THE ROLE OF CONFLICT IN THE TEACHING AND LEARNING OF UNDERGRADUATES: A CASE STUDY

LINDA C MAUND

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Surrey, 1994.
DEDICATION

TO RICHARD
HE KNOWS WHY!
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is the culmination of a project that has been sustained and encouraged through many turbulent changes by the support and forbearance of supervisors, colleagues, students, family, and friends. Both general and specific ideas contained in the study share the influence of such people.

I cannot adequately acknowledge everyone to whom I am indebted but can only say that the exaltation at the completion of the study is due, in part, to these people.

I specifically wish to acknowledge the support of Dr Pamela Denicolo and Dr Robert Brownhill without whom I might have long since lost hope.
Conflict is the gadfly of thought. It stirs us to observation and memory. It instigates invention, and sets us at noting and contriving. 

... conflict is the *sine qua non* of reflection and ingenuity.

JOHN DEWEY (1859-1952)
ABSTRACT

This research originated from my experience in teaching and learning and particularly in facilitating courses with Business Studies undergraduates. The role of conflict in the learning environment is little researched.

This study seeks to gain an understanding of the learning experiences of undergraduates in Business Studies and to examine the role of conflict in learning in the practical setting, from the perspectives of the students and the teachers. Since the research involves the changing interpretations of individuals involved, in the natural setting of the learning environment, a heuristic - iterative - reflexive approach has been adopted.

The experiences of the participants were monitored over a two year period. Data collected through questionnaire survey, narrative survey, focus group, and repertory grid elicitation is analysed in the context of theory-in-literature related to learning, conflict, and the use of conflict in teaching and learning.

Major categories of response are identified and discussed in detail. These categories are sequential and represent the learning process experienced by the participants.

Attention is drawn to the definitional and ethical difficulties experienced in researching the role of conflict in learning, to the detrimental and positive effects on learning, and to the use that teachers could put functional conflict to in the learning environment.

The study concludes by suggesting that teachers and students need to cultivate an awareness of the indicators of functional conflict with its accompanying potential for enhancing teaching and learning, and thus improve the performance of individuals, the department, and the organisation. It is suggested that such development may well require modification to existing staff training which investigation could be an area for future study.
CONTENTS

List of Figures
List of Tables

CHAPTER ONE EXORDIUM
1.0 Introduction 1.1
1.1 Personal Background 1.1
1.2 Conflict: Schools of Thought 1.2
1.3 Difficulties of Definition 1.3
1.3.1 Definitions in General 1.3
1.3.2 Defining Conflict 1.4
1.3.3 Defining Learning 1.6

CHAPTER TWO LEARNING
2.0 Introduction 2.1
2.1 Individual Learning:
   2.1.1 Learning Styles and Strategies 2.1
   2.1.2 Approaches to Learning 2.5
   2.1.3 Learning Processes 2.7
2.2 Learning within a Group 2.9
2.3 Organisational Learning 2.10
   2.3.1 Styles and Strategies 2.11
   2.3.2 Organisational Learning Systems 2.11
2.4 Continuous Development 2.12
2.5 Barriers to Learning 2.13
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER THREE</th>
<th>ORGANISATIONAL THEORY AND CONCEPTS: LEARNING AND CONFLICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Learning and Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Place of Attribution Theory</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Links with Perception</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER FOUR</th>
<th>FUNCTIONAL AND DYSFUNCTIONAL CONFLICT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Differences and Demarcations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Optimum Levels of Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.1</td>
<td>Low or None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.2</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2.3</td>
<td>Optimum</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER FIVE</th>
<th>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Definition of Ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Ethics and the Study Process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2.1</td>
<td>Humanity of Researcher and Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Ethics and the Study Content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.1</td>
<td>&quot;Good&quot; versus &quot;Bad&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.2</td>
<td>Functionality of Conflict: An Ethical View</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3.3</td>
<td>Aspects of Teaching: The Moral Viewpoint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Role of the Teacher in Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4.1</td>
<td>Teachers' Ethical Concerns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CHAPTER SIX
**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Relationship with Literature Survey</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Formulation of Specific Research Questions</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER SEVEN
**METHODOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Philosophical Basis and General Orientation</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Particular Methods: Rationale for Use</td>
<td>7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.1</td>
<td>Questionnaire Survey</td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.2</td>
<td>Narrative Survey</td>
<td>7.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.3</td>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>7.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2.4</td>
<td>Repertory Grid</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER EIGHT
**CONTEXT OF RESEARCH AND ITS RELATION TO METHODS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Organisational Overview</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.1</td>
<td>Collegiate Structure</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.2</td>
<td>Student Composition and Programme</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.3</td>
<td>Business Studies Department</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1.4</td>
<td>Relationship Between Rationale and Aims of the Study</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Fieldwork Plan</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Negotiation of Contract</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CHAPTER NINE

**PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA: QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY AND NARRATIVE SURVEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Questionnaire Survey - Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.1</td>
<td>Student Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1.2</td>
<td>Data Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Narrative Survey - Students and Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.1</td>
<td>Student Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.2</td>
<td>Teacher Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2.3</td>
<td>Data Interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER TEN

**PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA: FOCUS GROUP AND REPERTORY GRID**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Focus Group - Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1.1</td>
<td>Student Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1.2</td>
<td>Data Interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Repertory Grids - Students and Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.1</td>
<td>Student Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.2</td>
<td>Teacher Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2.3</td>
<td>Data Interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

**DISCUSSION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>Implications and Consequences of the Research Methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1.1</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1.2</td>
<td>Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1.3</td>
<td>Writing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Title of Figure</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>Kolb learning cycle (1974)</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Merging of the Kolb learning cycle (1974) with the Honey and Mumford learning styles (1986, 1992)</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Optimum level of conflict within a group</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Classification of two paradigms after Pope and Gilbert (1982)</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Lewin's (1947) change model</td>
<td>7.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Dimensions of conflict-handling orientations (Thomas, 1976)</td>
<td>9.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Example of the presence of perception using a student’s narrative response</td>
<td>9.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Causes of conflict in organisations</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>A systematic approach to conflict</td>
<td>11.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Title of Table</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Generalisation of appropriateness of the research techniques used</td>
<td>7.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Completed grid from one student respondent</td>
<td>7.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Range of participants</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Fieldwork plan</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Questionnaire survey sample and return rates</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Age and gender of questionnaire survey sample</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Course programmes of questionnaire survey respondents</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Courses being followed by questionnaire respondents</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Breakdown of questionnaire survey responses according to solution-oriented</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>Breakdown of questionnaire survey responses according to control</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>Breakdown of questionnaire survey responses according to non-confrontational</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.8</td>
<td>Questionnaire survey responses in relationship to compromising, forcing,</td>
<td>9.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accommodating, collaborating, and avoiding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>Dimensions of conflict-handling behaviours (Thomas, 1946)</td>
<td>9.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.10</td>
<td>Sample and return rates of student narrative survey sample</td>
<td>9.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.11</td>
<td>Age and gender of student narrative survey sample</td>
<td>9.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.12</td>
<td>Study programme of student narrative survey responses</td>
<td>9.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.13 Composition of course programmes of student narrative survey respondents
9.14 Course programme followed by student narrative survey respondents since joining the organisation
9.15 Courses being followed by student narrative survey respondents within the Business Studies Department
9.16 Narrative survey response breakdown (Students)

10.1 Pairings of elements across all repertory grids
10.2 Elements pairing with Deliberate Provocation
10.3 Construct pairings and clusters (Students)
10.4 Construct pairings and clusters (Teachers)
10.5 Relationships between elements as related to Deliberate Provocation as an element (Students)
10.6 Relationships between elements as related to Deliberate Provocation as an element (Teachers)

11.1 Questions which can be used to diagnose conflict with their relationship to functional or dysfunctional conflict
11.2 Win-lose versus win-win strategies in relation to the increase of direct access students (including international students)
CHAPTER ONE

EXORDIUM
1.0 INTRODUCTION

This disquisition is centred on how functional conflict is used to facilitate learning amongst undergraduates within a Business Studies Department.

Chapter One attempts to give context to the empirical work of the later chapters by noting the importance of the personal background of the researcher which drives the study (1.1) and relating this to the principal schools of thought about conflict (1.2).

This is followed by a discussion on the difficulties related to the use of definitions in general usage, in conflict, and in learning (1.3).

1.1 PERSONAL BACKGROUND

The presence of conflict and thus its use as a functional technique in learning is a matter of individual perception. When relating this to my personal experience I recall that, when teachers at school punished me for what they perceived as bad behaviour, it was primarily because I was bored - this was internal human conflict. Sites (1990), when writing about human needs and conflict, said that there were four primary emotions, listing them as fear, anger, depression, and satisfaction (happiness, joy), but he added a fifth - boredom - which has, according to him, an accompanying need analogue of stimulation. He believed that this fifth emotion could relate to conflict stimulation - that is, to the use of functional conflict to eliminate boredom - functional conflict could have stimulated me into learning. Consequently, my interest in conflict came about because of life experiences - from being a child to my professional role as a facilitator of learning.

1.2 CONFLICT: SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Throughout my upbringing and young adult years, outside my family environment, I had been told that conflict of any sort and in any situation was undesirable - it was bad and to be discouraged. This traditional school of thought was one which reinforced the negative connotation attributed to conflict, perceiving it as discordant, and interfering. Statements such as "you're always arguing", "stop taking sides", "you're always opposing me", and "do try to keep the peace", all marked
the metaphors I lived by (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) in that the
"war words" used displayed the traditional perception of the
phenomenon of conflict as it affected me at the time. This
was, that conflict of any kind should be avoided. On the
other hand, I was encouraged in the home to question and
experiment which reflected the interactionist viewpoint on
conflict i.e that conflict can be functional. This clash
between the traditional view, that any kind of conflict in any
situation was a bad thing, and the interactionist view, that
conflict could be functional, resulted in internal conflict.

This personal interest in conflict developed professionally
when I became a teacher in a large inner-London comprehensive
school where I was faced with overt and deliberate conflict in
the classroom and was encouraged by my mentors to do all I
could to "stamp it out" - yet more "war words". This
reinforced the view of traditional conflict and, as Cronk
(1987) had perceived happening in secondary schools to other
probationary teachers, it was made necessary by my trainers for
me to adopt the traditional line. This was in some ways
contradictory to any personal inclination which was to
stimulate functional conflict in an attempt to enhance the
pupils' learning. Examples of these would be: setting
problem-solving exercises for small groups of pupils or using
self- and/or peer-assessment techniques for projects in an
attempt to stimulate creativity, eliminate potential boredom,
and introduce active student participation.

The concept of conflict has always interested me and I wanted
to look at the area of functional conflict because it caught my
attention whilst I was preparing teaching materials for
undergraduates following a course in Organisational Behaviour -
the study of people and groups in organisations which is fully
defined by Robbins (1992):

Organizational Behaviour (OB) is the systematic study of
the actions and attitudes that people exhibit within
organizations. (p1)

This included a systematic study of the concept of conflict as
it related to functional outcomes of a group within an
organisation. Such a link between theory and practice as a
claim to knowledge is a major theme of this thesis.

