be there all the time.” (19:39).

This role of guiding and assisting only while encouraging the child to complete the majority of the learning experience themselves, models the Parent's belief that learning must be experienced by the child. As the Parent said,

“Well, I could be dead tomorrow, so if I'm not around they've got to have the understanding of the basic principles they're going to need to apply.” (20:03).

The Parent's belief that challenge is required for learning experiences is illustrated in the following;

“it doesn't have to be a challenge for you to learn something, I mean, if your life's going along and there is no challenge, you learn from that and you create a challenge.” (1:07:41).

One of the most prominent values about learning presented by the Parent is the value of all experiences as an opportunity to learn. When asked about learning experiences the Parent makes reference to many experiences in and out of the academic area, including descriptions of learning experiences involve planning a European holiday, buying a new guitar, coaching a rugby team and driving a car.

Indirect learning experiences/process involvement.

The data illuminated several situations where the shared learning experience between the Parent and child were indirect. The Parent coached his son's rugby team and this entire experience allowed the child to witness his father's learning experience and this new learning put into practice.

“[Todd]'s intrinsically involved in sport because I was coaching the rugby side for four years, and he was in the rugby team.”(53:56).

This is also evident in the Parent's description of planning the family trip to Europe, and when deciding how to buy a new guitar. The child has observed the Parent's need for a goal when upgrading his bicycles and the strategies used to continue motivation.

“So on the drive home I said ‘You know mate if you really wanted that Gibson because you're really focused on what you're doing with your guitar, and I know you're keen to make it as popular and as successful as you can, I would have brought the Gibson.’ He said ‘No,’ he said ‘You can buy that later,’ ‘cause he said ‘I need a goal.’ So the goal up until now has been to keep practising on the guitar so I can get rid of the thing that I've had for the last five years, and get this Epiphone that I want. And he said ‘And then for the next two or three years, I'll play that, and then I'll go to the Gibson.’ And he said to me ‘How long did you have your first bike?’ And I said ‘Well mate, I probably had it for six years.’ And he said ‘And then when you got rid of that one, which one did you get then?’ I said ‘I got a [Bike brand unclear]. He said ‘How long did you have that?’ And I said ‘I probably had for two or three years.’ And he said ‘And what after that?’ And I said ‘That was my [another unclear Bike brand], and had that for two years,’ and I could see where this was going. And I said ‘Now I've got a Trek, and I've had it for two years, so it was probably five or six years, and then every two years I upgrade.’ And he said ‘Well I'm doing the same.’ He said ‘I've had this thing

for five years, and I'll have the Epiphone for two years, then I'll upgrade to the Gibson, and then' he said 'I can take it from there.' So he's worked out what model his old man uses to buy boy toys, and he's going to use the same model for boy toys." (37:44). Wol

There is also evidence of shared learning experiences from the child to the Parent. One of the children decided to discontinue Mathematics study in her final year of schooling. The Parent had strong views of Mathematics study, calling it, "one of those fundamental life skills that everyone should do." (9:54). His daughter explained her reasons and strategies behind her decision,

"if she dropped the subject that she wasn't performing in or had no interest in, and take another subject that she was performing in or did have an interest in, then it was going to impact variably on her UAI (University Admission Index)".

This challenged her Parent's previous idea about compulsory Mathematics study and changed his mind,

"she convinced me that there were other matters that she needed to consider." (9:15).

Evidence of shared learning experiences between children is present in the data.

"[The] youngest, learns just as much from his sisters then he does from his parents... his sisters are only two years or four years older then he is. So he thinks that, and he's probably right, that they understand his world far better then we will ever understand his world." (1:08:55).

The youngest refers to his older sisters when seeking assistance with social situations that occur at school.

"straight away the girls would be providing a wealth of gratuitous advice about how he should deal with it." (1:11:20).

Although the Parent may volunteer strategies they are quickly dismissed for strategies suggested by his older sisters.

“My advice was ‘Mate, go and tell a teacher.’ Now she says, ‘(Todd) that’s the last thing you want to do. Don’t go and tell a teacher. He doesn’t know, he’s out of touch, this is the strategy you’ve got to adopt. And when it happens tomorrow, go and do that. If it happens the day after, then do this. If it happens the day after that, then do this.’” (1:11:42).

But he does question these strategies on occasions;

“His only concern was that they were girls and they didn’t understand boys. So and then (Bree) would point out ‘Look, it doesn’t matter whether we’re girls or whether we’re boys, so long as the outcome is a desirable outcome.’” (1:11:26).

The youngest also relies on strategies to cope with specific teachers in his school, deferring to his sisters’ judgement.

Within the data the Parent also recognizes the sharing of strategies between sisters. The incident mentioned was not a positive one as the oldest sister shared coping strategies for stress. This involves violently kicking bedroom doors. As the Parent states;

“she does learn some skills, I’m sure that that’s good for her because she let of some steam and she felt better afterwards, but the door’s not looking good at the moment” (1:16:20).



Figure 7.4 Parent is a more experienced learner

Within the philosophy of learning permeates all areas of life, the Parent discussed learning experiences related to the Parent being a more experienced learner. Within this area, the data reveals specific learning experiences. Those were; driving, modeling, sport, education, learning style and expectations.

Relating to driving as a learning experience the Parent discusses two incidents involving his children. The first involves his daughter and an accident that occurred while she was attempting to park the car into the garage.

“I pointed out in no uncertain terms that that could have been a five year old child in a pedestrian crossing, and she might have been looking at someone’s hairstyle on the footpath, and that she could kill somebody, which drove it home really hard. But I think now she’s taken that onboard, and thought ‘I’ve

got to use the same learning model here, haven't I again. I've made a mistake here, what can I do in future? I simply have to focus 100% on the driving when I'm behind the wheel, and the time I can think about other issues and work that.'" (34:50).

Although damaging one of the family cars is inconvenient, the Parent starts this description with a positive attitude, looking at the incident as a chance for his daughter to learn. The Parent believes that mistakes are an opportunity to learn.

There is also evidence that particular parts of the learning process are emphasized during the act of learning to drive.

"You might be driving the car and the evaluation thing happens the whole time. And when I was teaching the kids to drive, the evaluation thing was happening the whole time. 'Don't just sit and look at the road, you can't use your mirrors the whole time, and don't just look at what's happening, look at what you think is about to happen.'" (46:39).

This illustrates the occurrence of evaluation throughout the learning process, not only at the conclusion. Learning to drive a car provides an opportunity for the Parent to emphasize this. As a more experienced learner the Parent uses many varying opportunities to model learning to his children. The experiences referred to in the data can be categorized into the following groups; learning strategies, learning is a process, learning motivation and adult learner.

Learning Strategies can be discussed in three specific areas; study strategies, school learning strategies and general strategies.

Firstly, the Parent describes several situations where study strategies were modeled to his children. The following three quotes were also discussed previously.

Direct learning experiences/process involvement.

"No,' he said 'You can buy that later,' 'cause he said 'I need a goal.' So the goal up until now has been to keep practising on the guitar so I can get rid of the thing that I've had for the last five years, and get this Epiphone that I want.

And he said ‘And then for the next two or three years, I’ll play that, and then I’ll go to the Gibson’ (59:16).

This example not only illustrates a study strategy but also the use of persistent, high levels of effort. This is echoed in another example from the data;

“Get in there, shut your door, summarise, revise, and summarise and revise, and summarise and revise. Dad taught me that I suppose and it’s one of the things that I’ve tried to pass on to our kids, which is that there are some things in life you simply have to endure, not everything is meant to be enjoyed” (8:49).

Strategies that assist with school learning are also presented in the data. The Parent reveals how his own learning experiences as a young and adult student have influenced the way he models learning strategies to his children.

“Look, the fundamental platform’s the same now as it was when I was going through school. The most important thing is to listen. If you don’t understand, ask a question, and if you’re asked a question and you don’t like the response, challenge, don’t be afraid to challenge your teacher, but do that in a way that preserves the dignity of the teacher” (58:51).

There are also several examples of the Parent modeling more generalized learning strategies. In particular, the skill of evaluating throughout the process of completing a task. The data presents three separate examples of the use of evaluation. The first describes the Parent’s experiences completing triathlons.

“And people say to me ‘Geez, you’ve done 20, you must have it all sorted out, like automatic,’ but it just doesn’t work like that. Things happen out there, and you’ve got to self evaluate pretty much every minute of the ten or 12 hours that you’ll be out there. You’re doing an evaluation, you’re doing a body check just to make sure that everything’s happening the way it should” (45:44).

He then goes on to explain the skill transfer to other areas of his life.

“And it’s very concentrated, very, very concentrated. And I think that’s been a valuable exercise for me, because it happens, the evaluation thing happens automatically, and with anything. You might be driving the car and the evaluation thing happens the whole time... you’ve to think about what can happen” (46:25).

When asked about the ways the Parent learns new skills, as an adult learner, the strategy of evaluation presents itself again in another situation. He describes his learning as a process and when asked if he evaluates throughout this process he answers,

“Oh, all the time! I’m evaluating what I’m planning” (45:00).

Due to the reoccurring nature of this particular strategy, the subject was asked if he felt the level of consistent evaluation throughout each process required a high level of awareness throughout and he replied;

“Right. Invariably I think that applies to most things that I do” (48:40).

The Parent has a strong belief that there are many different ways to learn and imparts this knowledge about learning as much as possible to his children.

“But I think it’s wise for the kids to have an understanding of alternative ways of doing things, so there’s not one religious way of being able to achieve an outcome, and that there’s a range of different things you can do to achieve the same sort of outcome” (10:48).

There is also evidence within the data that suggests the Parent believes that children learn differently and that learning strategy success may differ for individual learners.

“I try and find an alternative approach, because the approach that they’re taught at school may not necessarily be the one that gels with the kid’s hard wiring” (59:55).

The Parent acknowledges that differing learning strategies are not always presented in the school classroom, with many teachers limited by school/curricular restraints. The

use of varying learning strategies is modelled by the Parent and their importance is explained.

“But then I’ve got to say ‘Well what have we tried to do?’ and they’re doing some stuff on Pythagoras’ theorem, and I’ll go through it, and he’ll say ‘That’s not the way the teacher showed us.’ And I say ‘There are a million ways to skin the proverbial cat. The teacher’s got one way, and most the teachers are told that they’ve got to teach it that way. Don’t assume that it’s the only way to achieve the outcome that you want, there’s this other way to do it. And your teacher is not going to necessarily complain if you use a different method. As a matter of fact the teacher might think you’re a bit of a smart ass because you’ve come up with a different method.’ So we’ll go through the alternative method, and providing he comes up with the right answer, the one that’s in the back of the book, and that he’s comfortable, he now has to apply the same model to the rest of the chapter that he’s got to do” (1:00:26).

The use of varying learning strategies underpins the cognitive strategy attribution theory discussed in detail in the previous Literature Review chapter.

The Parent imparts more of his knowledge about learning to his children. He emphasizes a need to assess each learning experience so that appropriate strategies can be chosen. This assessment is encouraged at the beginning of the learning experience when the parent might identify alternatives in approach, resourcing and time management, tailored to each child and then discuss this with them before the project even begins. There is also evidence of this assessment happening during the learning experience;

“ where it clearly becomes a stressful issue, that we’ve got to get this out, we’ve got a deadline to get it out by, and I’ve gone in with some counsel and suggest, ‘Hey listen, all we’ve got to do is do this,’ it doesn’t have all the bells and whistles. Let’s just get everything done, meet the deadline and make sure that everybody’s less stressed.” (25:51).

The Parent is metacognitively aware of his own learning experiences and can identify what his children are doing when they learn.

“I see what the kids do, and I know what I do myself” (28:06).

What is very apparent from the language of the Parent in this data is the strong belief that learning is driven by a problem-solving mind set.

“they’ve got to have the understanding and the skill base to be able to go out there and assess, develop alternatives and try and drive an outcome for a solution” (20:07).

The Parent uses the word *solution* when he could have used the word *answer*. The word choice implies a process. This is supported by Dweck (2006) when discussing the nature of the growth-oriented mindset. This mindset recognises the process of learning as valuable as well as the answer. The opposite mindset, fixed, is solely concentrated on the goal. Growth-oriented mindset supports learning as a problem solving experience and this is evident throughout the data, particularly in the following section of data analysis.

The Parent exhibits strong beliefs that learning is a process-oriented experience and he models this with his children. He uses the word, *process*, regularly throughout the data when discussing learning, as in the following examples;

“you’ll probably make some mistakes, but that’s part of the process, so just go through that exercise” (18:04).

“it’s simply a part and parcel of the process” (26:33).

“we don’t respect failure in our household, failure is not an outcome. It’s just part of the process of doing” (42:30).

The Parent also models various learning motivations to his children. The first is the need for a self imposed goal to create sustained motivation. As discussed previously, when upgrading his guitar, his son explains to the Parent why he didn’t want him to buy the more expensive Gibson guitar, based on his need for a personal goal. This motivation technique had come directly from observing his father gradually upgrade bicycles.

More philosophical is the Parent’s belief that motivation to learn should come from the belief that all learning will add value to the individual’s life experience.

“when I was young I’d have a try at pretty much anything. And I think it’s vitally important for kids to do that. And I’d like to think that our kids have got the opportunity to try pretty much anything. But not just to try it, because it’s there to try so they can go to school and crow about the fact, simply because it adds some value to the life experience” (40:44).

The Parent also recalls hearing an interview with an eighty year old lady who was running in a famous local marathon. When asked why she was involved she explained that all new things add quality to her life. The Parent goes on to say,

“I thought ‘Well how good’s that?’ And it is, that’s one of the credos that I apply, and I think I’d like to see the kids apply the same sort of thing. They get an opportunity to try something, they’ll go and try it, see if they can learn something from the exercise, see if it adds some value to what they perceive their lifestyle to be, and if it doesn’t then they don’t have to pursue, but if it does they pursue it with a vengeance” (41:51).

The Parent also models what it is like to be an adult learner. His children were young when he began his higher education.

“I didn’t get my undergraduate degree until I was 35, I actually did some research on this one. I got my post graduate degree when I was 42, and I did a Company Director Diploma when I was 39, I’m still doing various grades of athletics coaching courses, I’m up to level 4 now, and I’m still going after various professional development programs that are related to my professional life on a regular basis” (42:49).

The children observing the Parent as a learner provides a long term view of learning in people’s lives.

“ if the oldies are still learning, then Jesus we’d better buckle up and settle in for the long haul” (44:20).

This is also present in the Parent’s idea of learning. When asked if he sees himself as an adult learner, the Parent replies;

“Yeah. [laughs] It just never stops does it”

The Parent is also very aware of how he learns.

“I’m a fact finder, I gather as much resources as I can. Decide a process, and then do it. Almost with the inevitable understanding that it’s going to cock up somewhere and I’ll have to go back and do it again. And when I do it again I assume that it’s going to happen all the way through the second time, and the third time” (44:33).