The very fact that I have lived through the traditional view of
conflict - that conflict (if acknowledged) should be eradicated
at all costs - and the humanistic school of thought which
believes that conflict is ever present, right through to the
interactionist viewpoint which states that conflict can be
functional, has given me an opportunity, as a reflective
practitioner, to investigate the concept of conflict stimulation. It is the very functionality of conflict which excites me because, like much else in modern life, the learning environment is within a domain of simultaneous change. If there is a lack of functional conflict this could result in too low (or none) or too high a conflict level for learning to take place.

However, before a study of the relationship between learning and the various types of conflict can be undertaken, some clarity about the meaning of terms needs to be made.

1.3 DIFFICULTIES OF DEFINITION

1.3.1 Definitions in General

Flew (1989) described the role of definition as a process of expression that provides the precise meaning of a word or phrase and this viewpoint is central to this discourse. Much has been written on the nature and value of definitions, occupying much time in formal and informal logic - Ayer (1946), Flew (1978, 1989), Elster (1979), Foy (1980), Doyal and Harris (1986), Hindness (1988) and Vickers (1988).

It is important to understand the interpretation of the word *definition* in the context of this work. Precise definitions can be preserved at the cost of rendering them worthless in practice, or by making them so broad that they are hopelessly ambiguous. It is the purpose of this study to use words carefully as a better alternative to the spurious precision of fake hard-headedness.

Definitions of great precision are only legitimate in limited contexts, such as scientific or legal discourse, and even here there is need for caution. To write a thesis which treats definitions as guides, for which purpose they might be extremely useful, rather than as a standard for all usage, on pain of becoming meaningless, is important. Within this investigation it is possible to proffer short and unambiguous statements of meaning which may well hold true if taken within context. The realisation that there is no particular reason to suppose that there must be one general rule for the meaning of conflict releases the researcher from the temptation to keep on rejecting the exceptions.
However, in order to facilitate understanding it is necessary to provide a definition of conflict as it relates to this study. Before doing so, an investigation into current use is required.

1.3.2 Defining Conflict

Because conflict has different meanings for different people it is difficult to define and, consequently, it is not easy to achieve consistency either in definition or in practice. Professional experience indicates that definitional accuracy is less often achieved by those who tend to be most insistent upon it.

If it is true that there is no universal definition for conflict, then it is better to be careful in the use of the word rather than attempt to provide a universal definition. However, in order to understand conflict it might be more beneficial to elaborate on what the notion of conflict comprises.

The concept of conflict is taken as an interpretative device and not as a precise definition as in the traditional physical sciences. Different models and sets of concepts can be used to describe the same phenomena - in this case conflict and learning. It is the view of the researcher that this is how it should be. In support of this, it could be propounded that individuals view the world from different angles - given that different problems and issues require different perspectives, reality could well be some combination of all - if reality is what is sought.

A definition which purports to give an account of a concept such as conflict either in general or specialised usage would only be a statement of a certain sort of fact and that, in itself, would imply the possibility of an objective definition.

Questions on the meaning of conflict will always be complex and if this study is to provide ideas which are free of confusion, then it is necessary to be clear about such issues. Most of the words linked to conflict have several levels of meaning, and many uses - descriptive, emotional, prescriptive, persuasive (for example), and many overtones. In addition, as discussed earlier, definitional precision is not always appropriate.

The focal idea is that it is difficult to define conflict in general and in particular. However, DeBono (1985) did attempt to tackle this definitional problem. He thought that conflict was ".... a clash of interests, values...." (p5)
and appeared to be unhappy with the use of the word conflict, seeing it as a potential direction rather than something that was actually happening. With this in mind he invented two new words: confliction and de-confliction. To him confliction was:

The process of setting up, promoting, encouraging or designing conflict ... . (p5)

and referred to confliction as the actual effort being put into creating a conflict thus covering all the deliberate things which happen before the conflict is established. That is, it refers to a deliberate process being the effort to establish a conflict - the stimulation of conflict. De-confliction was, however, more important to DeBono (1985) than confliction but, logically, in order to understand de-confliction it is necessary to have the word confliction since de-confliction, according to him, is its opposite. He defined de-confliction as:

.... the designing away or dissipation of the basis for the conflict .... de-confliction is the effort required to evaporate a conflict .... the demolition of the conflict. (p5)

He believed that in western culture, the usual negotiating methods were those of compromise and consensus; compromise suggests that both sides give up something in order to gain something. He also considered that consensus meant staying with that part of the proposal on which everyone was agreed - the lowest common denominator. With these views in mind he suggested that the de-confliction approach was one that involved making a mental map of the conflict terrain and upon which lateral thinking was used to generate alternative solutions. Thus he did not overtly address the issue of the stimulation of conflict (confliction in his terms) but he did address de-confliction.

As a leading writer on conflict, social psychologist Robbins (1992) argued in this and his other works (1974, 1989, 1990, 1994) that there were some positive consequences of conflict as demonstrated by the following:

.... when it improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest and curiosity among group members, provides the medium through which problems can be aired and tensions released, and fosters an environment of self-evaluation and change. (1992, pp182-183)
The difference between these two writers appears to be in the overtness and intention of the act but this could well be a difference of perception - which in turn makes common definitions difficult. Robbins (1989) put forward the viewpoint that conflict refers to the existence of a clash and the word *conflict* is applicable from the instant that the clash occurs, whereas DeBono (1985) believed that conflict had taken place even if the clash had not yet occurred.

Robbins (1989) operationally defined conflict as:

\[ \ldots \text{a process in which an effort is purposely made by A to offset the efforts of B by some form of blocking that will result in frustrating B in attaining his or her goals or furthering his or her interests.} \quad (1989, \text{p}570) \]


It is this definition of conflict which will be used throughout the study. Should any deviation from this definition be made at any time, it will be noted.

Having investigated the definitional aspects relating to conflict, it is necessary to inquire into learning in a definitional context since this study is concerned with the use of conflict within a learning environment.

### 1.3.3 Defining Learning

Learning has similar ambiguities in definitional terms. Gibbs (1981) made a distinction between teaching and learning by stating that *teaching* is what the teacher does whilst *learning* is what the student does. Thus, according to Gibbs (1981) teaching and learning are separate activities. Nowill (1992) also stated that learning is not the same as teaching and agreed with Gibbs (1981). However, when the teachers, both as facilitators of learning, and as learners themselves, are learning, then teaching and learning can be subsumed into a wider concept of learning. Thus, there is a connection between teaching and learning if the teacher is also learning as part of the process of teaching. When independent learning is taking place then learning can subsume teaching. If this is not commonly accepted, then learning is ambiguous and difficult to define. Indeed, many educationalists writing about aspects of learning appear to be reluctant to actually define the term.
Honey and Mumford (1986) stated that a person had learned:

... when either or both of the following descriptions apply:

He [sic] knows something he did not know earlier, and can show it.

He [sic] is able to do something he was not able to do before. (p1)

There is a Darwinian analogy put forward by Roderick (1993) when she stated that the objective of teaching was to maximise opportunities for learning at all levels and to exploit the potential for the learning of all people:

The key insight is that the capacity to learn individually and therefore organisationally, is an asset with huge survival value. (p13)

Conley-Hill (1979) considered that learning was strongly related to problem-solving yet failed to define it in operational terms.

The problem for the facilitator of learning is to understand how one may hasten and channel the process of learning and discovery. Learning usually occurs when others act as learning agents for the group (see Chapter Two), responding to changes in the internal and external environments of the group by detecting and correcting errors in organisational theory-in-use, and embedding the results of their enquiry in private images and shared maps of the learning group.

Argyris and Schon (1978) had earlier emphasised the advantages of organisational learning, (see Chapter Two) but, again had not actually defined learning.

It appears, therefore, that the principal point is about what students need in order to learn rather than what facilitators of learning do to teach. The Society for Research in Higher Education (SRHE) Leverhulme programme of study into the future of Higher Education did not include learning or students anywhere in its list of main areas of enquiry (Gibbs 1981). What matters is not the minutiae of the teacher’s performance but what the students do. Preoccupation with teaching has left us, until recently, ignorant about learning. What is of concern here is not a change in teaching techniques but consideration of the:
.... fundamental restructuring of our way of thinking about the purpose and nature of education. We might say that we are now beginning to perceive that the purpose of education is learning. And we are beginning to realise that frequently teaching interferes with learning. (Knowles, 1981 p5)

The researcher, as a reflective practitioner, does not view teaching and learning as separate activities and it should be noted that learning is difficult to define and can be ambiguous in its conceptual use. However, an appreciation of learning in context is important to the understanding of learning in action.

Within the particular context of psychology, learning is defined operationally to make it accessible to particular forms of study. Psychological learning theory merits a detailed study in its own right, and a comprehensive overview would be beyond the scope of this inquiry. However, the range of learning theories have one common factor: they all involve a change in behaviour. Reid et al (1992) believed that effective learning brought about a relatively permanent change in the behaviour of the learner as a result of practice or experience. An individual may be fully aware of what has been learned from the experience but, on the other hand, until attention is drawn to it in some way, the learner may be oblivious to the fact that personal actions have been modified.

This change in behaviour is important to this current study because it distinguishes two different aspects which are pertinent. Firstly, practice, which tends to be related to events that are deliberately planned, and, secondly, experience, which may have been intentionally arranged - remembering that it is possible to learn unintentionally - or may have occurred spontaneously in the natural course of events. A central theme of the present study is "learning to learn" and self-development through active learning. It is the proposal of the researcher that students cannot be brought together without spontaneous learning taking place and that as a result they will change their behaviour in a variety of ways. For example, at the simplest level, they will learn each others' names, technical jargon, and the location of resources; at a more sophisticated level, they will learn about the behaviour of their peers and teachers and thus develop attitudes which can have complex effects on their behaviour which, in turn, will confirm or alter the teacher's attitude towards the student.
The process is interactive in nature, both the student and the teacher learning about each other and modifying their behaviour accordingly. Both learn, \textit{inter alia}, by imitating others (modelling), by perceiving and interpreting what happens in the group and by the cumulative experience of trial and error. In this sense, Reid (1992) and Roderick (1993) were in accord when they stressed that some learning in any organisation is an inevitable organisational activity. Many of the learning opportunities presented by an organisation pass by untapped because they are unrecognised. However, it should be borne in mind that the ability to identify such opportunities - whether they be individual, group, or organisational - is the impetus for the process of learning how to learn.

A full explanation of how learning takes place seems to be an impossible task, not least because, as demonstrated by the few examples given so far, there is a variety of different kinds of learning, each with their individually perceived definition. In addition, human abilities are extremely wide, ranging from autonomic reflexes such as removing the hand from a hot surface, through psychomotor skills, such as operating a computer keyboard, to the negotiating skills of a student on an industrial relations course, to the symbolic skills of a student writing a computer programme, or the decision-making skills of the undergraduate. The facilitator of learning searching for one set of simple rules which adequately encompass such varied learner activity is continually disappointed.

In summary, then, it appears that although there is no universal definition for either conflict or learning there is a suggestion that both can take place in the classroom. It is necessary to see how learning can be enhanced if there is no universally accepted theory of learning.
2.0 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the theme of learning will be developed to include a discussion on how individuals learn (2.1) followed by an investigation into how individuals might learn as a member of a group (2.2). This learning theme is then considered as it relates to organisations (2.3) with a discussion on the importance of continuous development (2.4). The chapter then finishes with a discourse on situations which could be barriers to learning (2.4).

2.1 INDIVIDUAL LEARNING

2.1.1 Learning Styles and Strategies

Even though there appears to be no universally accepted theory of learning, the concept of learning styles is an important development for this study because it might help to illuminate how people learn from experience. When planning specific learning activities it is wise if the facilitator of learning allows for the fact that some people learn better by one style than another and some may indeed reject certain styles altogether (Honey and Mumford, 1986). It is beneficial, therefore, if programmes are planned with a knowledge of learners' own preferences regarding learning styles although it is not necessarily advisable that only the preferred style be adhered to.

A reflective practitioner has a natural learning and teaching style, and in choosing appropriate techniques the learners' preferred or desired learning styles, as well as the teacher's should be considered, insofar as it is practical to do so. Also, the facilitator of learning may have a natural style which may be at variance with the culture of the organisation and with that of the learners (Pask, 1976, Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983 and Entwistle and Tait, 1990).

It is the responsibility of a professional practitioner to investigate that variance and to find a modus operandi which is suitable to meet the demands of the situation and the aims of the interaction. Considerable developmental work on learning approaches (see section 2.1.2) has taken place and there is a wide range of literature (Guilford 1950, Gibbs 1981, 1988, 1992a, 1992b, 1994a, 1994b, and Gibbs et al, 1984).
Kolb (1974) suggested that there were four stages in influencing learning: the experience; observation and reflection; theorising and conceptualisation; testing and experimentation. To be effective, the learner correspondingly needs four different but complementary kinds of abilities which Kolb (1974) illustrated using the model represented in Figure 2.1 below:

**Figure 2.1  Kolb learning cycle (1974)**

Kolb (1974) suggested that this ideal is difficult to achieve and argued that, in fact, the required abilities might even be in conflict. He claimed that most people are better at, and prefer, some of the four stages rather than others. For instance, a mathematician might give preference to abstract conceptualisations and active experimentation whilst a manager may have greater concern for concrete experience and the active application of ideas.

In the field of learning theory Kolb's (1974) learning cycle is highly relevant to the debate on continuous development (Institute of Personnel Management 1984, 1986) and which is further discussed in section 2.4. The theory's essence is learning from experience, the nature of which is described as a continuous cycle or process. However, his abstract conceptualisation stage could well be more correctly described as academic learning.
Building on his theoretical base, Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992) defined four major categories of learning styles: activist, reflector, theorist, and pragmatist. These correspond with the four stages in the Kolb (1974) cycle, i.e., concrete experience (activist), observation and reflection (reflector), formation of abstract concepts and generalisations (theorist), and testing implications of concepts in new situations (pragmatist). Hence Kolb's (1974) model can be integrated with Honey and Mumford's (1986, 1992) theory as indicated below in Figure 2.2:

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 2.2** Merging of the Kolb learning cycle (1974) with the Honey and Mumford learning styles (1986, 1992)

Honey and Mumford's (1986, 1992) adaptation of the Kolb (1974) cycle is helpful to a facilitator of learning because of its potential utility of learning styles (activists, reflectors,
theorists, pragmatists), which could well be seen as more relevant to the world of work and as significant aids for facilitators who want to develop interest in learning.

Both models have a cyclical appreciation of learning strategies, i.e., that learners may move around the cycle, and yet neither model indicates an appreciation of the fact that it is not a staged cycle therefore individuals may ignore or utilise one or more of the learning styles.

During the course of their research, Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992) developed a Learning Styles Questionnaire (LSQ) on self-description, employing established norms for different types of people such as those engaged in research and development, production or finance. Such a questionnaire is a useful measuring instrument for the facilitator of learning and could ultimately yield data which would constitute a valuable guide in, for instance, determining an optimum composition of groups within which individual students can learn. Whilst subject classes are selected by individual students using criteria other than that of class composition, the LSQ has an advantage in defining composition of smaller groups within the class.

For the individual student it provides a self-diagnostic tool as a guide to building on strengths (best learning styles) and overcoming weaknesses (least favoured learning styles), leading to the adoption of a richer variety of methods. To this end, Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992) gave advice on how to make the best use of individual learning strengths and how to improve and practise each of the four styles.

Personal experience of the researcher as a facilitator of learning has shown, that, as suggested by Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992), students differ in the ways they prefer to learn, partly in reaction to the instructional modes provided, but more generally in terms of a distinction between holistic and serialistic styles of learning (Reid et al, 1992). Students adopting holistic learning strategies want to see the "whole picture" straight away seeing how their present learning fits into the course as a whole, and what its purpose is. In learning, they thrive on everyday examples, illustrations, diagrams and anecdotes, they look for links with similar ideas, and they also build up more idiosyncratic forms of understanding which are personally satisfying. In contrast, students preferring serialist strategies tend to focus narrowly on the particular task or topic and for them, learning needs to be step-by-step, concentrating first on the details and on the connected logic, progressively building up their own and developing their understanding.
It can be seen that a completely deep approach (discussed in section 2.1.2) depends upon using both holistic strategies (relating ideas and developing a personal organisation) and serialist strategies (examining both the evidence and the logic), indeed some students have such strong learning styles that their learning is effectively incomplete, being dominated either by over-generalisation or too narrow a vision. Teaching can be designed to encourage students to carry out the more complete forms of learning which lead to conceptual understanding, for example, through self- and peer-assessed group work (Boud et al, 1985).

2.1.2 Approaches to Learning

Kenney and Reid (1988) believed that learning to learn was a central issue in learning approaches and suggested that there was a need for further research in this area. Attention has been gradually focused away from mechanistic formulation of objectives and the conditions which surround learning, to the activities of the learner, and the means of equipping that learner with strategies and a range of styles which are appropriate not only for present learning but also for transfer to future situations thus enabling learning from experience to take place. Therefore emphasis has been moved from activities largely controlled by the teacher towards consideration of the learning process itself and, where possible, to self-directed and self-managed learning using opportunities provided by the facilitator of learning and by new technology, such as computer-assisted programmes.

Much learning theory assumes that learning objectives represent a static work state, in which case competence depends largely upon memory and the acquisition of basic skills, and that these skills which will last a lifetime without the need for change. Knowing "what" and "how" and "when" is a matter of remembering what the manual or text book says, and/or what worked last time. However, memory often proves unreliable if the content, or indeed the context, of work is constantly changing.

As has been suggested previously, as students go about learning they vary in their approach. An experienced facilitator of learning will have identified students who, no matter how they are advised, seem determined to give back, regardless of the format, exactly what happened in the classroom environment. Other students strive to develop their own perspectives and syntheses of the subject. This may sometimes involve a difference in ability, but most often it involves a difference in intention: students are trying to achieve different things.
Marton and Saljo (1976a) reported on their findings of an experiment aimed at finding out how a student's approach to learning changes with differing conceptions of the nature of the task and, also, in 1976b, they described an attempt to identify different levels of processing of information among groups of university students. These two studies introduced the concept of the approach to learning with a crucial distinction being drawn between a deep approach and a surface approach, each depending essentially on the intention of the student.

In a deep approach the intention is to develop a personal understanding of the topic, while in a surface approach the intention is simply to reproduce the course content to the satisfaction of the teacher or examiner. An interpretation of these two analytic categories shows that there is a dichotomy that highlights another fundamental difference between the ways humans learn - those of memorising and of linking information and ideas together in ways which make sense to humans (meaningful learning). Though this dichotomy may appear to be an over simplification, it can prove powerful, in distinguishing differences between students and also in suggesting which methods of teaching and assessing are most likely to support high quality learning. Students who use a deep approach in their learning change their conceptions of technical material, whilst students adopting a surface approach are left with inadequate conceptions which create increasing problems as more complex material is introduced. The latter approach also makes it difficult to transfer the knowledge acquired to real-world contexts.

Surface approaches are common and do not automatically disappear with maturity and experience. A student who takes a surface approach is unlikely to:

a) gain a full understanding of a concept;
b) gain an overview of a topic;
c) gain a grasp of the main ideas in a report;
d) be able to distinguish principles from examples;
e) be able to write an essay with a logical argument; or
f) be able to recognise key ideas in an oral presentation.

Work carried out by students who have taken a surface approach is quite different from work which takes a deep approach. A surface approach produces a multistructural work, as for example when an essay contains a list of unrelated items, while a deep approach usually produces a relational answer where
items included are structured, or where an extended abstract answer goes beyond the immediate topic and applies ideas to related issues or areas.

2.1.3 Learning Processes

In 1981, a report, "How Do I Learn?", was produced for the Further Education Unit (FEU) by a team from the then Industrial Training Research Unit (ITRU) (Kenney and Reid, 1988); the team had been asked to look into what the FEU called "doing" learning (as opposed to "memory" and "understanding" learning). The team made two important points. Firstly, learning is something one does for oneself and, secondly, the most effective ways of learning involve conscious mental activities such as checking, self-testing, and questioning. These points emphasise the fact that whatever the activities of the teacher, it is the learner who is in the pilot seat and who has the final control of what s/he does as a learner.

There are positive and negative factors affecting learning: initial confidence and sense of achievement in attaining competence, which in terms of reinforcement theory act as a motivator to further learning, in contrast to apprehension and fear of change which might demotivate. In ideal circumstances, the desire to learn might be regarded as self-generating giving rise to confidence in one's ability as a learner and reinforcing the desire for further learning. The learner remains competent and learns to learn, eventually creating new improved performance objectives and managing the learning process required to realise those objectives. This is the essence of active learning and self-development.

The Working Party of the Committee of Scottish University Principals (1992) attempted to define this kind of learning. Its members investigated the instructional principles and practice and considered the concept of active learning to be of paramount importance in the provision of quality learning for undergraduates. The writers of the report defined active learning as:

.... a term used to emphasize the importance of ensuring that students engage actively in the learning process, rather than passively accept the work as a component of course requirements. (p5 para 2.2.3)

They also highlighted the definitional dichotomy by going on to say:

.... the term is also used when students take more responsibility for their own learning. (p5 para 2.2.3)
In order to encourage this learning to learn and self-development philosophy, the facilitator of learning needs to find a medium which activates and continually motivates learning. As discussed in Chapter One, definitions are difficult and the same arguments apply regarding active learning.