This is very important because, as stated previously, the Parent uses what he knows of his own learning and models this to his children during learning experiences.

Specific instances of self-awareness during sporting endeavors are mentioned in the data. The Parent uses a consistent evaluation strategy throughout competitions leading to high levels of awareness. This means that more effective or new strategies can be substituted as variables change.

“Because the same thing happens when you’re racing the Iron Man thing, you’ve to think about what can happen. Not so much what’s happening, but if I maintain this sort of pace with this heart rate, I’m going to be hypoglycemic by the time I get to 26k in the marathon, and I’ve still got another 16k to go, so how am I going to get through that 16k. What do I do? Do I back off a little bit, do I take on some more fuel? If I take on some more fuel, what sort of fuel do I take on, when do I take it on, and how frequently do I take it on” (47:57).

Cognitive strategy attribution theory describes evaluation throughout the learning process, allowing for learning strategies to be modified or changed for maximum learning.

“And it’s very concentrated, very, very concentrated. And I think that’s been a valuable exercise for me, because it happens, the evaluation thing happens automatically, and with anything” (46:26).

The Parent suggests the consistent evaluative strategy transfers to other areas of his life.

“Invariably I think that applies to most things that I do” (48:40).

The Parent also identifies himself as a more experienced learner than his children. When asked which subjects he studied at school he replied,

“Look, pretty much everything” (57:01).

When asked what kind of learner he was at school;

“I don’t think I was ever tops in the class, I certainly wasn’t the school dux or anything like that,... I was probably one of those nerdy kids at school that probably spent too much time studying” (58:30).

The Parent definitely views himself as an adult learner. As stated previously in this chapter, the Parent has completed undergraduate and postgraduate degrees as well as professional development programs on a regular basis.

On several occasions throughout the data collection interview, the Parent mentions the importance of expectations. These comments can be grouped into two separate categories; expectations related to performance and outcome, and expectations related to the learning process.

The Parent describes himself as a perfectionist and also describes his children as perfectionists.

“They’re perfectionists, like their father, so it gets done to the perfectionist degree. Now that might be an issue, I don’t know, I am a bit of perfectionist, and the kids are all perfectionists in the areas where they’re to learn, where they’re trying to achieve something” (25:35).

There is also recognition that successful learning experiences establish and sustain high expectations for future learning attempts.

“I think the more you learn the more confident you become at the out get, and being able to achieve an outcome” (28:07).

Although this statement discusses learning in general terms, it is supported by one of the main premises of Attribution Theory. It differs because Attribution Theory is specific about the future learning experience. It has to be similar to the past learning experience. An example would be a learning experience involving fractions and a

future lesson based on fractions. The initial learning experience with fractions, good or bad, would affect the learners' expectations of their performance in a similar learning situation, fractions, in the future. It can work both ways. If the past learning experience was unsuccessful then the learner will have unsuccessful expectations of a similar future learning experience, and vice versa.

The Parent also describes the affect self-imposed expectations and outside-parental expectations can have on the learner. He describes the dangers of high self-imposed expectations.

“So as they learn more and more they get more confident, but by the same token, confidence creates an expectation of an outcome, and if that doesn't happen then all of a sudden you begin to question your competence” (28:12).

“And they all want to learn a lot of things in a hurry, and if they can't learn all of those things in a hurry, then they get stressed about the fact that they aren't performing to their expectations” (24:40).

As stated previously, the Parent recognizes high expectations in his children as learners. This leads to a specific example of the problems associated with high expectations of performance and/or outcome in a learning situation. It involves his oldest daughter and occurred during her senior years of High school.

“everything was going fine for extension English, but things weren't going all that fine for advanced English. And she was thinking that the outcomes that she was developing weren't up to her expectations, and she was getting very concerned about it, and starting to lose some confidence” (29:53).

This illustrates the acute awareness of the Parent towards his children's learning. He recognizes the problems associated with having children who are active learners with high expectations of their performance or outcome. As stated in the data, the above incident regarding his oldest daughter was serious enough for him to step in, by quietly contacting the school-teacher and organizing an extra-curricular tutor. This solved the confidence problem because the tutor modeled and provided realistic expectations during the learning processes.

There is also evidence that the Parent is aware of outside-parental expectations.

“We do the praise thing at home, but we don’t do the praise thing in a big way” (1:03:26).

He believes that praise for a specific outcome or performance can be a dangerous.

“I think that if you go overboard with the praise thing it creates an unnecessary expectation about performance” (1:01:32).

Although he mentions that this is an occasional event in his home, the examples mentioned come from his experience as a sports coach.

“Cause kids don’t necessarily have expectations that they’re going to win 1st, or come 2nd or 3rd. But if you create expectations that the only outcome that you will award is if they’re in 1st place, then all of a sudden you’ve created a very unrealistic expectation then to the child” (1:02:39).

Expectations about the learning process are also evident in the data. A solid belief that learning is a process and that part of the process is to make mistakes is evident in this family. This also relates back to the work on evaluating because the process involves the expectation of mistakes, then the re-evaluating of previous work and strategies, leading to a more refined learning process.

Realistic expectations are evident in the way the Parent negotiates the learning process and also in his observations of the way his children negotiate the learning process, describing himself as a ‘fact finder’ who persists in his learning until he succeeds. There is mention of his second oldest daughter and her recognition of the process of learning.

“She recognises that the outcome that she generates on a project, or on her travels through life, isn’t always the best outcome. And as a matter of fact I think she recognises that it very seldom is the best outcome, that it’s a learning process that she needs to go through in order to be able to refine what she’s doing and can make it a little better each time she goes through the process. So I think she uses that model extensively” (33:05).

Expectations related to performance and/or outcome can be negative or positive.

(ii) Learning Philosophy 2 – All Learning is Valued

The Parent strongly believes that learning is not isolated to a specific situation, such as school. Throughout the interview data, the Parent conveys a strong philosophy supporting the value of learning in many varied learning experiences and varying learning situations. An emergent theme to surface in the interview data is a strong parental support for all learning experiences and is summarized in the following quote,

“ I think it’s absolutely vital for any parent to support any child in any learning endeavour, whether it be school related in terms of academic, whether it’s cultural or artistically, or whether it be sporting” (6:24).

More specific detail can be obtained by separating into the varied learning situations discussed in the data.



Figure 7.5 Support for all learning experiences

Parent data provides support for school based learning activities, mentioning the specific area of assessment tasks. These can be broken into several areas of learning; projects, homework and social.

a. Projects.

Within the data, the Parent provides support in several different ways. He provides support in the beginning of the project by assisting with the planning by,

“being able to identify which project out of a list of alternatives might be most beneficial given the talents of the children, and access to resources, and my perception of the timeframe that’s going to be involved” (15:55).

The Parent also supports learning in projects financially.

“in the purchase of resources, I recall that [Bree] was doing a study of the impact of sunlight on the growth of plants. So then we had to go and buy, pretty much buy a glass house with lights... it was a pretty significant thing, and we had to go and buy seeds, and grow stuff from seeds, and that didn’t work, so then we had to go and buy seedlings.” (17:00).

The data indicates that Parent provides himself as a reference point during the process of learning, “When you’ve got your final report bring it up to me and I’ll have a read of the final report and I’ll check the grammar and spelling” (18:25).

b. Homework.

Parent provides assistance and support for homework learning experiences when the need arises. The Parent is unsure how the need comes to his attention but offers suggestions.

Parent indicates that although his son seeks assistance regularly, he does not directly ask for assistance with Mathematics homework.

“[Todd] continually comes up- and he doesn’t ask for assistance, he doesn’t come up and say, ‘Dad, can you help me with this?’ He comes up and says, ‘Dad the answer in the back of the book is wrong’ (1:00:20).

This quote may indicate a lack of confidence when seeking assistance from his Parent but an alternative way of initiating the conversation leading to direct assistance. The data illustrates that any kind of assistance sought by the children is validated by the Parent.

c. Social.

Parent indicates that picking his children up after school provides opportunities for social assistance.

“we’d eventually get around to the social engagement that happened at lunchtime, and as soon as you’d point out that particular kid and the problems that occurred... My advice was, Mate, go and tell the teacher” (1:11:51).

Parent data provides support for private lessons learning activities, mentioning the specific areas of Music and English tuition. Within Music tuition several specific areas of assistance were mentioned; financial, time and stress.

Private Music lessons

a. Financial.

Parent indicates that financial assistance has been provided for all of his children to participate in private music lessons, both extra-curricular and within the school band.

“Both the girls have gone to drum lessons, both the girls were in the Eleebana school band, [Lara] played trumpet, [Bree] played clarinet” (5:00).

Not only is this financial assistance associated with the private lessons but also through the purchase of resources such as instruments and software.

“There’s a financial commitment as well, because in the house we now have an electric guitar, and acoustic guitar, a set of drums, a recorder, an electronic keyboard, and a range of different computers that all have iTunes doing various things, and we’ve got Garage Band [software program]there somewhere” (06:00).

b. Time

Private music lessons also required a time commitment not only of the children involved but the parents.

“They had to be at school at 8 o’clock, which the two young girls, is a nightmare because you had to be out of there in an hour early. So this was summer, winter, spring and autumn” (05:27).

c. Stress

Parent also indicated within the data that stress was a significant part of providing the children with private lessons.

“So there was some stress associated with getting them there on time, and that’s one of those stressful things that sort of lingers after they’ve gone” (05:55).

Private English Lessons

Parent provided extra support for his oldest child in her final years of school by providing specialized English tuition. She began to lose confidence and with private tuition, this improved and her marks began to improve.

“And I would think that a large part of that was related to the English tutor that we got to provide her with support. Because this guy works with the kids, not

just being able to teach kids, but he had a daughter studying, and he will mark papers and done all sorts of stuff... So all the qualifications were there, and I think he was able to impress upon her the need for her to trust her judgment “ (31:20).

Parent data demonstrates a support for all learning experiences in the area of Sport. These can be broken into several areas of learning; individual, team and coaching.

Individual and Team Sport Learning Situations.

In reference to his son, Parent has witnessed transfer of cognitive learning processes to other unrelated areas. Areas mentioned repeatedly are sport related.

“Having him understand the process of learning, he’s been able to pick up that model and take it into other areas. And it’s not just school, I see it happen in rugby, I see it happen with his social relationships, I see it happen with what he does with through mountain biking and any other sporting relationship that he’s got” (23:00).

Mountain biking is an individual sport and rugby is a team sport. In summation the Parent states that all his sporting endeavours benefit from his son’s knowledge transfer of the learning process.

Parent provided opportunities for his son to not only observe his own learning as a coach, but be part of the process, from start to finish.

“I’d never played rugby, I played rugby league, so I needed to educate myself to some of the technicalities of the game. And then he’d see that actually put into practice when we’d actually get to training, and he’d get to be a part of the process” (53:56).

Parent data demonstrates a support for all learning experiences included in general life. The two areas mentioned were driving and buying a guitar. The Parent comments on his daughter’s learning process and then relates it to a recent car accident while still learning to drive.

“I was pleased that within a week she actually ran into the garage. Because as I pointed out to her when she come inside in tears because she ran into the brick column that divided up both sides of the garage, I pointed out in no uncertain terms that that could have been a five year old child in a pedestrian crossing, and she might have been looking at someone’s hairstyle on the footpath, and that she could kill somebody, which drove it home really hard. But I think now she’s taken that onboard, and thought ‘I’ve got to use the same learning model here, haven’t I again. I’ve made a mistake here, what can I do in future? I simply have to focus 100% on the driving when I’m behind the wheel, and the time I can think about other issues and work that”

Interestingly, the Parent is happy that an accident occurs so that she can re evaluate her learning process. This is an example of support for learning to drive, even when the learning situation involves damage to his car.

The parent also mentioned his son’s learning experience when buying a new guitar, previously discussed in learning philosophy 1; Indirect learning experiences/process involvement. Although Parent offers to upgrade the guitar, his son recognizes his own need for a goal. The son’s decision comes directly from observing his Parent. Therefore this learning experience is supported by the Parent.

(iii) Learning Philosophy 3 – Learning is a Problem-solving process oriented towards life experience growth.



Figure 7.6 Learning Philosophy

3

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2 Literature Review, Attribution Theory can be used to examine individuals' beliefs about learning. The attributions made throughout the learning process can affect the potential success or failure expectation of similar tasks in the future.

An area of particular interest is the research addressing Strategy Attributions. By attributing an unsuccessful outcome to an inappropriate strategy choice, the learner

has the ability to change a failure outcome into a continuing problem-solving event. Failure need not be an outcome to a learning experience. The most significant issue regarding strategy attributions is the ability to change a failure situation into a problem-solving situation.

Interestingly, the Parent data supports the belief that attributions are made, not only by the Parent during new learning experiences but also all of his children. The Data also reveals many beliefs about learning that directly relate to Attribution Theory.

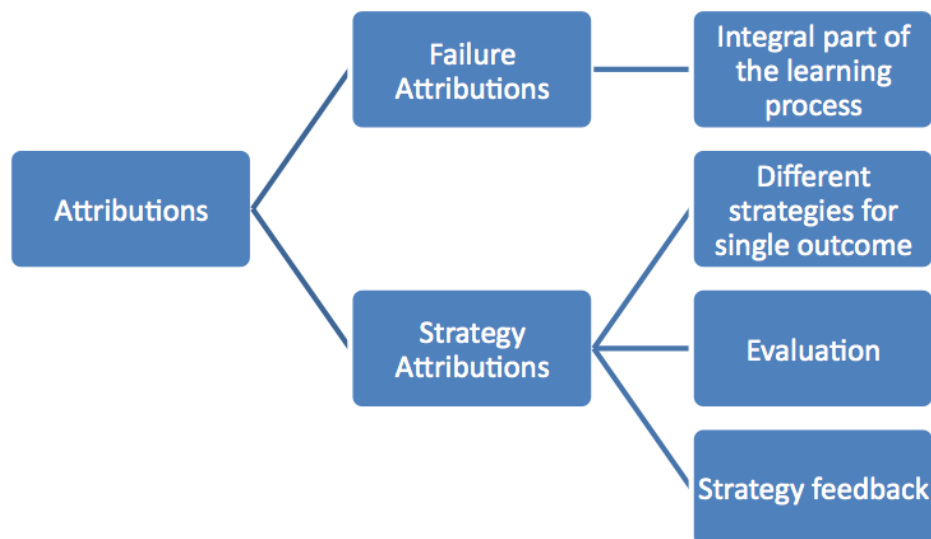


Figure 7.7 Attributions

Failure Attributions

The data is very clear regarding failure attributions involving the children, including the Parent's response to such situations.

“they make mistakes and we don’t ridicule them if they make mistakes. We just say it’s part and parcel of the process, if you made a mistake, what have you learnt from the mistake?” (1:03:52).