Denicolo et al (1992) stated that active learning has a chameleon-like definition in that, like conflict, it is different things to different people and is situationally specific. However, they did offer an operational definition which emphasised the four distinct characteristics of active learning:

.... a search for meaning and understanding; greater student responsibility for learning; a concern with skills as well as knowledge; and an approach to the curriculum which looks beyond graduation to wider career and social settings. (p3)

It is not the purpose of this work to compartmentalise active learning but to look at it in a holistic manner. Denicolo et al (1992), after detailing active learning in a compartmentalised way, recommended the holistic approach but left it to the practitioner to consider the key ways of promoting active learning.

The possibility that functional conflict stimulation could be used as a technique in the promotion of active learning is an issue which a facilitator of learning might consider. Denicolo et al (1992) used conflict words when talking about teaching-learning methods:

[active learning] calls for a blend of teaching methods which will itself set students an array of learning challenges. (p31) (Researcher’s italics.)

They went on to imply a collaboration:

.... usually entails some combination of the traditional and the innovative. (p31) (Researcher’s italics.)

stating that:

Students are unlikely to be stimulated to become more active learners by a bland bread-and-water diet of lectures, tutorials and practicals each taught in uniformly conventional and rather limited ways. (pp31-32)
Whatever terminology is used, active learning puts the emphasis on what the contributory factors to high quality learning are, that is, its precursors, rather than on the essential features of it. The emphasis in this thesis is on the importance of certain forms of student activity, teacher management of the learning environment, and of resource material and tasks.

While the evidence for specific learning styles is somewhat equivocal, the idea that students differ in their preferences is sufficiently well established to justify it being taken into account when considering instructional practice.

Remembering that students are unique individuals who approach learning differently and who learn in different ways, at different rates, and in different situations, traditional class teaching which is geared to their learning the same thing, in the same order, at the same rate and in the same situation/circumstances, is not likely to result in effective learning - however learning is defined.

Although learning is, in essence, an individual activity, students in higher education are increasingly being encouraged to work as a member of a small group within the larger class either for class activities, such as syndicate work, or outside of the class, in learning sets, in which the students carry out a shared project for assessment. This facilitation of learning within groups is not a new phenomenon to the researcher, who as an active practitioner has always encouraged group activities.

2.2 LEARNING WITHIN A GROUP

A traditional difficulty of intra-group learning is the effect of the dynamics of the group and the influence it can have upon individual learning. When the researcher was utilising Belbin's (1981, 1993) work on the management of teams in the formation of learning sets his Learning Style Inventory was useful at the outset in ensuring that there was a breadth of team roles within the group. However, it was soon found that students adopted the role with which they identified and did not attempt to develop any of the other roles attributed by Belbin (1981, 1993) to the successful management of teams. Belbin did not include the role of learner. However, Belbin (1981, 1993) had been describing what he found, and not necessarily suggesting all that was needed - and the inclusion of roles such as team worker and monitor should be respected since they appeared to mirror the descriptors as put forward by Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992).
Perhaps the strongest appeal of Belbin's (1981, 1993) theory accrued from his definition of management as a set of roles, and not necessarily as attaching to any particular title or titles. Belbin's (1981, 1993) research was into the characteristics of winning teams, not just effective managers, and hence the formula could apply to teams in general, regardless of their degree of formal management structure.

However, while the concept of learning styles does not produce instant answers to the problem of the effects of group composition or "chemistry", it nevertheless contributes an explanation, and may help to promote useful discussion and understanding within the group's composition.

Students' individual learning may well be facilitated within small groups, but these groups are part of a much larger class which is, in turn, part of the organisation as a whole.

2.3 ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

The study organisation is, by its very nature and activity, an organisation centred on the facilitation of learning and should, therefore, be particularly active as a learning organisation. However, a detailed investigation into this area was beyond the scope of this study.

A team of researchers from Warwick University (Pettigrew et al, 1988) reported on specific organisations which seemed to be practising organisational learning. Interest has since been growing in this field, which aims at establishing a set of conditions which might be regarded as necessary for employee development.

The concept of the learning organisation is still developing; with a variation in definition. Jones and Hendry (1992) gave a simplistic definition:

.... a lot of people learning. (p3)

Pedler et al (1988) reported that a learning organisation was one which facilitated the learning for all of its members and thus continually transformed itself.

In order to do this effectively, an organisation, like the host organisation of this study, needs to consider the styles and strategies connected with the organisation as a learning system.
2.3.1 Styles and Strategies

A consideration here might be the importance of the structural and cultural barriers cycle. One can think of the organisation itself as having a preferred learning style, which influences those within it; for example, the organisational design may be of a machine bureaucracy and this might encourage an autocratic and didactic approach to learning.

2.3.2 Organisational Learning Systems

Shrivastava (1983) studied organisations' learning systems and found a number of different approaches corresponding to differing mixes of two variables. The first variable was what he called the Individual-Organisation Dimension where learning activity is seen as being for the good of either the individual or the organisation (or - in the case of a mix of the two - reflecting an emphasis towards one of them).

Individual Learning ______________________ Organisational Learning

*Individual learning* was seen as accepting personal development as the only planned aim; *organisational learning* was seen as fitting individual learning into a co-ordinated pattern which would also serve the organisation's work needs. An example here would be an organisation where the only planned training involves the sending of individual staff on external courses compared with one where the departmental training plans are created as part of annual operating plans.

Shrivastava's (1983) second dimension related to how learning is expected to happen: it is either allowed to evolve in its direction and time, or it is designed through a master plan or a set of procedures which ensures that it takes certain forms (or, once again, there is a bias towards one of these two alternatives).

Evolutionary Learning ______________________ Planned Learning

To Shrivastava (1983) *evolutionary learning* exhibited itself as lacking in any conscious effort to contrive the learning mechanisms that emerge in any organisation, and *planned learning* comprised the formal introduction of mechanisms to serve the stated learning and/or information needs managers usually identify.
In recent years organisations with substantial training activities have been adjusting their learning systems in two ways. Firstly, they have been increasing the planning, and decreasing the evolutionary, emphasis. Secondly, they have put organisational learning as a priority over individual learning, whilst trying to achieve both (Reid et al, 1992).

For the purpose of this study it is necessary to understand that learning is a lifelong activity and thus the teachers and students are involved in self-development and continuous development - in the teachers' case it is continuous professional development.

2.4 CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT

Whilst the Institute of Personnel Management (now the Institute of Personnel and Development) was developing their continuous development philosophy (1984, 1986) other researchers/writers were increasingly searching for ways to define the same thing as continuous development in organisational terms. Work in the mid-eighties (Pedler et al, 1988) in what was known as the "learning company project" led to the detailing of a wide variety of factors which are related to a learning culture but have not traditionally been seen as mainstream employee development - such factors as organisation structure, worker participation, and management style.

Clearly, there is a significant overlap between what is expressed as being the role of a learning organisation and continuous development: it could be said that their aims are identical. The principal difference between continuous development concepts and the learning organisation models is mainly one of emphasis. Advocates of continuous development believe that, given the existence of an attitude wholly supportive of continuous learning, appropriate organisations will follow (serving both operational and learning ends). Hence they accept any organisational culture and any management style: the continuous development attitude is expected to continuously adjust to the culture.

The learning organisation approach, on the other hand, tends to assume that an appropriate organisation is needed to ensure that the positive attitude towards learning can survive; hence it tends to suggest social and structural interventions which should ensure that learning takes place.

It is possible that the two initiatives will tend to merge even more over the next few years: their conceptual bases and strategic aims are close enough to ensure that they draw support from each other. Their importance lies primarily in
their common aim which is less to abandon traditional methods than achieve a new balance - or perhaps, more properly, a new set of balances between learner dependence and learner independence; formal and informal learning methods; standard programmes and unique, self-directed plans; learning and work as separate processes and learning and work as an integrated whole. It is in these arenas that the use of functional conflict techniques might be of assistance.

Learning theory is better considered within the process of continuous development where the latter stresses learner motivation, and insists that learning is at its strongest when it pertains to the learner's objective; hence continuous development advocates tend to view standardised programmes as second best, or lowest common denominator alternatives. Continuous development also claims to be relevant to all levels of the learner: the individual, the class, the group, the department, the organisation, the nation.

Continuous development is the ultimate learning intervention and a philosophy which allows and encourages all other learning interventions: it is an attitude of mind, an approach, a philosophy, which attempts to promote endless learning, and designs environments to that end. As such, continuous development cannot properly be viewed as an alternative to any other intervention.

Whatever style, strategy or approach is used in whatever environment, there may well be certain obstacles in the way of the individual trying to learn.

2.5 BARRIERS TO LEARNING

Advocates of continuous learning would probably know, however, that there are a number of barriers to learning, for example, fear of failure, the inability (or unwillingness) to expend the time and effort. In the rapidly changing environment of higher education it is not sufficient to acquire the standard knowledge and skills while the ability to transfer such knowledge and skills is paramount to the continuous learning process (Institute of Personnel Management, 1984, 1986). The successful learning environment is one within which attention is paid to minimising demotivating factors by creating a supportive climate and by developing students' confidence in their ability to tackle and overcome barriers to learning; in other words an environment which fosters and encourages the natural self-generating learning process. This is a critical aim. Learners who have grown to believe that they are competent at learning take the lead in managing change and develop themselves in the process (Fothergill et al, 1982).
This returns to the point that there needs to be an understanding of learning. Teaching and learning take place in a complex, interacting system. The outcomes of learning depend on the combined effects of the whole learning environment provided by the organisation and its courses - teaching, discussion classes, resource materials, and assessment procedures - as well as the teaching techniques used which, in this case, centre on the potential of functional conflict stimulation.
CHAPTER THREE

ORGANISATIONAL THEORY AND CONCEPTS: LEARNING AND CONFLICT
3.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two discussed the role of individual learning as facilitated within a group and the organisation.

This chapter explores the concepts of learning and conflict within organisation theory since students and teachers work within a body which prides itself on providing learning par excellence and which is, by definition, an organisation.

Firstly, there is an overview (3.1) followed by a discussion on the role of learning and conflict (3.2). There follows a discussion on the links with attribution theory (3.3) and perception (3.4).

3.1 OVERVIEW

The study of any concept, such as strategies for effective teaching and learning, which assists in bringing about organisational effectiveness is likely to be complicated because of the number of variables which need to be investigated. This very complexity helps in the understanding of why organisational theorists tend to focus on one group of variables, for example communication and group decision making, power and politics, motivation and group redesign (Robbins, 1994, Nelson and Quick, 1994). There is also the temptation to be lured only to the familiar. Selective focusing takes place because of personal experiences and situations and this is acceptable so long as it does not become merely habitual whereby, under such circumstances, many other important variables would be neglected. For example, an enthusiasm for understanding the role of functional conflict in learning should not ignore that it is only one aspect of a much more complex situation. Such reductionism would not suit the teacher who has to put together all the factors which affect learning effectiveness. It is in order for the current thesis as there is no attempt to provide a patent cure rather that the intention is to provide an arena for the investigation of the role of functional conflict in active learning.