The reaction to failure situations supports the belief that learning is a process and that failure is not an end outcome. It is part of the process towards success. There is evidence of this prevailing philosophy of learning throughout the data. The Parent has no previous training or knowledge about Attribution Theory and yet uses words that leave no doubt of their direct relationship to the theory. The following example is straight forward and to the point.

“we don’t respect failure in our household, failure is not an outcome. It’s just part of the process of doing” (42:30).

The use of strategies in the process-oriented nature of learning is evident throughout the data also.

“I’ve made a mistake here, what can I do in future?” (34:51).

Part of the problem-solving nature of learning involves identification of strategies. The Parent recognizes that there are various strategies available to a learner, all leading to a successful outcome.

“I think it’s wise, the kids to have an understanding of alternative ways of doing things, so there’s not one religious way of being able to achieve an outcome, and that there’s a range of different things you can do to achieve the same sort of outcome” (10:48).

This quote shows an understanding of the use of differing strategies and the importance of child learners to be aware and experience finding different ways to achieve success with a new learning experience.

It's also interesting that the Parent recognizes that the alternative successful strategy can be used with similar learning situations in the future. This is supported in the cognitive strategy attribution research. Learners can create a stock pile of strategies that can be added to as new learning occurs and called on for new learning experiences.

A major facet of cognitive strategy attribution theory is the evaluation of strategies during different stages of the learning process. This implies that learners are evaluating how the learning is progressing and the effectiveness of strategies chosen. This evaluation occurs throughout the learning experience, as previously discussed in Learning Philosophy 1; Parent is a more experienced learner.

Wider definition of success

The data also reveals the Parent's belief that success is not only the most obvious outcome. Success in a learning situation can be defined on a broader level. The example given previously in Learning Philosophy 1; Parent is a more experienced learner, illustrates this point in an experience involving a sporting outcome where the obvious successful outcome would be first place. The Parent reveals his concern when another parent only rewards the obvious successful outcome; first place. This example shows the Parent's belief of a wider definition of success. This belief resonates consistently throughout the data, in all three of the Parents' Learning philosophies identified at the beginning of this chapter.

Learning is a process

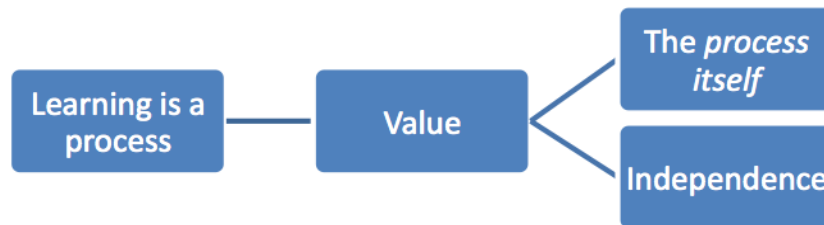


Figure 7.8 Learning is a process

Another reoccurring belief is the value placed on the learning process itself. Intertwined throughout other areas identified in this chapter, is a strong belief that learning is a process, and that *process* has value. The Parent consistently uses the term *process* when discussing learning in various environments involving various members of his family, including himself.

“Decide a process, and then do it” (44:34).

Specific ideas about the importance of the process to his children’s learning experiences are provided in the data.

“Once they’ve elected which of the projects they want to pursue, and we’ve brought the resources ‘Of you go, you’re by yourself,’ no more input from mum and dad, because it’s all part of the learning process.” (17:48).

More detail about the *process* is given when describing his second child’s learning. Although quoted before it is worth restating the parent’s description.

“[Lara] does it a lot with pretty much everything that she does. She recognises that the outcome that she generates on a project, or on her travels through life,

isn't always the best outcome... it's a learning process that she needs to go through in order to be able to refine what she's doing and can make it a little better each time she goes through the process. So I think she uses that model extensively" (33:05).

His youngest child's exposure to a learning process is evident in the next example relating to sport and the Parent's involvement in his rugby team as the team coach.

"And I don't know what the other coaches do, but a fair bit of preparation goes into my coaching. So he would have weekends seeing me pour through books and through various articles on strength and conditioning programs for rugby players. And I'd never played rugby, I played rugby league, so I needed to educate myself to some of the technicalities of the game. And then he'd see that actually put into practice when we'd actually get to training, and he'd get to be a part of the process" (53:34).

Please note the repeated use of the term, *process* when discussing new learning experiences. Even the description of the first family holiday to Europe was described as a process the whole family was involved in (54:30).

The learning process is valued by the Parent as well as independence in the learning process. Parent believes his role is to support throughout the learning process but the child must begin to travel through the learning process alone. This independence within the learning process is encouraged and valued by the Parent.

"But also I think kids have got to understand that parents are there to support their activities, but not necessarily do it for them. Because there's a stack of stuff that they're going to have to do in life that I'm there to support, but I just won't be able to be there all the time. And sooner or later they've got to leave home, and when they leave home they've got to have the understanding and the skill base to be able to go out there and assess, develop alternatives and try and drive an outcome for a solution. And I'm not - well I could be dead tomorrow, so if I'm not around they've got to have the understanding of the basic principles they're going to need to apply" (19:32).

It is also mentioned that the independence in the learning process is oriented towards life experience growth, therefore empowering them to continue learning new things with confidence, based on previous learning experiences.

The Parent also discusses the benefit of children participating in new learning experiences that are unknown to the Parent. As mentioned previously in this chapter, the Parent feels strongly about unrealistic expectations during the learning process. If the content is unfamiliar to the Parent the child has the freedom to set their own goals, expectations and pace without an initial expectation from the Parent's own learning experience.

“The major reason [for supporting their children's study of music] is that it's - and I don't know whether the kids see it this way, I assume they do. I think for the kids it's something that they can do that's independent of their parents. In other words they know that we're got an iceberg's chance of ever being able to lead them in a particular direction with their music skills because we have none. So it's something they can do independent of us, it's their thing, and they can achieve at the pace that they want to achieve at, and when they get there they know they've done it pretty much by themselves, with the assistance of their music teacher and their teachers at school and they're tutored in various areas, but they know that it's something that's required absolutely no input because we can't provide input, from their parents.

Q. And you think that's important for them?

A. Absolutely” (3:54).

When asked about why these independent learning experiences benefit his children, he answers,

“Because it's their choice so they've got to be committed to it. So their outcomes that they've got to achieve, they've set their own outcomes, they've got their own expectations, so they've got to go down that path and make sure that it happens by themselves” (7:37).

The previous emphasis on value leads to the discussion of motivation for new learning. Problem-solving strategy based learning processes seem time consuming and tedious, particularly if the initial strategy choice was not effective. What motivates this particular family to continue to be enthusiastic about new learning experiences?

The Parent data provides many different answers to this question.

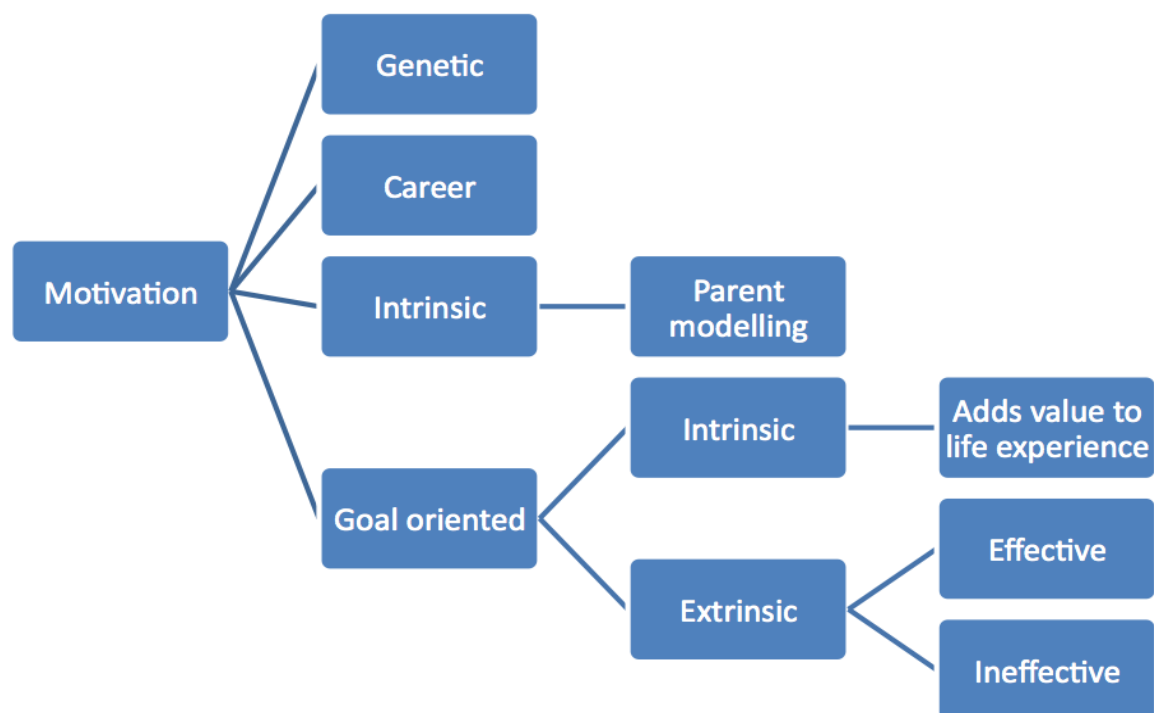


Figure 7.9 Motivation

Four areas within motivation are identified in the data; genetic, career, intrinsic and goal-oriented. As seen in the chart above, more information was gathered in the areas of intrinsic and goal oriented motivations for learning.

Firstly, there is evidence in the data suggesting a genetic motivation for new learning. When discussing areas of learning he felt strongly in, the parent makes reference to his father's strength in the same area.

“Mathematics, I’ve always had a bit of a penchant for, and I suppose that’s the only thing, dad was an electrical engineer so I probably picked up some genetic traits there” (58:00).

When discussing his children’s study of music, although being humorous in his answer, refers to ‘music genes’.

“I’m wondering whether [his wife] has been misbehaving at some stage when I wasn’t at home ‘cause the music genes got to appear from somewhere” (3:39).

Although not prevalent throughout the data, these two separate answers suggest that the Parent feels there may be a genetic link providing a motivation to accomplish in specific new areas of learning.

The Parent also recognizes career aspirations as a motivation towards new learning.

“Industrial arts was good because I wanted to move into engineering and it was part and parcel with that” (58:17).

The Parent also identifies two distinct factors that can influence motivation, intrinsic and extrinsic. Both are widely accepted in educational theories of motivation. Motivation that stems from factors such as interest, curiosity or the activity itself is rewarding is considered intrinsic. Motivation that stems from external factors such as rewards, avoiding punishment or even pleasing the teacher is known as extrinsic.

The Parent believes that intrinsic motivation factors are important for new learning experiences. He discusses a situation he saw in a coaching environment.

“At the Regional Championships at Coffs Harbour last year, a guy won a 400, dad told him he’d buy him a PS2 [Play Station unit]. And I had to pull dad aside that night and say ‘You can’t go there because what happens at the state championships, what are you going to buy the kid then? Are you going to buy him a car? He’s got to do it because he wants to do it, not because of some expensive reward at the back end. He needs to do it because of his own intrinsic value that he generates out of it.’ ” (1:01:49).

He also identifies intrinsic motivation in his children's learning.

“[Lara] probably does it [learns] because she tries look for intrinsic value in everything that she does” (21:15).

When speaking about his youngest child;

“He'll learn what he wants to learn, and if he doesn't want to learn it, no amount of prodding, poking, discipline, or any other issues is going to get him to learn it. So you've got to try and find some intrinsic value that he's going to generate out of the exercise” (21:59).

This statement also recognizes that extrinsic motivations for his son are not as effective as intrinsic motivations.

There is also evidence of the Parent modeling intrinsic motivation towards learning tasks. When asked why he got involved in some of his children's learning experiences he replied, “Oh look, for a couple of reasons. (a) It's intrinsically interesting” (19:04).

There is also a mention of the need for challenge in the learning process.

“it doesn't have to be a challenge for you to learn something, I mean, if your life's going along and there is no challenge, you learn from that and you create a challenge” (1:07:41).

The challenge creates an intrinsic motivation towards the successful learning of something new. This is particularly prevalent in his children, specifically his second oldest and will be discussed in more detail in future chapters.

Learning goals were present in the data. Several different situations were discussed by the Parent. The first illustrated the importance of intrinsic motivation when learning something new. The Parent believes that new learning experiences add towards your individual life experience and for that reason alone, should provide the intrinsic motivation to attempt it. This is evident in the quote discussed previously in Learning Philosophy 1; Parent is a more experienced learner.

This belief is echoed in another example from the data. The Parent recalls a radio interview and relates the contents to his own life and the life he encourages his children to pursue.

“I was listening to the car radio, I was washing the car one day and they were just reporting the City to Surf, and they were interviewing some 80 year old lady who was running the City to Surf, and the guy said, the DJ says to her ‘Tell me what makes someone who’s 80 want to run in the City to Surf?’ And she said ‘Well I’ve never run in the City to Surf, but I always value the quality of my life in accordance with the number of things that I’ve had to enjoy or experience through my life, so I just add to that list of life experiences, then it’s likely it adds to the quality of my life” (41:27).

Examples providing learning experiences where the motivation is extrinsic are also evident. The first involves his youngest child and the purchasing of a new guitar, which has been mentioned previously in Learning philosophy 1; Indirect learning experiences/process involvement. The Parent offers to purchase a more expensive guitar as a motivation to continue learning. This offer is refused by his child. This example also shows the youngest child knows what motivates him and consciously uses goals to support his motivation for continued learning. This motivation strategy is effective for this learner.

The following example is an ineffective extrinsic motivation for the same learner. When academic grades are motivated by the purchase of a new guitar, the result is not successful. The child knew this was not a successful motivation strategy from the moment it was presented to him.

“We were going to use his Epiphone [guitar] as his goal for some academic performance. I actually said to him ‘30 outstandings and we’ll buy the guitar.’ He said ‘30?’ almost as though ‘Oh [expletive], that’s just out of this world, not going to happen.” (39:39).

From these two examples with the same learner, it can be said that when the relationship between the goal and the learning activity was very closely related, guitar playing and new guitar, the extrinsic motivation was effective. When the relationship

between the goal and the learning activity was not closely related, academic performance and new guitar, the extrinsic motivation was not as effective.

Lastly the Parent recognizes that successful learning outcomes are not limited to ordinal rankings among other students completing the same learning experience. This idea of a wider definition of success is evident in the previously discussed area of expectations in Learning Philosophy 2. The Parent presents the idea that students can feel successful even if they do not earn a first second or third place ranking.

Summation

The data provided in the semi-structured interview with the Parent has provided rich detail into his beliefs about learning; his own, his children's, and other children around him. The learning philosophies that have presented themselves throughout the data provide strong support for these beliefs and filter through all of his learning interactions with his children. He provides many opportunities to model these philosophies with his children in many different learning environments, solidifying these ideals into the everyday world of his children. The Parent has an astute knowledge and awareness of how he learns best and how he perceives his children learn best. Due to this above average observation of learning, the Parents' views on his children as learners has validity in this study. This Parent analysis provides a natural progression towards the following data analysis chapters that focus on the individual children in new learning situations.

The Parent acknowledges that his three children are all different learners. When discussing his oldest child, two learning traits emerge. The first is determination to learn.

“[Bree] is more a ‘I’m determined, I don’t necessarily like this, but I’ve just got to do it,’ because it’s provides an invitation to a lifestyle or a career at some later stage, so ‘I’ll just do it.’”(20:57).

There is also the recognition that the oldest child relies on the strategy of high level, consistent effort to learn.

“And despite my counsel, [Bree] still proceeded to think that it had to be bigger than Ben-Hur, the entire world had to stop. So we didn’t sleep for 24 hours as we were printing stuff out, we had three computers going, stuff that was coming out hadn’t been formatted, so then various people had to play with the formatting to get the thing done properly” (26:43).

“But she insisted that we were going to have to do it with all the bells and whistles and all of us had to cross all the t’s and dot all the i’s, and yet we were still going to make the deadline, and I don’t care if the entire bloody house was up for 24 hours, or whether the entire [expletive] suburb has to stay up for 24 hours, this is going to get done” (27:18).

The description also implies that this strategy disrupts the entire household and creates an environment full of stress. This has been discussed in chapter four.

The Parent also acknowledges the prevalent use of intrinsic motivation with his second child.

“[Lara] probably does it because she tries look for intrinsic value in everything that she does, so if it doesn’t first appear, then she’ll keep at it knowing full well at some stage, depending on the problem, she’ll work out the actual value. To her lifestyle. And if it’s not now, it will be how she perceives her lifestyle as it develops over the next decade or two or three or whatever it might be” (21:15).

This trait resurfaces in the case study of the second child in the previous chapter five.

The Parent also makes some keen observations about his youngest child during new learning experiences.

“Look, I don’t know whether this is a boy thing, and my sister who’s a teacher tells me that it’s not a boy thing and I shouldn’t make excuses, but I think it’s a boy thing. He’ll learn what he wants to learn, and if he doesn’t want to learn it, no amount of prodding, poking, discipline, or any other issues is going to get him to learn it” (21:46).

The Parent recognizes the difference between the youngest child and the older siblings is more prominent.

“He’s completely different to the other two” (35:33).

Although learning differences between all three of his children have been noted, the Parent also observes behaviours that are common to them all. Two are evident in the data. The first is determination in learning experiences.

“The one thing they’ve all got in common is they’re down right bloody determined to some extent, almost to the extent that they’re obsessed.” (20:50).

He shares how this behavior seems to becoming stronger as they become older learners.

“They’re becoming more and more determined as they get older, all three of them are getting more and more determined” (24:12).

This increasing level of determination in learning experiences seems to be affecting their appetite for learning.

“I think as they become more determined they want to learn more” (24:32).

There is also a mention of the three children placing performance expectations on themselves.

“I think they’ve got an expectation of performance themselves, that if they can’t get there then I think they get a bit stressed” (25:07).

These astute observations are apparent in the case studies of the individual children in the previous three chapters.

The next chapter will present the conclusions of this research study generated from the data analyses of all three siblings and the Parent.

Chapter 8

Discussion

Introduction

Within the data presented in this study is strong affirming evidence to support the premises of Attribution Theory. Attributions are demonstrably made when presented with a new learning experience in the authentic learning environment of the High school music classroom. As learning is such an individual experience, it is extremely important to identify contributing factors that affect attributions particularly in the learning environment (Weiner 1986, 1990). As stated in Attribution Theory, these attributions can affect motivation for a similar task in the future. This is evident in each of the participants learning behaviours pre-learning consideration: previous experience with a similar task. All three of the students involved in this case study asked themselves this question when confronted with a new learning experience within the music classroom. This question was asked even before a decision of relevance or interest or motivation to achieve, were initiated. This is significant as it can determine whether a student continues towards new learning or disengages from new learning from that early moment in the learning process. Thus pre-learning considerations could be considered to be essential to engagement with the learning process.

Another important aspect of attribution theory is illustrated within this data. Strategy attributions based on learning strategies employed by the student to achieve new learning are made during music classes at High school. As presented in chapter two, it is identified that attributions made to reasons that are internal, unstable and controllable causes are more effective towards academic achievement. This supports the work of Weiner (1979; 1992). When the student attributes a failure or unsuccessful new learning outcome to a cause they can change, then learning becomes a problem-solving process. What was tried was not the most effective way of learning, so next time something else will be tried. In this scenario the outcome has the capability to change. Failure is not a reoccurring outcome that cannot change. Strategy attributions are repeatedly present throughout the three students' data, in varying degrees of complexity.

Although the data is phenomenological, the researcher has attempted to present common emergent themes together, endeavouring to present the individual data within the themes without generalisations and overt comparisons.

Emergent themes

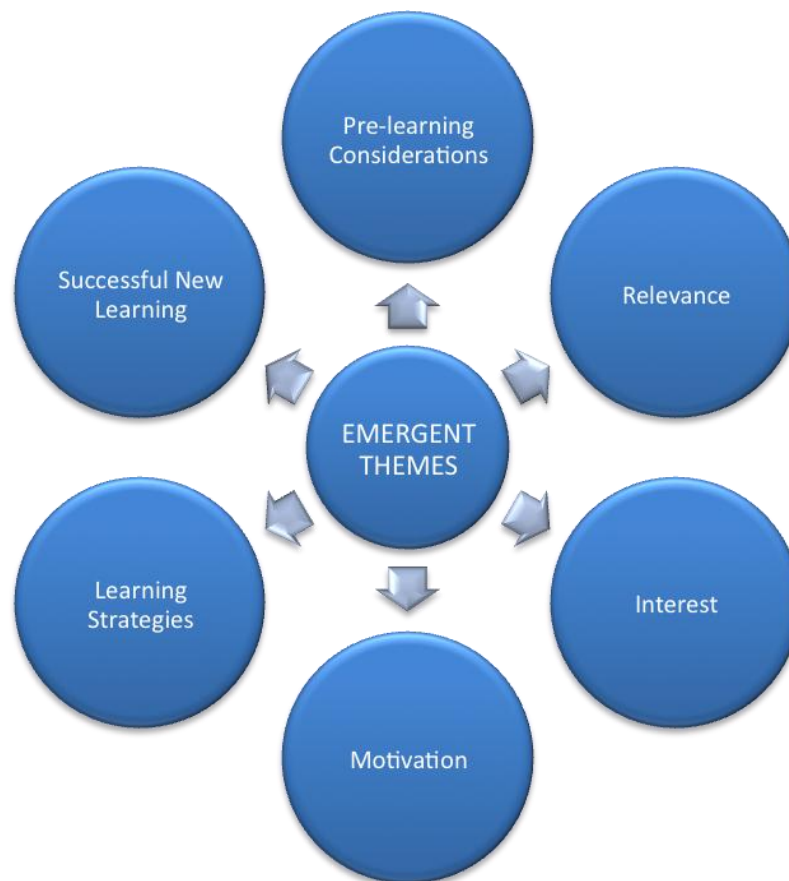


Figure 8.1 Emergent Themes

An interesting finding of this study was the large amount of information about an individual student's learning process that was accessed through attribution queries. When investigating authentic new learning experiences within an authentic learning environment, questions related to academic attributions created a window into the complexities of the individual's learning process. Areas such as pre-learning considerations, relevance, interest, motivation, learning strategies and successful new learning emerged as significant themes for all three student participants. The findings within each area will now be discussed in more detail.

Pre-learning considerations

When first presented with a new learning task, students can stop and consider whether the task shares a similarity to previous learning experiences and whether there is a clear learning objective identified. Both of these considerations can affect how and if a student continues to move towards new learning. A new learning experience sharing similarities to a previous learning experience is prominent in the data of both Lara and Bree. Most of the similarities to previous learning experiences mentioned in the data are presented negatively and the students seem to pre-empt possible problems arising in the current learning experience. Lara's concerns arise due to past problems experienced due to ineffective teaching and learning activities, such as group work or time management. On several different occasions, Bree is concerned that she and/or no one in their group has any previous experience that would assist with the new learning task, therefore going into the learning experience is approached with less confidence of success.

Bree does mention some positive similarities to past learning experiences where her confidence for achievement is increased from the very beginning of the new learning experience. It is related specifically to skills and abilities that have occurred previously in the music classroom or skills she has learnt previously that can be transferred into a new learning experience. Previous experience with a similar task can affect motivation towards new learning, as stated in Attribution Theory. Data presented in this research study strongly supports this premise.

The presence of a clear learning objective from the very outset of a new learning experience is also a pre-learning consideration exhibited by all three siblings. All of Bree's and Todd's learning journal entries begin with a clear learning objective. This could suggest that they only engage with new learning tasks when they understand what is required of them or recognise new learning when a clear learning objective is present. Lara is a strategic learner so a clear learning objective from the outset of a new learning experience is imperative so she can begin to devise a strategic learning plan. She mentions several occasions where a clear learning objective is missing and presents an overall pessimistic attitude towards the new learning experience.

Relevance

Following the pre-learning considerations, both Bree and Lara make decisions about relevance. Is the new learning experience relevant? This decision affects the level of motivation they project into the following new learning experience so it occurs before motivation and all other learning behaviours.

In particular, Bree's judgement of relevance is a strong determinant when continuing to learn something new. Relevance of a new learning experience relates to her current life world and her future life world. This decision not only makes the new learning experience worthwhile but also initiates the motivation to begin strategising in an attempt to successfully achieve the new learning outcome. When she decides there is little or no relevance to a new learning experience, her reaction is equally strong and bears quoting again, "I'm never going to use it, so I just don't care." (Bree, I2)

Lara has the same reaction in her data. When a new learning experience is judged relevant she begins strategising and the process of learning begins. When irrelevance is perceived, little motivation is employed with simplistic and ineffective strategy choices leading to unsuccessful learning experiences. The judgement of relevance seems to be significant to both Bree and Lara, particularly with respect to the immediate learning behaviours that follow.

Interestingly, Todd makes no reference to relevance directly in his data. The only comment that could relate to relevance is one of the reasons he provides for continuing school music study which also bears repeating, "It helps me with my outside school Music" (Todd, I2). Todd's extracurricular music study is his current life world and if his music study at school helps him with his outside music study, then that may provide a relevant reason for his school study. This is the only comment that could be related to relevance as a judgement made about a new learning experience in school music class. The difference to his older siblings could suggest that as students move their way up through the High School years, relevance becomes a more prominent judgement, weighing heavier on following learning behaviours than in earlier years.

Interest

A judgement related to interest in the new learning experience is found in all of the siblings' data. The relationship between interest and new learning experiences in the music classroom are complex and varying between the siblings. Firstly, the separation of the previous emergent themes of relevance and interest must be explained. The following quote leads into this discussion.

“If we learn something that’s relevant to us and that we’re interested in then we learn a lot better.” (Lara, I2)

In this quote relevance and interest are both mentioned as separate issues, indicating that Lara sees them both separately. This separation is also evident in Bree’s data.

“If it was easier I’d probably would find it, not so much relevant but more interesting and I’d probably enjoy it a bit more.” (Bree, I1)

There is also evidence in the data illustrating the use of both terms in isolation, suggesting one can be commented on without mentioning the other. Todd does not mention relevance at all in his data, only interest judgments. Due to the phenomenological nature of this research, it is the researcher’s responsibility to honour the participant’s views and understandings of their personal new learning experiences. The researcher’s role is to understand, “what something is like, from the perspective of the person who is trying to make sense of it” (Smith, 2009, p.204). Therefore the researcher’s decision to include interest separately to relevance is based on the underlying methodology of this research.

The data analysis chapters also provide evidence that the judgment of relevance is considered before the judgment of interest. Although it was difficult to separate these two emergent themes in some areas of the data, the researcher believes there is enough evidence to not only separate these themes, but also present relevance as the most commonly found first judgment before interest.

All three siblings had varying ideas related to the variables that contribute to their interest judgment when confronted with a new learning experience in the music classroom. Bree, the oldest sibling, exhibits the most variables in relation to interest levels (refer to Figure 4.2). The most significant is the sense of enjoyment.

As discussed in detail in chapter four, connected to enjoyment is the level of ease associated with a new learning experience, confidence levels, effort levels, previous music study and attitude. All of these variables affect Bree's level of enjoyment which in turn directly affects her interest. This is important as both judgments of relevance and interest are made before the beginning of motivation.

Interestingly, there are fewer variables affecting interest in the remaining two younger sibling's data. This may be due to the age difference and less experience as learners in the High school music classroom. One of the most significant things to emerge from Lara's data is her need for a challenge. This is directly related to her interest judgment. If the task is challenging, then Lara is interested in learning. Lara identifies challenge within the new learning experience if it provides a unique experience. If the new learning experience requires her to attempt something she has never done before, Lara is challenged and therefore her interest to learn is increased. Also, if the learning experience does not provide a challenge for Lara, she tries to create a challenge within the new learning experience. If a student is wary of failure, challenge is a frightening aspect of new learning and can lead to detrimental learning behaviours such as learned helplessness and self-protective behaviours. These were discussed in chapter two. The fact that Lara seeks out challenges demonstrates a confident, mastery-oriented mindset. As stated many times throughout Lara's data, she does not believe in failure. This allows Lara to relish a challenge in new learning experiences in her school music class. For her challenge is an opportunity for more new learning.

Much of Todd's interest level in new learning experiences in his school music class is fueled by his extra-curricular music interests. As the youngest sibling in his first year of High School music study, the data suggests that at this early stage Todd needs to justify his school music study with his extra-curricular music interest. Like his sibling Lara, Todd makes a brief mention of a unique new learning experience increasing his interest levels. Before his High School music class, he had never studied composition. The small amount he has done so far in his High school music class had immediately increased his interest levels. Although Todd does not mention the need for a challenge in his new learning experiences in school music class, when asked to identify possible improvements to his music class learning experiences he introduces the addition of increased challenge in the new learning experience content. This suggests that his first year of learning experience in high school music is not creating enough of a challenge

for him and he does not wish to be bored. Todd is seeking learning opportunities that create challenge for him in his school music class. This will increase his interest to learn.

The data collected on interest to learn from the three siblings highlights the complexity of the individual learning process. With the oldest sibling, Bree exhibiting many variables affecting her level of enjoyment and in turn, directly affecting her level of interest in new learning, the younger two siblings exhibit fewer variables.