Analysis is a very important prerequisite of action. Whilst it is no substitute for action, it is the argument here that analysis without action or implementation remains mere analysis. This could well be considered to be irritating sophistry, however, that action without analysis becomes mere impulse and therefore a reflective and naturalistic approach has been taken towards this inquiry. By adulthood most humans have absorbed a wide array of concepts which they use in turn - or together - to analyse and interpret the data which continually bombards other senses. Such concepts are often known as beliefs, hunches, assumptions or gut
feelings. In some cases they could be myths, stereotypes, and superstitions. Very little behaviour can be said to be purely impulsive.

Analytical issues are important because they influence the way that all people perceive conflict - including both the researcher and the inquiry participants. The links between perceptions of conflict and the teaching and learning interactions are emphasised by Bruner (1975) and Corbett (1990). Bruner (1975) believed that analytical skills were learned through language which he considered was a calculus of thought. Corbett (1990) stressed the importance of questions in the discovery of arguments and style of presentation made by people. This emphasis on the importance of language and the clarification of concepts and deductive thought processes is often at the forefront of learning.

3.2 LEARNING AND CONFLICT

Few can study and teach in the area of organisational behaviour or work in and with organisations and their managers, without unconsciously picking up other peoples' views and having an appreciation of how they can change one's individual views. This can result in original sources of many ideas getting lost in time. The evidence for some new insight may be recalled but its provenance forgotten.

Organisational theory seeks to substitute a coherent set of conceptual frameworks for collections of assumptions which people hold. In his landmark study Handy (1993) said that concepts used properly and understood, should:

Help one to explain the Past which
in turn
Help one to understand the Present
and thus
To predict the Future which leads to
More influence over future events and
Less disturbance from the Unexpected. [sic] (p16)

It is vital, however, not to underrate the value of the conceptual understanding of the present.

There is, it would appear, a need to sift through this melee to find out what is relevant to the study at hand: namely that functional conflict may be used to stimulate learning. It could well be, if this is found to be true, that training will be needed for facilitators of learning to effectively utilise functional conflict techniques. Pondy (1967) observed that the functionality of conflict could be determined only when the outcome criteria were understood. In other words, only when the teacher and the student understand the outcomes of learning can potential or perceived conflict be dealt with. Thus, it is only when the facilitator of
learning recognises what is required in behavioural terms from the students that the appropriate conflict-handling behaviour can be utilised.

The shortcomings of training approaches to conflict that emphasise the effects of another party's behaviour and background conditions upon an individual's conflict behaviour have been criticised by Louis (1977). He proposed a conceptual framework of the process through which an individual conceptualises conflict and the impact of personal development variables upon conceptualisation. By this he meant that if training methods were used to aid people in the use of conflict handling procedures, it would first be necessary to get such individuals to perceive conflict and identify it, within their own experience.

Simultaneous research was being carried out by Thomas (1976) into the values of teaching in relation to conflict behaviours. He recognised that there were strengths in the diverse perspectives and use of conflict behaviours and proposed that management education should use multi-dimensional values in teaching to: avoid rejection of input, reduce threats to self-esteem, prevent the abandoning of individual strengths, and maintain flexibility.

In response to Thomas (1976), Chesler et al (1978) recommended that power training was an essential prerequisite for effective conflict management. He argued that because multi-party conflict was a reciprocal endeavour, those who did not understand how to gain or use power could not benefit from approaches in conflict management training that assumed the recipients of training had power to utilize such in the actual management process.

Warehime (1980) moved the literature on conflict into the interventionist paradigm - that conflict could be functional - by supporting the individual difference perspective. He described systematic training in coping skills that developed alternatives for functioning in conflict from personal actions and reactions at the cognitive, emotional, and behaviour levels.

Lippitt (1982) addressed the interactionist view by discussing the inevitability of organisational conflict and its role in the decision-making process. He suggested that development activities should prepare managers to understand the causes of conflict, to expand their diagnostic capabilities, and to develop their coping methods.

As can be seen, past contributors in the field of conflict did not always use the same language and concepts; it is, therefore, difficult to decide whether they were actually discussing the same phenomenon. From the literature there was little conceptualisation of conflict as a universal phenomenon with generic sources.
As Thomas (1976) highlighted, the issue of functionality of any behaviour is extremely complex and varies with individual situations and also with the skills of the individuals who implement the situation: these seem in this thesis, to be: the skills of teachers, and the use of functional conflict as a learning strategy. As Thomas (1976) said:

There is a need to adopt teaching strategies which reflect realities - strategies which fit the realities of different individuals and which allow them to value and to capitalize upon their own strengths. (p489)

It is within groups that the facilitator of learning works but, even though groups exist to attain a goal or goals, it is the impact that a conflict has on an individual that defines the functionality of conflict. The impact of conflict on the individual and on the group is rarely mutually exclusive, so that the ways that individuals perceive a conflict in the classroom may have an important influence on its effect on the group. However, this need not be the case and, when it is not, the orientation of this work will be towards investigating the benefits of functional conflict for individual learning and thus individual behaviour.

3.3 PLACE OF ATtribution THEORY

Robbins (1993), stated that the attribution theory has been proposed to develop explanations of a given behaviour - for example, how to deal with perceived conflict. He stated that this theory suggested:

That when we observe an individual's behavior, we attempt to determine whether it was internally or externally caused. (p20)

"To attribute" means "to consider as caused by" and according to Wade and Tavris (1990) there are two kinds of causes. Firstly, situational attribution which is an action perceived or regarded as being caused by something in the environment. This is analogous with Robbins' (1994) interpretation of external causation. Secondly, dispositional action, perceived or regarded as being caused by something in the person which is analogous with Robbins (1994) when he stated that such behaviour was internally caused.

However, if anything goes wrong or moves off into an unexpected direction, humans tend to blame the individual - either self or other. This is part of the psychological success theory where an individual seems to continually increase personal self-esteem or to enhance individual self-concept. Psychological success can only be experienced if the individual sets a personally challenging goal, determines the personal methods of achieving the goal, and where the goal is relevant to the personal self-concept. Such an attribution theory is used to develop explanations of how people are judged differently depending on what meaning is attributed to a given behaviour.
The theory suggests that when an individual’s behaviour is observed the observer attempts to determine whether it was internally or externally caused. However, that determination depends on three factors: firstly, distinctiveness, which refers to whether or not the individual displays different behaviours in different situations; secondly, consensus, when all who are faced with a similar situation respond in the same way; thirdly, consistency, which can be said to have taken place if the individual responds the same way over time. An astute facilitator of learning would see this operating within her/his professional life. However, all similar behaviours are not perceived similarly. Actions are judged within their situational context. This self-learning bias tends to exhibit itself because individuals usually attribute their own success to internal factors while putting the blame for failure on external factors. As stated by Wade and Tavris (1990):

The tendency of people to take credit for good actions and to excuse or rationalize their mistakes. (p659)

This is related to one of the most relevant applications to the concept of conflict - that of perception.

3.4 LINKS WITH PERCEPTION

Organisational concepts like learning and conflict are concerned with human beings and, therefore, perception is an important issue. A human’s perception of people differs from her/his perceptions of inanimate objects because humans make inferences about the actions of people whereas they do not make such inferences about inanimate objects. One of the main differences between person perception and object perception is that person perception is reciprocal ie as each individual perceives and makes assumptions based on the behaviour of another, these are also interpreted and reacted to by the other individual (Nelson and Quick, 1994). Non-living objects are subject to the laws of nature, but they have no beliefs, motives, or intentions. It is argued that people do. The result is that in observing human beings, people attempt to develop explanations of why they behave in certain ways. Any perception and judgment of a person’s actions, therefore, may be significantly influenced by assumptions made about that person’s internal state.

A basic premise of this thesis is the belief that a better understanding of functional conflict, and the way it works within groups, will lead to more effective teaching and learning. However, it would be naive to believe that this understanding will result from merely reading the text. The process of understanding or learning is more complicated than that, as has been demonstrated by the discussion on learning in Chapter Two.

A reiteration of the notion that whether a particular conflict is perceived as functional or dysfunctional will depend on the individual and their prior experiences and their learning from such experiences.
CHAPTER FOUR

FUNCTIONAL AND DYSFUNCTIONAL CONFLICT
CHAPTER FOUR

FUNCTIONAL AND DYSFUNCTIONAL CONFLICT

4.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Four follows the theme of conflict addressed in the previous chapter, by looking at the differences between and the demarcation of functional and dysfunctional conflict (4.1). Following this is a discussion of optimum levels of conflict (4.2) in relation to conflict that is either too high or too low to be functional for the particular individuals involved.

4.1 DIFFERENCES AND DEMARCATIONS

Literature searches indicate that research on conflict has yet to identify those situations where conflict is more likely to be functional (constructive) than dysfunctional (destructive). However, the difference between functional and dysfunctional conflict is important enough to allow one to go beyond the substantive evidence and to propose two hypotheses. Firstly, extreme levels of conflict - often exemplified by overt struggle or violence - are rarely, if ever, functional. Functional conflict is probably most often characterised by low to moderate levels of subtle and controlled opposition. Secondly, the type of group activity taking place should be another factor determining functionality. The hypothesis is that the more creative or unprogrammed the activities of the group - particularly in regard to decision-making - the greater the probability that the conflict will be constructive ie functional. The professional experience of the researcher suggests that individuals within groups that are required to tackle problems requiring new and novel approaches - for example, active learning techniques such as self- and peer-assessment, and the use of case studies - appear to benefit more from functional conflict than individuals who are not actively participating in their learning.

The use of functional conflict in learning should be considered as part of a holistic approach to learning. When writing on active learning Denicolo et al (1992) stated:

.... gaining an informed understanding of students' perceptions and experiences is an indispensable step in bringing about a lasting change. (p44)

The interactionist view of conflict states that conflict is not only a positive force but that it is absolutely necessary for effective performance. However, such conflict must be functional in that it supports the goals of the student and
improves his/her individual performance. It is not the purpose of the interactionist view to encourage dysfunctional conflict per se. However, the demarcation is neither clear nor precise: it could well be at different points for different people (or different mixes of people).

In order to understand why functional conflict is necessary in the classroom, it is important to recognise that a class is much more than an assemblage of individuals. As a member of the class, each student's behaviour is influenced by feelings of membership. If differences or conflicts arise with other students - or the teacher - then a student is notionally free to react and change his/her mind on the basis of new evidence and to give or withhold co-operation in keeping with personal desires.

However, a group develops norms that regulate the behaviour of members through sometimes subtle but potent pressures. Significant individual departures from important jointly held group values and attitudes or accepted patterns of behaviour are rarely tolerated (Bettenhausen and Murningham, 1991). Students who think or act differently are either punished, persuaded, or rejected. Seeking to solve interpersonal disputes between two individuals not only disregards these important short-term solutions but at the same time disrupts internal group cohesion, producing new and more serious problems in the future, such as failure by an individual to meet the peer group requirements for successful completion of the course (Summers et al, 1988).

Two distinct criteria define the role of the teacher in the classroom. Firstly, the creation of a set of objectives and learning outcomes and, secondly, an assurance that any proposed activity is directed toward some end.

Even though the students' learning might be facilitated by membership of a group, the teacher still has to monitor the learning process which could well include observation of the type of conflict in use during the interaction of individuals within the group.

### 4.2 Optimum Levels of Conflict

The facilitator of learning should not adopt as acceptable or unacceptable one single level of conflict under all conditions.

Classes of student learners might require functional conflict if learning is to take place and there will be some situations in which conflict levels are too low, and therefore should be
raised to an optimum level. There will also be other situations when the conflict is too high and is thus dysfunctional bringing about the need for activities to be brought into line with optimum levels of conflict.

The ways that individual students and teachers perceive conflict may have an important influence on its effect on the group within which the individual student is learning, whether this group is a class or a small group, say, a syndicate. The individual view cannot be ignored since learning is a personal activity. Thus, conflict may be perceived to be either constructive or destructive to the functioning of the individual and, therefore, ultimately to the group. Such levels of conflict could be either too high or too low. After Robbins (1993) this is be diagrammatically portrayed as below:

Figure 4.1 Optimum level of conflict within a group
4.4

4.2.1 **Low or None**

Some minimal levels of conflict might facilitate critical thinking among students within a class and also enable the groups within the class to become more responsive. This could provide benefits enhancing the performance of the groups, and hence of the class as a whole.

In the previous figure (4.1), at situation A the level of conflict would be either low or nil and would be dysfunctional in nature. Members of the group would be likely to exhibit identifiable internal characteristics such as apathy, stagnation, complacency, non-responsiveness to change, and a lack of new ideas. The performance of individuals within the group towards achieving the desired learning outcomes would probably be low.

4.2.2 **High**

Point C describes a class with a high level of dysfunctional conflict when the students could become disruptive, chaotic, and unco-operative. The class performance outcome would be likely to be low, so this level of conflict would be dysfunctional.

4.2.3 **Optimum**

At point B there would be an optimal level of conflict of a functional type and the class would be viable, self-critical, and innovative with a high class performance outcome. This is also termed the *Goldilocks* point i.e. the point when conditions are "just right" (Vecchio, 1991, p411).

Whilst point B may indicate that there is an optimal level of conflict for the class this could vary between classes. For one class it could be optimal and for another it could be either too high or too low a level of conflict. The same process could apply to an individual. As conflict increases, individuals typically experience greater arousal and levels of motivation (Sites, 1990). Therefore, in a class where students are exhibiting signs of lethargy, for example, and where ideas have become stale and behaviour routine, greater functional conflict may be needed to generate ideas and motivate students to exhibit higher levels of performance.
Functional conflict may be a means of bringing about a radical change and as such it could be an effective device by which the facilitator of learning - who is managing the learning of the student - can drastically change the existing power structure, the current interaction pattern, and also the entrenched attitudes of the learner.

Whilst functional conflict has the potential of increasing intragroup hostility, external threats will tend to cause individuals to pull together as a unit. Intergroup conflicts raise the extent to which members identify with their own group and increase feelings of solidarity, while, at the same time, internal differences and irritations dissolve.

According to Vecchio (1991) and Robbins (1994), the use of functional conflict can improve the group effectiveness and, thus, that of the organisation. The stimulation of conflict can initiate the search for new meaning and goals and clear the way for innovation. The successful solution of a conflict can lead to greater effectiveness, to more trust and openness, to greater attraction of members for each other, as well as to the depersonalisation of future conflicts.

Functional conflict could bring about a slightly higher, more constructive, level of tension which might well enhance the chances of solving the conflicts in a way that is satisfactory to all parties concerned. When the level of tension is very low, the parties may not be sufficiently motivated to do anything about a conflict.

The teacher has the responsibility for deciding the direction that the class will take as well as having the authority to move the group toward its goals. This is a most important factor in determining the group's success or failure and consequently the progress of the individual learner. This depends on differences in perception between the student and the teacher. Successful teachers will make correct choices in order to anticipate change, vigorously exploit learning opportunities, correct poor performance, and lead the class towards its objectives normally stated as learning outcomes. However, teachers have other roles to consider which might well be in conflict with their professional experiences as facilitators of learning eg by the requirement to adopt procedures as directed by management at the apex of the organisation.
Whilst differences in perception can lead to dysfunctional conflict so can differences in values and ethics become sources of disagreement. Most students and teachers will have their own sets of values and ethics but the extent to which they apply these ethical considerations in the learning situation is an important consideration for this study.
CHAPTER FIVE

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS
CHAPTER FIVE  ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.0  INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the definition of ethics (5.1), the issues raised during the process of the study itself (5.2) as well as ethics as it relates to the contents of the study (5.3). The role of the teacher in higher education as it impinges on ethical issues is discussed (5.4) as well as teachers' individual ethical concerns (5.5). (In this section the common usage of "ethics" means it is interpreted as a singular noun.)

5.1  DEFINITION OF ETHICS

Navran (1992) believed that to behave ethically was to act in ways consistent with one's personal values and the commonly held values of organisation and society. Other definitions like that of Nelson and Quick (1994) see ethics as related to:

.... moral values and moral behavior. (p126)

The Chambers English Dictionary (1990) describes ethics in relation to what is good or bad stating that it is concerned with moral duties and obligations.

In common usage, 'ethics' stands for the practice as well as for a reflection on that practice. As a practice ethics is a conscious appeal to the norms and values to which, on reasonable grounds, human beings hold themselves obliged, as, reciprocally, they hold others obliged to the same norms and values. As a reflection, ethics is a methodological and systematic elaboration of the norms and values that humans appeal to in their daily activities. Where these activities are organised around learning, ethics is faced in both the practical and reflective variety of teaching and learning.

Ethics also presents itself as a discipline in that it is a science of a specific nature: a normative science where emphasis is not primarily on what is the case, how a given situation came about and how it can be influenced, but on what ought to be done or ought not to be done.

When considering the issue of ethics it is necessary to appreciate exactly what the norms and values referred to are. The concern here is not about the general nature of norms and values but the point that today, in Western society, norms and values seem to be less stable than they used to be. Life
experiences throw up a common interpretation that our times are characterised, increasingly, by a pluralism of values and by shifting patterns of norms. Care should be taken not to exaggerate this because not "everything goes", and not all norms are shifting simultaneously. However, people today are accustomed to the fact that, to a certain extent, they have to shape their norms and values for themselves - even to the extent of inventing some. This is not necessarily done in isolation but, as in the classroom, there are groups of significant others to whom to apply for moral support. Standards, also, do not have to be constructed from scratch because at a basic level it is possible for people to share moral insights and convictions of a global and yet fairly distinctive nature.

Ethics is about norms and values of a certain seriousness; about standards and ideals which individuals cannot easily neglect without harming others, or without being looked on disdainfully by significant others. It is about keeping promises, respecting sentient beings, and distributing benefits and burdens in a fair and equitable way. Most people feel obliged to obey, however approximately, the rules of morals; this is partly because they are expected to do so by a forceful moral community and partly because they acknowledge their status as an autonomous person and this involves not only freedom but also responsibility.

Norms and values, reasonableness, moral community, equity and reciprocity, obligation, and responsibility are core concepts in ethical practice as well as in ethical reflection, and ethical research.

5.2 ETHICS AND THE STUDY PROCESS

5.2.1 Humanity of Researcher and Participants

There is a need within this study to acknowledge the common humanity of researcher and participants; the researcher should do no harm and in this belief there is a suggestion that there is automatically a relationship between the researcher and each individual participant. However, knowledge can be considered to be relative rather than absolute and a doctrine of relativism is complex and can take many forms: such a discussion is beyond the scope of this study.

There was, for the researcher, the need to be responsible to self and to behave in accordance with her own ethics as well as owing ethical responsibility to the participants and to the organisation within which the inquiry was placed. Such
standards of conduct are time and situationally variable and it could well be argued, perhaps sceptically, that the standards attained, or striven for, by the researcher are unsustainable.

Participation in the research was voluntary but a decision not to participate might well, in the eyes of the potential participant, have carried negative connotations. For example, individuals who might have chosen not to participate may have felt that they would have been perceived as unhelpful or overly protective of their activities. In order to offset this fear, the researcher assured all potential participants that their freedom and privacy would not be compromised and that they would not be identified, nor be identifiable by others, through the finished work. The researcher was aware that participants had given up some freedom - not least of all their time - when they agreed to participate in the inquiry. There was not, in this case, any tangible trade-off in the form of payment or benefits.

However, the researcher had five underlying values which had implications for the inquiry:

a an appreciation of the participants who were always treated with dignity and respect and perceived by the researcher as being responsible, conscientious, and caring;

b a belief that an effective and healthy department is characterised by trust, openness and a supportive climate;

c a desire to de-emphasise hierarchical authority and control with the view to achieving power equalisation;

d a belief that if problems arose they would be openly confronted and dealt with;

e a belief that those who might be directly affected by the research process or product should be given an opportunity to influence that research.

The final value (e) is also influenced by a hypothesis that when people participate in research such as is incorporated in this study, they become more committed to implementing the resultant suggestions, in this case a range of different ways of facilitating learning.

It could be suggested that the inquiry controlled the participants to some degree by seeking, through a humanistic methodology (see Chapter Seven), to encourage them to be more open and trusting. Such outcomes cannot be railed against
because the researcher and others were not likely to impress their peers by arguing mutual avoidance or closed communication, and that distrusting relationships were in order because they happen to protect the individual's privacy. Students were not under pressure, in this light, to participate but the teachers as employees of the organisation, may have felt that they were, even though they were assured otherwise by the researcher.

Ethical issues are of paramount importance and the researcher sought to adopt a style which was sensitive to the parameters of the inquiry by avoiding cognitive dissonance and inconsistency (Festinger, 1957). So the researcher attempted to dissipate dissonance with the participants through making them aware of specific actions taken that clearly demonstrated concern for the dynamics of teaching and learning within the department. This meant that the researcher had to consider whether it was good or bad (see section 5.3.1) to actually research into a sensitive issue like conflict.

Faced with the above moral uncertainties, the researcher had to look for some commonly accepted general principles, apply them to the inquiry, and then attempt to show that the principles effectively fitted the situation i.e. in what way they did and to what extent. It was expected that there might be some gaps to bridge because the wording of the inquiry or the conversation used might not prove to be adequate to the special conditions of the inquiry.

The researcher, in anticipation of such difficulties, utilised the general principle of case variance by finding out through literature searches and conversations with researchers, if, and if so to what extent, a given principle was applicable in a specific case. She varied slightly the conditions of the case by comparing it to similar - yet not identical - instances. Such a major preliminary condition for reaching a defensible standpoint was to stay close to the specific circumstances of the study: this was in line with the view held by Brady, (1986).