Significantly, Lara's interest is strongly affected by the opportunity for challenge within new learning experiences in the school music classroom. Interestingly, the youngest sibling Todd relies on his extra-curricular music study to fuel his school music learning but is quickly exhibiting the need for a challenge in the content of the new learning experiences in his school music class. The relationship of challenge to interest implies a mastery-oriented mindset and supports the strategy-based learning behaviours that will be presented and discussed, further in this chapter.

Motivation

The previous themes, pre-learning considerations, relevance and interest, provide a great influence over motivation. If a new learning experience is judged positively as relevant and/ or interesting then the creation of motivation to learn occurs. Due to the complexity of the learning process some areas identified are relevant in more than one emergent theme. The researcher has discussed these areas within the emergent themes in which they occur in the data. The overlapping of data supports the complex nature of the learning process.

Firstly, all siblings share a strong belief that successful achievement is attainable. This belief underlies much of the data and fuels motivation and strategy-based learning behaviours, particularly through new learning experiences where more than one learning strategy is required.

All siblings exhibit a desire to learn new things in the school music classroom. Bree's desire manifests itself in a strong determination to achieve. Lara has a passion for music study and experiences a strong emotional response when new learning has been achieved. When describing both positive and negative motivational experiences, Lara

uses the term, “strive” in place of the term, motivation. “If you don’t want to do something then I don’t feel a strive to do it.” (Lara, I2). Like his older sister, Todd exhibits a strong determination to learn which is fuelled by school music study allowing him individual self-expression. Todd also believes he is ‘naturally good’ at music, which is based on specific teacher feedback, and this motivates him to exert effort and work hard.

All siblings exhibit varying levels of metacognitive knowledge of their own learning style and its strengths. This knowledge not only provides a source of motivation for new learning it also relates to the upcoming section on learning strategies. Effective strategy choice can be based on metacognitive knowledge of how one learns best. Both Bree and Lara know how they learn best. Bree reflects on past learning experiences and uses this knowledge to booster her confidence levels when attempting a similar task. She also reflects on her successful new learning experiences due to her persistent high levels of effort. Determination is a learning strength that Bree not only acknowledges but also relies on regularly when faced with a new learning experience in her school music classroom. Lara uses the knowledge of her own successful strategy use, as a strategy to fuel on-going motivations and continues strategy based learning behaviours. This metacognitive knowledge increases her motivational stamina during new learning experiences and makes challenges a problem-solving situation where failure is never an outcome. This is particularly interesting because Lara’s metacognitive knowledge about her strong strategising behaviours was recognised during her participation in the researcher’s previous research study (Henry, 2005). The fact that Lara uses this knowledge now to enhance her motivation is significant, suggesting that some students may benefit from attribution intervention as well as attribution education. Not only can detrimental attributions be corrected with teacher intervention but also students’ knowledge of what they do well during the learning experience may assist with motivation levels during future new learning experiences. This certainly seems to be the case for Lara and warrants further investigations in future study.

Bree mentions self-knowledge of her competitive nature during new learning experiences and also the motivation derived from the social, extra-curricular involvement in music performance. Extra-curricular involvement can also relate to the previous section on relevance and illustrates another area where the data on

motivation and new learning can overlap, adding to the complexity of the learning process.

Todd exhibits a simplistic metacognitive knowledge compared to his older siblings. He is aware of what he needs to improve to enhance his chances of successful new learning in his school music classroom. Although his acknowledgement of the need for more patience which leads to more focus is simple, it does seem accurate and useful. The researcher suggests his metacognitive knowledge is more simplistic due to less learning experience than his older siblings. This may suggest that metacognitive knowledge becomes more complex as students become older and experience more new learning experiences.

Bree, Lara and Todd experience incremental success throughout the learning process which provides on-going motivation. Bree's learning strategy of task management, where she breaks down a new learning experience into manageable sections, provides small incremental levels of success as she achieves each section. This provides on-going motivation towards the achievement of the new learning objective. Todd mentions an increase in motivation due to a small success with a new learning experience. He did not experience absolute success but continued to derive motivation from the parts of the learning experience he did achieve success with. Due to Lara's strong strategy based learning behaviours, she experiences small steps of achievement, even when adjusting or replacing ineffective learning strategies with new learning strategies, "There's always been a time where I've had trouble with something but I have always achieved something with it" (Lara, 11). This is significant because judgements related to achievement and successful learning are being made during the learning process, not just at the end. The researcher suggests that attributions related to academic achievement are not only made at the end of a new learning task, but during it as well. Small successes through the new learning experience provide on-going motivation to continue strategising and exerting effort towards the final learning objective. This premise is supported by the data of all siblings.

Extrinsic sources of motivation are mentioned in the data of all siblings. Usually extrinsic motivation involves rewards or awards but this was not the case in this data. Interestingly, both Bree and Lara discuss the motivation to continue to learn new

things in their school music classroom, coming from their trust in the class teacher. Due to the teacher's knowledge of the student's skills and abilities, both Bree and Lara trusted the teacher's judgement in relation to task achievability, as evident in the following quote, "Obviously she thought I could do it so I wanted to keep trying" (Lara, I1).

Both Bree and Todd also mention marks as a source of extrinsic motivation. Todd is motivated by earning good marks in his school music class and Bree is motivated by her final senior marks that contribute to her Higher School Certificate (HSC), which relates directly to University admission. Todd also mentions the roles played by one of his sisters and his father in motivating him to learn. He is accountable to both but mentions that his father has more power over him. The researcher suggests this power may relate to potentially controlling Todd's participation in extra-curricular pleasures, such as soccer games or parties when new learning does not occur.

Learning Strategies

All of the sibling's data reflects the consistent use of learning strategies when confronted with a new learning experience in the school music classroom. Firstly it is important to recognise the sources of these learning strategies and all three siblings can identify varying sources.

Both Bree and Lara recognise that some learning strategies are sourced from similar previous learning experiences. This relates directly to the previously discussed pre-learning consideration – previous experience with a similar task. Previous learning experiences provide successful strategies for both girls to use when confronted with a new learning experience that is similar and also allows them to have positive expectations towards successful new learning. Interestingly, Bree discusses the role of reflecting and how employing this activity after an ineffective strategy choice can produce alternative new strategies if faced with a similar task in the future. Even unsuccessful learning experiences, if reflected on by the student can suggest alternative strategies for future similar learning experiences. Lara also mentions the role of the reflective learning journal, which was a data collection device of this research. Deeper self-analysis and further self-reflection of her new learning

experiences has led to more focussed thought during the learning process and generated new learning strategies. This suggests that self-reflection related to learning is a positive activity that may generate new learning strategies for future similar tasks. This leads into Bree's sense of self in generating learning strategies. Bree suggests that her use of her own initiative to find learning strategies and resources implies her role as a source of learning strategies. These statements support the active role she plays in her own new learning in school music class.

All three siblings source learning strategies from their peers in the same learning environment. This is described as a safe learning strategy choice as they can observe how another peer is attempting the new learning without exposing himself or herself to a negative judgement. Peers are a regular source of learning strategies for Todd. "I tried different techniques off other people. I was looking at other people's work. I wasn't getting the answers, I was looking at how they were working the answers out" (Todd, I2). A discipline technique of moving Todd away from everyone else in the class, removes Todd from one of his most relied on learning strategy sources, his peers. As a consequence Todd experienced no learning in the lesson and became very distracted and bored. The researcher suggests that Todd is not as experienced a learner as his older sisters so he does not have as many learning strategies to choose from when confronted with a new learning experience in his school music classroom. His learning strategy choices are limited so if one is removed, he has less chance of successful learning. His oldest sister Bree not only uses her peers as a strategy choice she also seeks out specific peers who have specific skill sets for new learning experiences. This suggests Bree is a more experienced learner and identifies the benefits of specific peers' skills and abilities when sourcing ideas for new learning.

Bree and Lara both rely on their classroom teachers as a learning strategy source. Lara specifically relies on class teacher feedback containing constructive comments and advice so that she can identify new learning strategies for similar future tasks. Bree relies heavily on her classroom teacher for learning strategies. It is not always her first strategy source choice, but it is relied on regularly throughout the data. She considers teacher assistance as a reliable source when all others fail.

Both Bree and Todd look to their outside school tutors for learning strategies as well. Todd mentions his singing and guitar teachers assisting with new learning tasks from

his school music class and Bree mentions her drum and singing teachers as a relied on source of learning strategies too. Both believe that more help from their outside tutors would enhance their chances of successful learning in their school music lessons. Bree states, “the main way that I learn I think is out of school anyway” (Bree, I2). This belief would explain why both she and Todd feel that school music learning would be enhanced by increased outside tuition.

Todd mentions one situation where he relies on his oldest sister as a source for a learning strategy. Although this source is only mentioned once, it is interesting that he recognises her learning experience as a good source for learning strategies for his school music.

Strategy based learning behaviours (See Figure 8.1)

When a student is employing learning strategies with new learning experiences, specific learning behaviours are present. These learning behaviours have been identified from the data of all three siblings. Although the focus of this research is idiographic in nature, there are some learning behaviours that are exhibited by one or more of the siblings so will be discussed together.

1. Continued and persistent effort.

For continued strategy based learning to occur, a large amount of consistent effort is required through a new learning experience. All three siblings use continued and persistent effort when confronted with new learning experiences in the school music classroom. Both Todd and Lara believe that continued and persistent effort always leads to successful new learning. Both Lara and Todd use persistent effort along with other learning strategies that they also acknowledge on reflection. Bree does not acknowledge many other learning strategies and attributes her successful new learning experiences to effort alone. She believes that continues effort will produce successful new learning, even after a failed attempt. This is inaccurate as the data reveals the use of various learning strategies throughout her new learning experiences. Her attributional judgements are inaccurate and as such, Bree does not acknowledge the

use of learning strategies. Unlike Lara, who is acutely aware of the learning strategies she employs and their effectiveness and Todd, who uses and acknowledges more unsophisticated learning strategies, Bree attributes all of her successful new learning to her high levels of effort. She does not consider new learning a problem solving activity; more a continuous hard labour until successful new learning occurs. Although this is not the most effective way to learn, Bree does not question it because it has always worked for her in the past.

The researcher feels that Bree considers persistent and continued effort as a separate learning strategy, not as something employed with a learning strategy. This not only comes from her belief that effort alone will eventually lead to successful new learning, but also her previous learning experiences that support this belief. It is also the researcher's belief that Bree would have benefited from strategy-based feedback from a significant other such as a class teacher or tutor. Not only would her use of learning strategies be recognised but also the problem solving nature of new learning experiences would allow her to investigate new learning strategies or the adjustment of current ones. This leads to a much lesser level of frustration and stress. As stated in the previous literature review, attributional feedback that relies on effort alone is not recommended, as it is not effective for students to continue to exert effort without monitoring the ways they are attempting to learn. Repeating the same learning strategy over and over again will not produce a successful learning outcome if the learning strategy chosen is ineffective. Interestingly, Bree attributes her successful new learning experiences to effort but the data shows that she employs various learning strategies when attempting a new learning experience in her music classroom.

Lara employs persistent and continues effort in conjunction with various learning strategies and attributes successful new learning to both. There is also evidence of a strong belief that continued and persistent effort will lead to successful new learning in the music classroom. The researcher believes that Lara uses persistent effort as a stand-alone learning strategy but in general, effort levels are associated with learning strategies. This is echoed in the data of Todd. Strategic learners not only employ effort along with learning strategies, they also monitor their learning strategies for effectiveness and progress (Weinstein, 1998). There is evidence of monitoring behaviour in both Lara and Todd's data. Lara's data shows a mature level of

reasoning with a firm understanding of the learning objective whereas Todd's monitoring and adjustments of learning strategies is more simplistic. The researcher believes this is due to differing levels of learning experience. Lara is older and has had more new learning opportunities where she practice her strategic learning behaviours whereas Todd has only just begun his High school years of learning and music learning as a separate subject in a school environment. One promising aspect reflected in Todd's data is the positive emotional response and an expectation of success with a future similar task, after attributing a new learning experience to effort and learning strategies in his music classroom, "I would feel really confident to do a similar task now. I feel a lot better". This positive expectation and positive affective response is supported in the attribution theory literature.

2. Specific learning strategies

There is mention of several specific learning strategies within the sibling's data. All siblings use repetition and this supports their strong belief that persistent and continued effort leads to successful new learning. Bree acknowledges the use of summarising, making lists, the process of elimination and research and Todd acknowledges the use of substitution as a learning strategy. Both Bree and Todd show evidence of task management as a learning behaviour. Todd attempted to break a large new learning experience into smaller more manageable sections so it is easier to complete. Bree, as a more experienced learner, exhibits more complex task management behaviours. In one example she describes the division of the task into more manageable sections where she labelled each section A and B. Her reasoning for this strategy is based on the level of work she expects will lead to successful new learning with that particular new learning experience. An important part of task management for Bree is time management. She does admit that even though she does not experience failure in her school music classroom, the time it takes to attain successful new learning does vary. Time management also affects her classroom learning environment and she is frustrated when time is not managed effectively by the class teacher, and her successful new learning does not occur as quickly as she thinks it could have. This area of task management is also the focus of many of her post successful learning reflections. On several occasion within the data, Bree admits that she can improve by improving her time management of new learning tasks. This

is obviously an important area of her cognitive strategy knowledge that relates to her current new learning behaviour in the school music classroom.

Like his older sister, Todd has identified specific areas of strategic learning behaviours that require improvement for more successful new learning in school music class. Active listening and focus during the new learning experience are mentioned in his data. If having difficulty he employs the learning strategy of directed listening and this is successful. He also recognises that actively focussing and concentrating on the new learning experience is also a successful learning strategy. Although quite simplistic it is interesting that Todd already recognises these as potentially successful learning strategies he can employ with future tasks. As a more complex strategy based learner, Lara acknowledges the power of her strategy learning behaviours. Evidence of this is her strong belief that failure will not occur because there is a limitless amount of learning strategies. New learning becomes a problem-solving process where difficulties can be overcome by monitoring, adjusting or replacing a learning strategy with another. In her experience she has never experienced a limit to learning strategies. The data provides evidence that this belief has been a part of her learning behaviour for a long period of time and as her experience as a learner progresses, her ability to choose the most effective learning strategies for new learning situations in her school music class only becomes more accurate and refined.

All siblings believe that there is no failure in the school music class. Even though some new learning experiences are difficult, achievement is always possible. Strategic learning behaviours create a problem solving nature for new learning, where a judgement of failure is not made because learning strategies are judged as ineffective or need to be adjusted. The process of learning is still active so successful new learning is still a possibility. Interestingly, Lara has difficulty even saying the word, “I think just past experiences of f...[does not complete the word], not failing but trying and they didn’t work” (Lara, I1). Failing is not a part of the vocabulary of the strategy-based learner.

As learners approach a new learning experience, sometimes ineffective strategies are chosen. There is evidence of this in all of the siblings’ data.