5.3 ETHICS AND THE STUDY CONTENT

5.3.1 "Good" Versus "Bad"

It is the case that the words "good" and "bad" can be used in an ethical or non-ethical way. The way the words are used depends on the point of view adopted by the user, the relevant standards in use and the general context of the case under
consideration. In ascribing someone or some act as "good" or "bad" one needs to state how the words are being used and from what point of view the activity or person is being considered.

Since the criteria of goodness or badness are determined in each case by the kind of thing that is under consideration, one is only in a position to judge whether "this is a good or bad student" where one has at least a rough idea of what students do. This applies to the potential functionality of conflict to enhance learning because the facilitator of learning can only judge whether a technique is good or bad if there is a perception of such techniques and if there is an understanding of what functional conflict can do in learning.

Ethics is the study of morals but whether there is such a thing as the moral point of view and how it might relate to an ethical standpoint is a question which cannot be settled in a few words: it requires a separate study.

5.3.2 Functionality of Conflict: An Ethical View

In some respects the whole of this research might be viewed as enacting the research problem focus - the use of functional conflict in the hope of promoting learning.

With respect to the inquiry interventions which took place, participants were asked to complete survey questionnaires, and narrative summaries, and to participate in focus group and repertory grid interviews, in order to determine whether they used, or perceived the use by others of, conflict in teaching and learning. The focus here was to identify an area of which facilitators of learning might be unaware.

The central attention was on understanding the use of functional conflict by understanding others, improving communication and improving performance. It is recognised that students and, particularly, their teachers, could not easily decline participation in such an apparently worthwhile venture. However, this could have been perceived as moral blackmail, a conflict situation, even though the researcher did not intend it to be so.

The researcher did not attempt to coerce any participant and it was understood by the researcher that participation contained risks for all - students, teachers, and the researcher alike.
However, it was these very risks which, in return, could stimulate the forces of change.

If the researcher had opted for an inquiry which had minimalised individual risk for all, the research climate might well have become so bland as to have had no effect on the facilitation of learning. The challenge for the researcher was to find the proper balance - whether and to what extent the students' and teachers' rights and well-being were considered within the potential improvements in the department's effectiveness and within the arena of informed consent.

However, it could be said that the stimulation of conflict is a curate's egg in that parts of it are excellent but not wholly to the taste of everyone. However, there might well be a confusion between explaining the disparities in the use of functional conflict within learning and seeking to justify the use of functional conflict. There are always separate strands to a discussion on conflict.

The use of functional conflict may well prove to be a mixed blessing. If it is not used correctly, it may be discovered that functional conflict techniques can suffer from selective blindness, and it is important to address the issue of conflict of ethics. Indeed, such techniques might well hurt people for no worthwhile reason. Total encouragement of the use of functional conflict could be a vice because if it is pursued at the expense of other methods of facilitating learning it could be prejudicial to teaching and learning. In this respect, it would not be expected that a teacher would use functional conflict stimulation regardless of what purpose it serves or of how it is managed.

Being bound by one method of teaching is an impoverished way to lead one's professional life. Consequently, the teacher should expect to suffer a quandary in the choice of medium from time to time, and should realise that this is not necessarily a bad thing. A collection of approaches towards the organisation, colleagues, and students with other attributes constitutes the components of a way of learning worth experiencing. A teacher with a variety of media will experience conflicts of choice, but the exercise of judgment required to prioritise them, or balance them, is an experience in developing practical wisdom. Moreover, as teaching and learning proceeds, changing methods has a place in allowing people to adjust to their situation as it develops.
5.3.3 Aspects of Teaching: The Moral Viewpoint

Many facilitators of learning demonstrate a clear competence in handling moral choices. Experience and reflection have taught them how to spot the ethical implications of a given situation, and how to approach them in an orderly way. In order to track moral elements adequately, the professional practitioner has to take the ‘moral point of view’ in that she has to determine the specific interests, rights, and obligations of all parties involved - this is the first moral decision that the practitioner makes in the process of forming a moral judgment.

How moral an individual’s point of view is depends on how far that individual is prepared to extend the circle of those individuals and groups that can legitimately claim that their rights and interests are synonymous with those of the viewpoint being expressed.

From a psychological point of view, some people have strong desires for approval from others and will work to meet such others’ ethical standards. Some people are relatively unconcerned with approval from others and apply strongly their own ethical standards. Still others operate seemingly without regard to ethics or values (Brady 1986).

Clark (1991) and, separately, Elbaz (1991) have both addressed the moral aspects of teaching. Clark (1991) laid a heavy responsibility on teachers by stating that they should:

*Be good all of the time. And be especially aware of the ethical and moral implications of everything you do, for the future of the human race depend [sic] on your good effects on children. (p5)*

By extension, these are heavy responsibilities for teachers and undergraduates to bear. There is often conflict between these cognitive and ethical imperatives. What may be effective facilitation of learning may at the same time be ethically questionable: being a "good" teacher may seemingly conflict with being a "good" person.

The problem before the researcher was a delicate one since she knew something about the ethical possibilities and pitfalls of carrying out an inquiry into conflict and learning. As an example, one immediate issue as the research commenced was whether the researcher should point out to the participants the exact area of inquiry or, for a while, at least, work on the premise that ignorance is bliss - this was a moral issue and this, according to Donaldson (1992), is:
Synonymous with 'ethical'. Refers to the customs, values, standards, practices of a group, age, or of a theory intended to be timeless. Refers also to the way in which they are, or can be criticised constructively or destructively. From the Latin mores, meaning customs. (Glossary, xxiii)

The researcher eventually decided to take the latter view and refer to the study as being "related to aspects of teaching and learning".

Most moral codes and other sets of norms are in fact partially enforced, for example, by the state, in legislation, and by groups at work, as well as by a variety of institutions. This is inevitable: the concern of this researcher was not whether such processes occur, but how they could be guided constructively. This involved recognition of inevitable conflicts and the skilled handling of them. The alternative, favoured by human relationists, of trying to eliminate conflict, and that favoured by most management custom and practice, of not facing up to it until it is too late, are possibly inferior to the systematic handling of values. The specific content of moral rules pertaining to a given situation is often a matter of discussion between sensible interested parties. Quite regularly it is the outcome of a reasonable compromise and in exceptional cases it is a matter of autonomous decisions based on conscience and on personal convictions.

Elbaz (1991) was concerned with the moral dimension of the knowledge of teachers and stated:

It is obvious if we look for it that moral concern pervades all of teachers' work and the knowledge that grows out of that work .... (p3)

She made a point which was pertinent to this study - that regardless of the methodological positions taken and the substantive interests that direct teachers' work, all deal in the moral dimension of a teacher's work. There is a moral dimension in general and all the activities of a researcher could be said to have a moral dimension. In order to get hold of the moral qualities that are characteristic of interactions in teaching and learning, it is necessary to attempt to clarify the nature and moral content of teaching and learning activities. The teacher and student can adopt one of three basic action types - typically, human actions can take three different directions; they can be self-regarding, other-including, or other-regarding.
Self-regarding action is one that intends the actor and the recipient of the benefits of the action to co-incide: "I commit myself to a course in the use of functional conflict stimulation techniques for the enhancement of learning in order to qualify for promotion". The other self-regarding action is one in which the actor intends to share with others the position of being the recipient of the action's benefit. Many teaching and learning interactions are other-including actions, because both parties are intended to have a deal. The other-regarding action is one with which the actor intends results that exclusively benefit one or more other people eg allowing a failing student a second chance.

Although a simple model of basic action patterns, it does acquire moral meaning if consideration of how the interests and claims of others involved in each of the different actions are being taken into account.

From a moral point of view, other-regarding actions do not require extended comment because here the actors, voluntarily, foster the interests of others. Therefore, although such people may be facing purely altruistic actions, highly respectable and stimulating, such behaviour should not be qualified as a moral obligation. Other-regarding activities embellish life, people acting in this way can serve as high-standing models: but moral duties are not at stake.

To a certain extent the same is true with regard to self-directed actions. As long as the research-practitioner is her own beneficiary, and no legitimate claims are raised by others, no specific moral qualifications are due. It could be concluded, therefore, that there is an ethics of self-development, guided by the principle of fidelity to one's basic self: "don't spoil the gift of your capacities, become who you are able to be", but for the rest, with this type of action, one is gliding in a quiet moral sky. However, some notion of what is worthwhile is needed.

Things change and as soon as legitimate rights and interest of others intervene in the pattern of an intended self-directed action then serious claims are at stake. Such allegations require recognition on the part of the research-practitioner in order to create a moral asymmetry between the research-practitioner and the party/ies who could be affected by the self-directed action. From a moral point of view, when this situation occurs, the positions of the parties involved can be defined as, respectively, that of a claimant on the one side and that of a duty-bound participant on the other, the former being morally entitled to the recognition of her claims and interests, the latter being obliged to recognise these claims. In terms of rights, the situation can be described as implying
one party's moral rights vis a vis the other party's corresponding moral duty. In terms of interests there is a situation of conflicting interests and unequal claims, with the tacit supposition that the rights of the party affected have a greater moral weight than the freedom to act of the research-practitioner. This is the domain of recognitional ethics.

The research-practitioner could well recognise both formally and consciously that she may get involved in situations of moral asymmetry and then will need to react accordingly. Basic also is what is called the principle of beneficence or the principle of non-maleficence - saying that no harm should be done to others, that harm done should be compensated, and that everybody, to a reasonable extent, has the moral duty to avoid harm being done by others.

The domain of recognitional ethics covers a large part of traditional ethical interventions. In the eyes of some, ethics is about asymmetrical relations, about the rights or interests of the one generating a duty for another. Practical ethical discussions are, then, about the moral weight of the rights at stake and about the extension of the corresponding duties.

5.4 ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Among the primary roles of a facilitator of learning in higher education are: setting and administering policy, solving problems, and making decisions. In so doing, countless factors are analysed, evaluated, and affected by the results. As a facilitator of learning the researcher may explicitly consider such issues in the light of how the results of her enterprises enhance the department, the organisation and the lives of those she affects. Most probably a concern would be whether her work and influence reflects the ethical principles expected by the department, the organisation, and by the wider society.

5.5 TEACHERS' ETHICAL CONCERNS

Teachers' ethical concerns are most probably connected to relationships and responsibilities because of the nature of their work where correct decisions are not perfectly clear, and there are no hard, fast rules to follow. Any time when the teacher is dealing with issues of rights and fairness, it is usually ethical problems which are being dealt with. However, students also have certain legal rights within higher education in the United Kingdom.
Doing the right thing can probably affect performance in learning. Unethical behaviour by students or teachers can affect individuals, classes, and the department. Ethical behaviour is influenced by two major categories of factors: individual characteristics and organisational factors (Treviño, 1986).