The data provides strong evidence that all three siblings employ strategic learning behaviours when approaching new learning experiences in their school music classrooms. As the most inexperienced learner Todd exhibits simple learning strategies but is aware of their role in his new learning. Interestingly, the most experienced learner, Bree is not the most sophisticated or complex strategic learner. Her younger sister Lara is. This may be due to Bree's success with her most prevalent learning strategy – continued and persistent effort. Even though it causes frustration and her time management of new learning is compromised, effort has always been a successful learning strategy so she continues to rely on it. Bree would benefit from attribution retraining; where the learning strategies she has been using are not only recognised but also more complex and content specific learning strategies are presented with the new learning content in the classroom. Although attribution retraining research has largely concentrated on the most remedial students, such as learned helpless, the researcher believes that attribution retraining would be beneficial for students such as Bree. This would alleviate unnecessary stress from the learning experience and create more effective learning strategies that would lead to successful outcomes more quickly. As an inexperienced learner, Todd would benefit from content specific learning strategy instruction and Lara, as a more complex strategy based learner could only benefit from such instruction as well.

Active participation

Strategic learners are aware that learning is an active process in which they share responsibility in the outcome (Weinstein, 1998). All three siblings exhibit behaviours associated with active participation, with particularly high levels of involvement shown in the data of the two elder siblings. Active participation is evident from the beginning of the learning process, the pre-learning considerations through to the completion of a new learning task. Active learning requires the learner to believe that action is required during the learning process. Education is considered a verb, by the subject of this study. They state that,

“If you have got no ambition and no motivation, it [education] can easily become something that is done to you” (Bree, I2).

“For me it [education] is something that I do” (Bree, I2).

There are several learning behaviours throughout the data of the siblings that exhibit active participation in the new learning process.

1. Control over learning

Todd demonstrates control over his own learning by actively pursuing and participating in the learning process. When asked about new learning in his school music class he takes one hundred percent responsibility for his learning and total control. This differs when asked about learning in general, where he feels it is shared equally between himself and the educator. As a new learner in his first year of High school, these beliefs about new learning and his role in that process may become more specific and refined with further time and learning experience. Bree is quite certain about her role in her new learning process. Bree’s use of personal pronouns is a strong indicator of her control in new learning experiences; “I took the initiative to try something different” (Bree, I2), and “I like to take the time to listen” (Bree, I2). This use of pronouns when discussing new learning is also evident in Lara’s data. Bree also links motivation to the level of control she can exhibit over her own new learning. If you are motivated to successfully learn then your active participation in the learning process will increase, providing more control over the learning process. It is interesting to note that as a senior student in High school, where many students do not attend all classes regularly, Bree considers attendance to her music class as a level of participation and control in the process of new learning. Even the action of ‘turning up’ shows a level of active participation in the learning process.

2. Classroom environment and subject content

All siblings discuss the affect the classroom environment and subject content has on their level of active participation in new learning experiences. Todd identifies the practical aspect of music learning in the school music classroom as strong determinate of his level of active participation. He compares the classroom environment and subject content of his music class to that of his mathematics class, stating that his levels of active participation are higher when there are less theory learning activities and more practical activities. Lara expresses the significant role classroom environment and subject content play in relation to the level of active participation

she exerts on new learning experiences. In particular she notes the importance of the class teacher in the classroom environment and how that can directly affect how active she is in her new learning. Lara does recognise that this is not a good reason to hold back her participation in new learning experiences but realises that this has happened in her past and will continue with her future learning experiences. The role of the class teacher in determining the level of active participation with a new learning experience is also noted in Todd's data. There is evidence that the behaviour of the class teacher during teaching and learning activities greatly affects Todd's level of active participation. If the teacher is not interesting, the subject becomes boring to Todd and his level of active participation in the new learning experience diminishes.

Bree provides evidence that the subject content allows her to exert control over certain aspects of the teaching and learning activity, allowing for a higher level of active participation in the learning process to occur. "In music you have still got those rules, like you can't play this note in this chord because it is not going to sound good, but you can bend the rules a bit more" (Bree, I2). New music learning in her school music classroom allows Bree to input her own creative ideas into the content and this allows her to actively participate in her own new learning process.

When the siblings were questioned about where these beliefs about active participation in their own new learning experiences came from Bree mentions her parents and older friends have provided the examples. She is adamant that her school teachers have not influenced her level of active participation in the learning process. Lara acknowledges her father as the example she follows when approaching new learning experiences. Her active role in the learning process is certainly an example she has gained from her father's example, "that's something I've definitely got from my Dad" (Lara, I2).

As discussed in the case study chapters, all three siblings are active in their own learning, not only by their own admission but also in the learning behaviours they exhibit. Active participation is not compatible with Malle's (1990) explanation of achievement motivations, where individual intention is absent. Achievement attributions merely explain something that has occurred. Active learners intend to learn and initiate effort towards the goal of new learning from the beginning and throughout the learning process. All three siblings exhibit learning behaviours that

indicate they are actively participating in the learning process. A lack of intention to learn may be present in passive learners, who do not believe learning is a verb, but something that is done to them without any individual input or intent. Passive learners adhere to Malle's explanation, but as shown in the data of this research, active participants such as Bree, Lara and Todd do not fit Malle's attributional explanation. All three are actively participating, in varying levels, in their own new learning experiences in school music class.

Successful new learning

In this research the siblings were asked to judge if they were successful with new learning experiences in the school music classroom. As a phenomenological study, it was important to understand what they viewed as successful new learning from their perspective and how they made that judgement individually. Several answers emerged from the data.

1. Individual judgement.

Both Bree and Lara use their own ideas about successful learning in school music to judge whether they have achieved. In particular Bree acknowledges different aspects of the school music syllabus, such as musicology, composition and theory and concluded that successful learning comes from achievement across all areas of music study, not just performance. This may be due to her maturity as a school music learner in her senior years of High school. It may also be a reflection of her awareness of the marking criteria for her final examinations that lead directly to her University admission mark. Only achieving successful new learning in performance would significantly affect an individual's overall music grade in a negative way.

2. Comparison to peers in the same learning environment.

Both Bree and Lara judge their new learning success by comparing themselves to their class peers in the same learning environment. Class ranking, such as top of the class, is mentioned by both girls and is used to help them judge *how* successful their learning achievement was. The direct comparison allows both girls to judge the

degree of learning success they have accomplished. As mentioned previously, Bree holds a strong belief that successful learning in music study in school relates to many aspects of the music syllabus, not only the area of performance. When she compares herself to other peers in the same learning environment, this permeates her judgements.

“I think being a successful music student isn’t just about topping the class in musicology and aural, or topping the class in performance, but it is being a well-rounded musician” (Bree, I2).

3. Marks awarded by class teacher.

All three siblings use the marks awarded by their class music teacher as a way of judging successful learning. For Todd, who is in his first year of High school music class, the marks awarded by his class teacher are a strong indicator of how well he is doing. Bree, who is very aware of the role her marks will play in her final High school grades and university admission scores, is not only motivated by successful marks in school music class but also aware that these marks are earned from successful new learning in various aspects of the music syllabus. Lara is blatant when discussing the role of marks in her judgement of successful new learning, “If I get a good mark then that’s when I kind of know that I’m doing well and if I get a bad mark, then obviously I’m not doing something so well” (Lara, I2). As an active strategic learner, Lara uses discrepancies between her self-assessment of how successful she was with new learning and the marks awarded by the class teacher as an opportunity to seek new or more effective strategies for future similar tasks from the class teacher. Interestingly Todd’s data does not specifically attribute successful new learning to himself. This may be due to his lack of experience as a learner and may develop over time. His older sisters are very aware of the active role they play in their new learning experiences and subsequently the personal ownership they earn when successful new learning occurs. Todd may not have matured to this mindset as yet.

4. Class teacher and extracurricular tuition.

Bree credits several new learning experiences in her school music class to her class teacher and her ability to change teaching strategies so that clear understanding and

maximum learning could occur. She also credits successful new learning to her extracurricular tuition teachers. The researcher believes that this is present in Bree's data because, as discussed previously, one of her most relied on learning strategies is teacher assistance. If she were accurately reflecting on the learning processes and behaviours that led to successful achievement then teacher assistance would be a common element and would require acknowledgement.

Emotional response to successful new learning

All three siblings experience an emotional response to successful new learning in school music class. Lara's affective response to successful new learning is strong and positive. Bree expresses relief and an increase in confidence levels. Todd expresses a feeling of happiness and increased confidence. Lara responding to challenge in learning experience and strategic learning behaviours creates strong connections to outcome and therefore strong emotional response to successful new learning. Bree exerts high levels of persistent and continued effort with less strategic behaviour than her sister Lara. This would lead to an emotional response of relief when successful new learning eventually occurs. This also increases her levels of confidence in relation to new learning in this subject area. Todd believes new learning in school music classes assist his musical efforts outside of school so happiness would be experienced when he experiences new learning in school music class. As a new and inexperienced learner in High school music class, his successful new learning experiences would also increase his confidence in this subject area, creating an expectation of success with future similar tasks.

All three siblings have positive expectations towards similar new learning experiences in school music class. As stated by Weiner (2010), attributions made towards internal, unstable and controllable causal dimensions greatly affect future expectation of success. The addition of cognitive strategy attributions allows students to feel more control, less stability than ability but more than effort, and an internal nature to their reasons for achievement outcomes. The researcher surmises that some students, such as Bree and to a lesser extent Lara and Todd, view persistent and consistent effort as a separate learning strategy. Bree's data illustrates her unshakeable belief that continuing to try, even with a limited use of cognitive learning strategies, will

eventually lead to successful new learning. As discussed in the previous literature review, continued effort without the inclusion of varying cognitive strategies can often lead to no new learning as the learner continues to do the same thing over and over again. In Bree's experience as a learner in school music classes throughout her High school life, this strategy is successful even if it does take a longer period of time to accomplish tasks and creates more frustration throughout the learning process. She would have benefited from content specific strategy instruction presented as part of the new learning content in her school music classroom, giving her more options of learning strategies to choose from when attempting a new learning experience.

All siblings are active participants in their own learning, exerting high levels of effort and employing varying cognitive strategies with the intent to learn new skills and abilities in their school music classrooms. Though exhibiting differing levels of sophistication when using cognitive learning strategies, the data supports the important role of learning strategies in the learning process of High School aged students in the school music classroom and the realm of academic achievement motivation. It also supports the work of Weinstein and Mayer (in Wittrock, 1986) which discusses the benefit of subject specific learning strategy presentation in conjunction with content presentation in the school music classroom, for all students with varying experience of employing cognitive strategies when confronted with new learning experiences.

Parent influence

The three siblings presented as individual case studies all share the same father. They have grown up in the same environment with the same parental influences and modelling examples provided by their father. Significantly, the data presented in the parent case study illustrates the acute knowledge of the father in relation to each of his children's learning behaviours and the active role new learning plays in his own life and therefore the example he presents to his children on a day to day basis.

Interestingly, new learning and achievement motivation are an active part of the father's life experiences due to his ongoing higher educational pursuits, his personal sporting endeavours and his involvement coaching children's sporting activities.

Although the parent is not the focus of this research, his influence is apparent

throughout the data of all three siblings. As noted in the literature review previous research involving parental influence has focussed on parents' attributions towards children's educational goals. This may be due to the complex nature of the home environment where the parent is not only modelling new learning behaviours but is also responsible for aspects such as caretaking responsibilities and discipline. Interestingly, the parent data is detailed and explicit when describing his learning behaviours and beliefs. Three separate but interplaying learning philosophies were identified from the data; learning permeates all areas of life, all learning is valued and learning is a problem-solving process oriented towards life experience. The father does not isolate new learning to school situations. He recognises and uses the life experiences that permeate the family's life world as opportunities for new learning. These philosophies affect all of his interactions with his three children. With particular relevance to the focus of this research, the parent is a strategic learner. He provides many examples of mastery-oriented, goal oriented and process focussed learning behaviours. The process of learning, whether academic, sporting or learning to drive a car is as important as the outcome. This strong and prevalent learning belief has filtered into his children's learning beliefs and therefore into their learning behaviours. The parent envelopes his children every day in situations where this belief is constantly present and acknowledged. Although all the parent learning philosophies have some relevance to this research, the final philosophy related to the process nature of new learning is particularly significant when discussing the attributional behaviour of these three siblings. All children exhibit learning behaviours such as process-oriented, problem-solving and strategic learning, some more prevalent or more frequently than others.

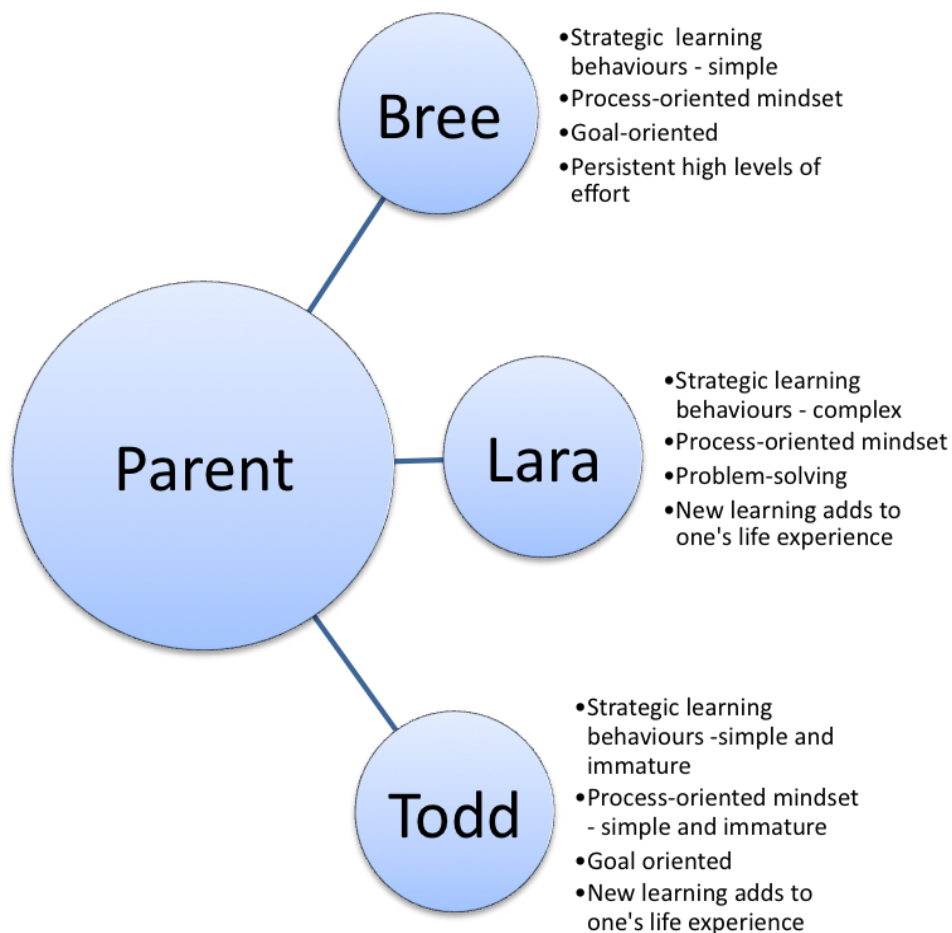


Figure 8.2 Influence of Parent's learning philosophy on three on children's learning behaviours in school music class

As demonstrated in the above chart, all three children show evidence of the Parent's learning philosophy in their new learning experiences in school music class. All exhibit strategic learning behaviours though in varying levels of complexity. All three exhibit varying levels of process-oriented mindset. Both Bree and Todd exhibit goal oriented learning behaviours but this is not present with Lara. The researcher believes that Bree, in her final years of High School is more goal oriented due to the nature of her examinations and assessments leading towards university admission. Her younger brother Todd in his first year of High school may be more goal oriented as he attempts to adjust to a larger number of assessments from a larger number of teachers than he experienced in his previous years at Primary school. Whereas Lara, who is the most complex strategist of the siblings, is enjoying the middle years of High school, where her experience allows her to concentrate on the process and problem-solving

nature of new learning experiences without the pressure of mounting assessments and examinations that contribute directly to her university admission mark. Interestingly, Bree implements her father's belief in high levels of effort towards new learning; to the degree the researcher has surmised that she considers it a learning strategy in itself. Whereas Lara and Todd have both absorbed their father's belief that all learning is valued as it adds to one's life experience. The data may reflect this difference, again due to the nature of senior High school education and the importance placed on the individual student's university admission mark. In this case, all new learning is related to the end goal, the Higher School Certificate.

As a strategic learner, the parent discusses the need for challenge and its relationship to motivation levels. This is also extremely prevalent in Lara's data and mentioned briefly in Todd's data. A challenge in a new learning experience allows for individually relevant motivation to begin strategising and problem-solving in an attempt to achieve successful new learning. Students, who feel new learning is relevant and valuable to them, seek new challenges to add to their learning experiences. Lara's data reveals that the teaching and learning activities presented in her school music class allow her to create individually tailored challenges within many new learning experiences. This is very important for her motivation levels in this subject.

Finally, as discussed in the literature review, a recent study by Khodayarifard, Brinthaup and Anshel (2010) investigated the achievement attributions made by the parent and compared them to the achievement attributions of their child. Failure attributions are nonexistent in the conscious and subconscious dialogue of this family. The father is a strategic learner and as such, mistakes are viewed as part of the learning process, presenting an opportunity to learn. This new learning is then used for future learning with similar tasks. This not only applies to the way he, as a parent, responds to unsuccessful learning attempts by his children, it also applies to his own new learning experiences.

Although the present research was focussed on the three case studies of the siblings, the detailed data provided by the father of all three children illustrated the important role parents potentially play in their children's learning behaviours. Learning philosophies that permeate the entire family dynamic can filter through to the

children, providing a solid ground for attributional and achievement motivational behaviours to begin and potentially bloom and flourish over time. As seen in the data, the children use what works best for them, even if they are not the most effective choices. This is particularly seen in the learning behaviours and attributional behaviours of the eldest sibling, Bree. Although her younger siblings and father all exhibit varying levels of strategic learning behaviours, Bree continues to rely on high levels of consistent and persistent effort when confronted with new learning in her school music class. The researcher believes that Bree has not sought out more complex and effective strategies because her limited number of learning strategies does eventually work. She does eventually achieve successful new learning. In the father's data he does recognise that Bree's reliance on limited learning strategies often create large amounts of stress which flow into the family dynamic.

One of the most interesting findings from the data is the overwhelming support for the belief that learning strategies in academic learning situations do not occur in isolation. This research asked the participants to pay attention to attributional behaviours and by doing that, so much more information was revealed relating to their individual learning experiences. It is not enough to know learning strategies and how to apply them. Students must have a desire to use them and the motivational stamina to continue to use them throughout the new learning experience. This is supported in the work of Weinstein, Husman and Dierking (2000).

The final chapter will discuss the conclusions from this research study and the suggestions for future research.

Chapter 9

Conclusions

This study delved into the learning world of three High School aged siblings. The focus was the authentic learning environment of the school music classroom. Within this authentic learning environment, academic attributions were explored when attempting new learning experiences. Attributions, or judgments made about successful or unsuccessful new learning experiences can affect future expectations with similar tasks. Attributions of failure to internal, stable and uncontrollable causes such as ability can lead to students avoiding a subject. In music study, this judgment could easily encourage the notion of a lack of ‘natural ability’ in music. Therefore the student may never attempt any musical learning again, or do so with much trepidation and expectation of further failure experiences. Similarly, if a student makes an attribution towards an unstable cause such as task difficulty or luck, they will not expect success with a similar task in the future. These detrimental and inaccurate attributions can lead to decreased levels of motivation and/or an avoidance of music study altogether. Due to the significant role these attributions can play in the future learning experiences of a music student, music educators not only need to be aware but be prepared to intervene when detrimental or inaccurate attributions are being made by their students. A particular feature of this study is the presence of strategy attributions within new learning experiences in the school music classroom. Attributions to strategy choice are advantageous as the outcome of the learning experience can change with the choice of a new, more effective strategy. Learning becomes a problem-solving process where failure does not occur. More effective strategies can be identified so that successful learning can occur.

It was a contention of this study that attributional judgments are made in real, new learning experiences, affecting future performance motivation and expectations of future success with similar tasks and this was found to be true. Strategy attributions are present in new learning experiences within authentic environments, such as the secondary music classroom. This research provided evidence supporting the presence of attributions, including strategy attributions within the authentic learning

environment of a public High School in New South Wales, Australia. It was also found that the use of strategy attributions during new learning experiences did foster a problem-solving process, where failure was not part of the learning dialogue. Attributions for unsuccessful new learning experiences were unstable and unchangeable, allowing for the possibility of successful new learning occurring with the employment of a more effective learning strategy.

It was also a contention of this study that parental influence could affect the attributional judgements made by children in new learning experiences within an authentic learning environment. This was also found to be true. The philosophies of learning thought and modelled by the father, throughout the family environment had indeed trickled into the learning belief systems of his three children, in varying degrees. There was also evidence of sibling influence in attributional behaviours. The focus on three siblings allowed the researcher to illuminate the influence both the parent and other siblings have on each other in the area of academic achievement behaviours.

Finally, it was contended that attributional responses develop throughout the secondary years of schooling but do not always become more effective with maturity. If an attributional judgement, such as a learning strategy achieves success in a new learning situation, then it will become a relied on and established learning pattern. As long as it is effective in achieving success, it will be repeated, even if there are other more effective learning strategies available. It is also contended that, as found in the initial study (Henry, 2005), some students view persistent effort as a learning strategy to be employed to achieve successful new learning. This was also found to be true, specifically with the oldest sibling and her reliance of high levels of persistent and consistent effort as a stand-a-lone learning strategy in new learning experiences within her school music classroom.

Although there is a long history of research in the area of attribution theory in relation to academic achievement situations, one of the most enduring aspects of Bernard Weiner's original work is the continuing areas of new exploration and investigation that are unveiled as more research is done. The researcher believes one of the reasons for this lies in the most common question at the heart of attribution theory research; why? When educators ask students not only **why they did** but **why they did not**

engage in a learning behaviour in their learning process, their answers not only provide attributional behaviour information but so much more information about the way the individual student learns new things. This is invaluable information for educators, as they try to access the individual student's learning process experience and attempt to spark motivation and a desire to learn, particularly when new learning experiences are difficult. This provides a way into the life world of the learner; a key to a door that many educators struggle to open on a daily basis. This research illustrates how much information can be discovered when students are asked *why* during new learning experiences and how it can provide the key to valuable information those educators can use to maximise the new learning experiences of a student and hopefully, offer a guide towards a fulfilling life of learning. That is the ultimate goal of most educators and attributional enquiry may be the key that unlocks that door.

Before proceeding with suggestions for future research it is important to reiterate the unique aspects of this study. Firstly, very few research studies investigating academic attributions have taken place in an authentic learning environment, such as the High School classroom. All new learning experiences presented in the data were genuine and not premeditated or manipulated by the researcher. Although there have been some previous attribution theory research in the domain of music, this study is the first to investigate student attributions within the authentic learning environment of the music classroom. All attributional responses occurred directly due to a genuine, new learning experience for the individual subject, in the school music classroom. The in depth data provided by the subjects also illuminated the importance of pre-learning considerations as a precursor to engagement in the individual learning process, when confronted with new learning experiences in the school music classroom. This has not been a part of attribution research previously. The inclusion of the parent data is original creating a context for the sibling data and providing evidence supporting the significant influence parents potentially have in their children's learning behaviours in the school environment. The use of siblings in academic attribution theory research is unique and provides an insight into the influential role siblings potentially play in each others' learning behaviours. Finally this is a qualitative research study, which is uncommon in the area of academic attributional research, allowing for in depth case study data analysis. This allowed for

an enhanced view into the complex nature of new learning experiences in the authentic High school music classroom.

Directions for future research

Future research suggestions have been listed in point form for clarity. They are provided as suggestions only, based on the findings of this research study.

- More work needs to be done in the real environments of learning, more specifically the music classroom. Reflective journals offer a non-judgmental way of collecting students' recounts of learning experiences as soon as possible after the event has happened. Students also need to be recalling events that really happened to them. Hitherto much research in this area has asked students to make attributions about other students' successful and failure situations but this is not the same as if the event actually happened to them. Authentic academic activities within an authentic learning environment, such as school should be included in research designs to enhance even further the applicability of research findings.
- Longitudinal studies, using small and large groups of students need to be done. As is evident in this research Todd is a less mature learner than his siblings. A comparison of subjects' understandings at different points in their educational lives would provide information about how attributions may change over time.
- It would be interesting to compare attributions made by subjects in different subjects studied. This has been touched on in this study but to explore this fully is beyond the scope of this present inquiry.
- The ability of attributional patterns to change with time or differing learning experiences must also be explored. Given the importance of pre-learning considerations to the subjects in this study, it is clear that previous experiences are important and remain influential.
- Comparisons of students' attributional patterns from families with musical experience or outside private music tuition need further investigation.

- Given the importance of pre-learning conditions in which it identified that the very act of committing to a course of study is part of engagement, the attitudes of students enrolled in compulsory and elective music classes also need to be compared. This is particularly relevant in contemporary High schools where teachers often struggle to maintain class numbers in elective studies.
- This study has employed qualitative research techniques and data collection methods and has yielded authentic, deep data from which insightful recommendations can be made. It would be beneficial to continue qualitative research in similarly authentic situations to provide more insights into the contextual factors of attributions in genuine achievement environments. This data could enhance music teaching and learning.
- Within the same achievement environment, higher achieving students' attributions should be studied alongside lower achieving students. Contributing factors, other than the learning environment, which would be the same, could be identified.
- Although there has been research on parental influence on student's academic achievement, there is no research on the influence of siblings. If teachers and parents have been identified as valuable learning sources of learning beliefs and learning behaviours, this study has identified the influence of siblings on each other's learning beliefs and behaviours. More research directed in this area is required.
- On a regular interval, for example every 5-10 years, a longitudinal study of the same students and their attributions throughout school years and the effect/transfer of these learning attributions to their future occupational lives would be interesting and provide valuable information about the importance of learning behaviours for lifelong learning situations.
- Examine the role of parents in influencing or determining their children's academic attributional styles. This could focus both on the parents' academic attributions and on their understanding of how they can support their children's learning.

- The positive role individual student attribution education can have on motivation during new learning experiences. Again authentic studies could be undertaken, possibly including the teacher perspective which was not the focus of this study. The link between teaching and learning and the understanding of all participants in a learning environment could produce a rich field for educational research.

This research study provides more support for the premise that students in the authentic learning environment of a school music classroom do make attributions about new learning experiences. It also illustrates that individual student attributional knowledge can be extracted. Even the youngest student involved in this research was able to verbalise and express in writing, aspects of his attributional behaviour when attempting a new learning experience. Educators need to encourage this information sharing from their students. The information gained from the individual student can and should be invaluable to the educator. Attribution retraining or intervention is incredibly significant for students who are experiencing difficulties or suffer from learned helplessness and a lack of hope. It is also important to recognise the importance of accessing attributional information from the students who are coping and those who are excelling. As seen from the data provided by Bree, successful students may be experiencing large amounts of stress due to the less effective but successful learning strategies they employ on a regular basis. Bree and students like her would experience great benefit from attributional intervention and cognitive strategy implementation in lesson presentation. Complex strategy learners, like Lara, may require less attributional intervention but would no doubt benefit from the inclusion of cognitive strategies presented in new learning experiences. Attributional knowledge extracted from Lara provided important knowledge about her need for a challenge in all new learning experiences in her school music class. With this knowledge an educator could ensure that new learning experiences contain a challenge or allow for Lara to create a challenge within the learning activities. This guarantees Lara's motivation levels would stay high throughout the new learning experience. Challenge fuels Lara's motivational stamina.

The analysis of the information in the Parent data also shows the relationship between parents' philosophies on learning and the direct affect they can have on the way their children attempt new learning experiences. All learning is valued and there are varying ways to learn which is something that is echoed throughout the life experiences of this family. This Parent provides a consistent example of what he believes and preaches to his children. It is only solidified as the Parent presents the general application of his beliefs about learning in many different aspects of the family's life experiences, such as learning to drive a car or sporting endeavours. These siblings have and continue to be raised in a family environment which resonates with the Parent's philosophies of learning. This provides a wonderful example for educators. Educators could provide a similar environment for their students and exist in an ideal environment to do so. Providing learning strategies when new learning is introduced shows students that there is often more than one way to achieve successful new learning. Teaching and learning activities that encourage the discussion of varying learning strategies allows students to learn more effective learning strategies from their peers, in an authentic environment. Teaching and learning activities that allow students to create a challenge, not only caters to varying abilities and skill sets within the classroom but also provides motivational stamina for more competent students. If students are immersed and surrounded in this way of learning it will influence their attitudes to learning and empower them to achieve. Attributional enquiry into students' learning behaviours can create a problem solving mindset. Ideally, when a student is confronted with difficulty when attempting a new learning task, educators would love the student to say, "I can't fail! I just haven't found the best way to do it yet."

Appendix 1

7 April 2005

Dr Jane Southcott
Faculty of Education
Clayton Campus

Miss Nerelee Henry
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

2005/163 - How students attribute new learning experiences in music classes

Thank you for the information provided in relation to the above project. The items requiring attention have been resolved to the satisfaction of the Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH). Accordingly, this research project is approved to proceed.

Terms of approval

1. This project is approved for three years from the date of this letter and this approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
2. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all information that is pending (such as permission letters from organisations) is forwarded to SCERH, if not done already. Research cannot begin at any organisation until SCERH receives a letter of permission from that organisation. You will then receive a letter from SCERH confirming that we have received a letter from each organisation.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by SCERH.
4. You should notify SCERH immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must contain your project number.
6. Amendments to the approved project: Changes to any aspect of the project require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to SCERH and must not begin without written approval from SCERH. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. Future correspondence: Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. Annual reports: Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. Please provide the Committee with an Annual Report determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. Final report: A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. SCERH should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. Monitoring: Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by SCERH at any time.
11. Retention and storage of data: The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.

All forms can be accessed at our website www.monash.edu.au/research/ethics/human/index.html

We wish you well with your research.

Dr Andrea Lines
Human Ethics Officer (on behalf of SCERH)

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Regards, Secretariat to SCERH

Appendix 2

28th January 2006

Project Title: How students attribute new learning experiences in music classes. **Project Number:** 2005/163

It has been suggested that students judge why they were successful or unsuccessful when attempting to learn something new. This judgement can affect future attempts at similar learning experiences. Sometimes, students don't make accurate judgements, or attributions. I feel that this is very important for teachers to know, when introducing new learning experiences. I will be working under the supervision of Dr Jane Southcott a senior lecturer in the Department of Education at Monash University towards a masters degree at Monash University and would like to examine students' attributions in the school music class.

I am looking for students aged 12- 17 years, who are currently involved in extra-curricular music study. These students are informed on learning music in situations other than the school music environment so I am extremely interested in their opinions. Students will be asked to fill out a questionnaire, which provides a background into their music learning history. The questionnaire should take no longer than 10 minutes to complete and will be returned in the reply paid envelope provided. The students will then be asked to make 4 journal entries in the journals provided, over the course of Term 2, 2006. Each entry will take no longer than 10 minutes to complete. At the end of Term 2, journals will be returned in the reply paid envelopes provided. Finally participants will be asked to take part in two semi-structured interviews, one at the beginning and the end of the research period. These will take no longer than 45 minutes each; with questions related to judgements regarding new learning experiences in school music with specific attention to changes over time.

No findings, which could identify any individual participant, will be published. Names and schools will be removed from all questionnaires and journals and replaced with code numbers. Only my supervisor and I will have access to this data which will be stored for at least five years as prescribed by the university regulations.

Participation in this research is **completely voluntary**. Even though some students may have contact with me for private music lessons, it is important that no one is forced or feels obligated to take part in the research. Information collected will be commenting on school music classes exclusively, and will not be discussed during private music lessons. Students **will not** be penalised or disadvantaged in any way if they do not participate in the research. This is the reason why I am asking for parental consent also, so that this point is clearly understood by you and your parents/guardians.

If you agree to participate you may withdraw your consent at any time. You may do this by simply not returning the questionnaire or by notifying me by phone or in writing. Students can also return questionnaires with some questions unanswered.

If you have any queries or would like to be informed of the aggregate research findings, please contact telephone 0414 819363.

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research (2005/163) is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the Monash University Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans at the following address:

The Secretary

The Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Humans (SCERH)

Building 3D

Research Grants & Ethics Branch

Monash University VIC 3800

Tel: +61 3 9905 2052 Fax: +61 3 9905 1420 Email: scerh@adm.monash.edu.au

Thank you.

Nerelee Henry 0414 819363

Appendix 3

Informed Consent Form for Parents/Guardians of Project Participants

I agree that may take part in the above Monash University research project. The project has been explained to and to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to allowto:

- Complete 4 journal entries discussing new music learning experiences at school.
- Participate in 2 semi-structured interviews concerning new music learning experiences in school.

Please tick the boxes:

- ☐ I understand that any information provides is confidential, and that no information that could lead to the identification of any individual will be disclosed in any reports on the project, or to any other party.
- ☐ I also understand that’s participation is voluntary, that s/he can choose not to participate in part or all of the project, and that s/he or I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

Participant’s Name:

Participant’s Age:

Parent’s/ Guardian’s Name:

Your relationship to participant:

Signature:

Date:



Appendix 4



Journal Instructions

Reflect on 4 separate situations that occurred in your school music lessons during 2006.

Each situation must describe a new learning experience, which is something you haven't done before. This could be learning to perform a new piece of music, learning a new aural skill, composing, music theory (note names, chords, note values, etc.) or anything new to you in music class.

❖ Use the following points to help guide your responses.

- 1) Describe what you were asked to do.
- 2) Describe how you tried to master the new task.
- 3) Did you get it (succeed) the first time you tried?
- 4) If so, why do you think you learned the new skill so quickly?
- 5) Do you feel confident that you can now be successful with a similar task in the future?
- 6) If you didn't get it (unsuccessful) the first time, why do you think this happened?
- 7) Did you try again?
- 8) Why did you try again?
- 9) Did you do anything different when you tried again?
- 10) What happened when you did try again?
- 11) If you got it (successful) this time, why do you think you were?
- 12) If you continued to try and did not experience success by the end of the lesson, why do you think you had so much trouble? Why did you keep trying? Would you do anything different next time?
- 13) If you were asked to do a similar activity in your next music class, would you feel confident that you be unsuccessful again?
- 14) Has this incident made you feel better, worse or the same about school music classes?

❖ Please write your journal entries as soon as possible after the music lesson. This will make it easier to remember all the details.

Appendix 5

Semi – structured Interview Questions

Interview 1

1. Hi_____. What High School year are you currently in?
2. How old are you?
3. What school do you currently attend?
4. Do you study music outside of school? What instruments, how much time, how long have you attended private lessons, do you intend to continue?
5. Do your brothers/sisters play musical instruments? Give details and if they study with a private teacher?
6. Do your parents/guardians play musical instruments? Give details.
7. Do you have any musical instruments in your house? If so, name them.
8. Do your grandparents play musical instruments? Give details.
9. Did you study music, whether an instrument or notation at Primary school? If so, give some examples.
10. Do you currently study music at High School? Compulsory or elective subject? Give details.
11. If elective, why did you choose it over other subjects?
12. Do you intend to continue to study music at school? Why/why not?
13. Are you involved in music activities nights within your school?(ie. Band, musicals, music performance nights, accompanying other students, etc.) Give details.
14. Would you describe yourself as a happy person? (yes/no. No elaboration required)
15. Would you describe yourself as a happy student? (yes/no. No elaboration required)
16. In general, do you like the way other people see you?
17. In general, do you like school?
18. Are there any areas of school that you like? Why?
19. Are there any areas of school that you don't like? Why?

20. Are there any subjects that you feel good about? Which and why? Do others agree? Who?
21. Are there any subjects that you don't feel good about? Which and why? Do others agree? Who?
22. Can you remember when you started to feel this way? Please give details.
23. Do you have any experience outside of school, in any of the subjects you have named as subjects you feel good or bad about? What and how long and details?
24. Why do you think you feel the same/different about the same area of study at school?
25. In general, do you like learning about Music? Why/ why not?
26. Do you feel you are 'naturally' good at music? What makes you think that?
27. Do you need to work hard to do well in music at school? Explain your answer.
28. Is music something you do in your own personal time? Give details.
29. Is a career using music a possibility for your future? Give details.
30. If not, why do you continue to study music at school?
31. When learning about Music at school, what things are you good at/confident doing? Why do you think this is so?
32. When learning about Music at school, what things are you bad at/ not confident doing?
33. Can you recall a specific time in school music class where you successfully learned something completely new very quickly?
34. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
35. Why do you think you were successful so quickly?
36. Who do you think is responsible for your success? Explain your choice/s.
37. Can you recall a specific time in school music class where you took longer to successfully learn something new?
38. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
39. When you didn't succeed at first, why did you try again?
40. Did you do anything different when you tried again?
41. If so, what did you differently and where did that idea come from?
42. Were you successful after trying only one thing differently? Why do you think this happened?

43. If it took more than two different attempts to learn and you were still unsuccessful, why did you try something else? Where did the other ideas come from?
44. How did you feel when you finally succeeded?
45. Who do you think is responsible for your success? Explain your choice/s.
46. Can you recall a specific time in school music class where a new skill/task was introduced to you and you did not learn it successfully?
47. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
48. Why do you think you were not successful?
49. Who do you think is responsible for your unsuccessful learning experience? Explain your choice/s.
50. Looking back at the three situations you have described, which, if any, would make you feel confident of success with a similar task in the future? Explain.
51. Looking back at the three situations you have described, which, if any, would make you feel confident of failure with a similar task in the future? Explain.
52. Do you feel like a successful student in school music class? Why/why not?
53. What things do you think, if any, could improve your opportunities of successful learning in school music? List and explain your answers.
54. Is there anything **you** can do to enhance **your** opportunities of successful learning experiences in music? List and explain answers.
55. In conclusion, how do you feel about learning in school music class?

Appendix 6

Semi – structured Interview Questions

Interview 2

Section 1

1. During the research time period, can you recall a specific time in school music class where you successfully learned something completely new very quickly?
2. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
3. Why do you think you were successful so quickly?
4. Who do you think is responsible for your success? Explain your choice/s.
5. During the research time period, can you recall a specific time in school music class where you took longer to successfully learn something new?
6. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
7. When you didn't succeed at first, why did you try again?
8. Did you do anything different when you tried again?
9. If so, what did you do differently and where did that idea come from?
10. Were you successful after trying only one thing differently? Why do you think this happened?
11. If it took more than two different attempts to learn and you were still unsuccessful, why did you try something else? Where did the other ideas come from?
12. How did you feel when you finally succeeded?
13. Who do you think is responsible for your success? Explain your choice/s.
14. During the research time period, can you recall a specific time in school music class where a new skill/task was introduced to you and you did not learn it successfully?
15. Can you describe the situation as you remember it?
16. Why do you think you were not successful?
17. Who do you think is responsible for your unsuccessful learning experience? Explain your choice/s.
18. Looking back at the three situations you have described, which, if any, would make you feel confident of success with a similar task in the future? Explain.
19. Looking back at the three situations you have described, which, if any, would make you feel confident of failure with a similar task in the future? Explain.
20. Do you consider yourself a successful learner in school music class? Explain why/why not?
21. Is there anything **you** can do to enhance your chances of being successful in school music class? Explain your answer.
22. Is there anything your parents can do to enhance your chances of being successful in school music class? Explain your answer.
23. Is there anything your school music teacher/s can do to enhance your chances of being successful in school music class? Explain your answer.
24. Is there anything your school can do to enhance your chances of being successful in school music class? Explain your answer.
25. Has your participation in this research made you aware/more aware of your own personal thinking when learning new things in school music class? If so, explain how.
26. Have you changed your learning behaviour in any way because of it? Explain.
27. Do you consider yourself a more successful learner in school music class now compared to when you began participating in this research? Explain why/why not?
28. What is your definition of a successful learner in school music class?

29. If music were an elective subject, would you choose to continue studying it?
Why/why not?
30. **Right now**, how do you feel about learning new things in your school Music class?
31. Has your opinion changed over the last two terms? Why/why not?
32. If I asked you the same question **one year ago**, would you have given me the same answer? Why/why not?
33. If I ask you the same questions **one year from now**, do you think your answer will be the same or different? Why/why not?

Section 2

Repeat Questions 1 to 33, replacing the word 'music' with 'mathematics'

Section 3

In this research you have been asked to look at your learning in Music classes and Mathematics classes at school.

1. Can you tell me some of the differences you find with new learning experiences in Music and Maths at school?
2. Can you tell me some of the similarities you find with new learning experiences in Music and Maths at school?

Section 4

These questions relate to '**general**' learning at school.

1. Do you feel that you have any control over your own learning?
2. Do you feel like an active part of whether you learn something new?
3. Is it up to you whether you learn something new?
4. Do you always feel like this at school, or does it depend on the subject? Explain.
5. Do you feel like an active part of whether you learn new things in other areas of your life (eg. Outside of school, sport, work, etc.) Give details.
6. Is learning something you do or something that is done to you?
7. Is education something that you do or something that is provided for you?
8. Where did your beliefs about this come from? (eg friends, siblings, parents, significant others)
9. Do you think these beliefs about learning can change? How? Any examples or details?

Total number of questions = 77

Appendix 7

Parent Semi - structured interview

Parent of Participant: _____

1. Did you study Music at school? Please detail.
2. If so, what were the benefits, then and now, if any? Please detail.
3. Were you encouraged? If so, please explain by who and the impact of this encouragement.
4. If not, how do you feel about it now? Was it your choice or not? Please detail.
5. How do you feel about your child/ren studying music at school?
6. Do you support your child/ren's study of music at school? How do you support them?
7. What do you see the benefits as being? Why do you support it?
8. How important is your support to your child/ren when studying music?
9. If Music study were not compulsory in Highschool, would you still support your chil/ren's study? Why?
10. Did you study Mathematics at school? Please detail.
11. If so, what were the benefits, then and now, if any? Please detail.
12. Were you encouraged? If so, please explain by who and the impact of this encouragement.
13. If not, how do you feel about it now? Was it your choice or not? Please detail.
14. How do you feel about your child/ren studying mathematics at school?
15. Do you support your child/ren's study of mathematics at school? How do you support them?
16. What do you see the benefits as being? Why do you support it?
17. How important is your support to your child/ren when studying mathematics?
18. If Mathematics study were not compulsory in Highschool, would you still support your chil/ren's study? Why?
19. Were you or your wife involved in the schools that your child/ren attend/ed? In what ways?
20. Why did you get involved?
21. Have you or your wife been involved in your child/ren's school work? Examples?
22. Why did you get involved?
23. How would you describe your child/ren as learners? What are their strengths/weaknesses?
24. Has this been consistent since they were young learners or have you noticed a change/development? Please detail?
25. Have you seen any similarities or differences in the way your child/ren learn new skills & content in other areas of their life, eg. Sports, cooking, etc.? Please detail.

26. Do you see similarities with yourself, when you were a young learner or as an adult learner?
Please detail.
27. Do you see yourself as an adult learner? Please detail.
28. How do you learn a new skill?
29. Do any of these new learning experiences occur in front of your child/ren? Please detail.
30. Are your children involved/take part in any of these learning experiences? Please detail.
31. What subjects at school did you do well in?
32. Why do you think you did well in these subjects?
33. Did you also enjoy these subjects? Why?
34. Does your experience as a student help you to guide your own children through school? How so?
35. If one of your children is having trouble achieving in a subject, what do you tell them, advise, etc? Any examples?
36. If one of your children is doing well in a subject, what do you tell them, advise, etc? Any examples?
37. Do you think your children learn how to learn from you? How so?
38. How important is your role as a model of learning?
39. What do you think the impact of this is on your children's lives?
40. Have you seen any evidence that your children are involved in each other's learning?
Examples?
41. How important is their role in their siblings learning?

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