Making ethical decisions is part of every teacher’s job. It was suggested by Andrews (1989) that ethical decision-making requires three qualities of individuals, and since decision-making is part of the role of the teacher and the research-practitioner, this relates to them also. Firstly, the teacher needs to be competent in identifying ethical issues and in the evaluation of the consequences of alternative courses of action. Secondly, self-confidence is required to seek out different opinions about the relevant domain and to decide what is right in terms of a particular situation. Thirdly, there is a need for the teacher to be toughminded in the willingness to make decisions when all that needs to be known cannot be known and when the ethical issue has no established, unambiguous solution.

There is another side of this coin because when facilitators of learning have to resolve ethical issues they must contend with the reaction of others within the organisation who may be affected by the outcome. Teachers need to know whether their judgment and response enhance or detract from the image the teacher wishes to project.

Such issues are embodied in the culture of the inquiry and emanate from every aspect of the work: from ethical issues related to the process of the empirical investigation to those concerning the use of functional conflict stimulation as it relates to teaching and learning. This has brought with it the need for the acceptance of others through genuine conversation and thus actual fulfilment of the relationship between researcher and participant. It was recognised and accepted that this otherness of an individual meant to respect that other as a valuable being in her/his own right and in their own independence which is, in itself, an ethical stance. This attitude is incongruous with any idea of possessiveness or any tendency to use the participant as a means to an end be this in the form of exploitation, domination, possessiveness, or some other attitude. Such a view stresses personal experience and responsibility and their respective demands on the individual, seen by the researcher as a free agent.
The inquiry was an intervention which relied heavily on the processes of participation and collaboration. However, in doing this the assumption was that the outcomes would be desirable and would lead to more effective teaching and learning within the department. With this approach comes the imposition of the researcher's values on the participants. Not everyone feels comfortable participating in a process that requires them to be open about their feelings and attitudes. For these individuals research interventions which demand openness reduce their privacy and freedom.

The tension between the richness of the data collected and the recognition of the participants' right to privacy are addressed in the section on methodology (Chapter Seven) after a discussion on research questions in Chapter Six.
CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
CHAPTER SIX

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

6.0 INTRODUCTION

Given the debate in the literature and in this study about the appropriateness or otherwise of the use of conflict in learning, the first general objective of the empirical inquiry was to discover if functional conflict was used within the Business Studies Department’s teaching and learning environment.

To further define the area of study, the general context was considered ie the focus was on the interaction between teachers and learners, and learners with learners, each with their own situational definition which informed the participants (see Chapter One).

This chapter considers the relationship between the area of study and the literature survey (6.1) and the formulation of the specific research questions (6.2).

6.1 RELATIONSHIP WITH LITERATURE SURVEY

As has been expounded in Chapter Two, general psychological research has demonstrated how various factors can affect learning and consequently individual learner’s reaction to it, with internal conflict (Sites, 1990), quality of student learning (Gibbs, 1981, 1988, 1992a, 1992b, 1994a, 1994b, and Gibbs et al, 1984), and understanding student learning (Entwistle and Ramsden, 1983, Entwistle and Tait, 1990) being particularly pertinent to this study.

This cannot be divorced from the view propounded by Kelly (1955) expressed in his personal construct theory where he saw the human in many ways like a scientist, continuously developing constructs which enabled the individual to predict, and hence interact with, their own world as they perceived it.

Dalton and Dunnett (1992) paraphrased this Kellian metaphor in thus:

Everyone was making their own theories about the world out there. They were doing this in order to make predictions about their future. (p7)
However, before deciding on the refined research questions it was also necessary to consider the psychological aspects as indicated in the literature. As Burr and Butt (1992) said in the preface to their work on personal construct psychology:

"... any problem has to be framed appropriately before we can even begin with a stroll to tackle it, and the process of reconstruction has to begin with a stroll round the psychological landscape in search of better perspectives."

The review of the link between general and specific psychological areas indicates that research in a generally psychological domain is closely linked, in this study, with research in the psychology of education which indicates that there are different cognitive styles: Honey and Mumford (1986, 1992) and their activists, reflectors, theorists, and pragmatists; Pask (1976) and holistic/serialists; Guilford (1950) and convergent and divergent thinking relating to problem solving. With Kolb (1974) and his work on the learning cycle (see Chapter Two) they represent various pervasive learning styles which may emanate from the teachers' own theories about teaching and learning and the nature of knowledge.

An important premise here is that one facet of a teacher's theory-in-use (Argyris and Schon, 1974) that could influence personal practical knowledge is the way that the teacher construes professional practice and the profession of teaching.

There is some commonality here with Pope and Gilbert's (1982) suggestion that teachers' personal epistemology or perspective on the nature of knowledge and their viewpoint that such a perspective will influence teaching strategy and aims:

"... you, the teacher, can raise the normal pattern of your classroom enquiries into a valuable contribution to educational research."

The sources mentioned above, and as discussed in Chapter Two, support an argument that there is no one style of learning nor one construction of reality. This view of reality is put well in Dexter (1989):

"The world is round and the place which may seem like the end may also be only the beginning."
The research questions needed to ensure that the teachers and students realised their situation and this is linked to a view of reality as expressed by Metner (1986):

You do not realize your own situation. You are in prison. All you can wish for, if you are a sensible man [sic], is to escape. But how to escape? .... If a man is at any time to have a chance of escape, then he must first of all realize that he is in prison. So long as he fails to realize this, so long as he thinks he is free, he has no chance whatsoever. (p37)

Thus individual preferred learning styles and theories about knowledge may affect how the individual students interact with the teacher and each other.

The lack of literature on the subject of conflict related to learning indicated that it might be pertinent to study the perceptions of teachers and learners within the context of the classroom. It was possible that there were factors which influence their rationale for using - or not using - functional conflict in their teaching and in their learning.

The psychological arena supported the relevance of assessing these factors in conjunction with an inquiry into the students’ perception of how they perceive functional conflict as enhancing, or otherwise, their learning as well as giving some indications of how functional conflict can be used as part of the learning process.

6.2 FORMULATION OF SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In formulating the specific research questions it was important to ensure that they would not impair the quality of the study which allowed for an iterative investigation of all possible aspects of the area of conflict and learning as it affected the teachers and the students. This was well put by Kellerman (1990) who said:

.... like a salad bowl - every ingredient maintains its integrity, no matter how you toss it around. (p25)

It appeared pertinent at this stage to study the role of conflict as it related to learning in the context of the teachers’ and students’ classroom experiences because it was possible that their use, or lack of use, of functional conflict may have influenced learning.
In summary, therefore, the more refined research questions were:

1 Do teachers within the Business Studies Department:
   a perceive functional conflict within the learning environment?
   b practise or capitalise on functional conflict in their facilitation of learning?

2 Do students within the Business Studies Department:
   a perceive functional conflict within the learning environment?
   b practise or capitalise on functional conflict in their facilitation of learning?

Having decided upon the research questions to be addressed it was necessary to consider the use of appropriate methodology which, because of the lack of appropriate literature on conflict and its relationship to learning, meant that the starting point was at zero and the position for the choice of methodological tools followed the view expressed below:

   The first elementary law of wisdom is .... I do not know. (Commander Data to Captain Picard, Startrek, 1991)

A discussion on the philosophical basis of the specific research methods used can be found in Chapter Seven.
CHAPTER SEVEN

METHODOLOGY
7.0 INTRODUCTION

This study attempted to concentrate on selected areas of particular relevance to functional conflict as informed by the fieldwork and as they related to methods of implementing the inquiry.

The review was guided by the personal experience of working with undergraduates and fellow teachers and the concern that research should reflect practice and practice would reflect research. This was balanced by an interest in Organisational Behaviour (see Chapter One) which is defined by Nelson and Quick (1994) as:

The study of individual behavior and group dynamics in organizational settings. (p4)

which highlighted the concept of conflict and, particularly, the use of functional conflict. It was necessary to balance these two principal forms of reference into a coherent inquiry informed by a relevant philosophy.

Chapter Seven gives a discussion on the philosophical basis and general orientation of the empirical investigation (7.1) and then goes on to discuss the rationale behind the use of the particular research methods selected (7.2).

7.1 PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS AND GENERAL ORIENTATION

There was no shortage of literature on research paradigms eg Cohen and Manion (1980) on the nature of the traditional scientific paradigm; Guba (1978) on the use of naturalistic methods of inquiry, with Reason and Rowan (1981) who put forward their new paradigm of human inquiry. Gilbert and Pope (1982) juxtaposed these various paradigms into their own classification - see Figure 7.1 over. However, the nature of this inquiry led towards methods which were naturalistic and illuminative (Parlett, 1981) being driven by a need to explore and make sense of human action and experience. The research work had to encompass creativity if it was to contribute to knowledge and practice.
Figure 7.1 Classification of two paradigms after Pope and Gilbert (1982)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LABELS USED FOR AIMS AND STRATEGIES OF TWO PARADIGMS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>METHOD TECHNIQUE TYPE OF DATA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARADIGM TWO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Traditional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naturalistic =&gt; Case Study =&gt; Observation — Qualitative or Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview =&gt; Qualitative or Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire — Mainly Quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARADIGM ONE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential =&gt; Experiment =&gt; Tests — Mainly quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prescriptive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reductionist</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

represents main methods or techniques used
In the light of the above, it was considered that a qualitative research approach was the most appropriate paradigm for five principal reasons:

a there was insufficient information or theory as provided by the literature in which toground a logical quantitative approach;

b it was anticipated that the questionnaire survey would produce useful information but that it might require development;

c the subject of functional conflict and learning was inherently complex and this very understanding was the backbone of the research brief;

d the subject was sensitive so that a highly structured interview schedule or observation would be likely to elicit only superficial data;

e the objective was to study relationships.

Qualitative techniques were considered to be oriented by such concepts as authenticity, relevance, and practicality because change is inherent. Reliability was not to be expected and credibility to the participants was being taken as a form of validity. As such, the methods used were based on the premise that they were responsive to the needs of the participants and the nature of the subject of functional conflict and learning. It was anticipated that the proposed research methods used would typically yield a large amount of exceedingly rich data being obtained from a limited number of individuals and thus provide a possibility to exploit the context of the data gathering to enhance the value of the data. The analysis of the data would be more explicitly interpretative, creative and personal. However, there was still a need to be systematic and rigorous.

Of applied qualitative research there are widely divergent views regarding legitimacy. It had added value when it was applied and could be validated with reference to the value placed on it by the success, or otherwise, of decisions based upon its findings. It was the researcher's view that the value of qualitative research lay in its utility as a research paradigm which assumed a central importance. As Rosenham (1972) believed, qualitative research has its own rightful place:

Much of what needs to be known cannot be learnt from quantitative research and in such circumstances "knowledge" has all too frequently been invented. (p250)
Rather than invention, exploration was required. Triangulation of method provided validation of data derived from each method used (questionnaire survey, narrative survey, focus group, and repertory grids) which was unique to the study and therefore required careful planning. As Morton-Williams (1985) said:

.... each study [is] unique because there is no blueprint. (p272)

It was necessary for the researcher to exercise judgment in deciding how to choose and use the research methods and so a phased approach was used because it allowed for the sampling for the later stages of the project to be guided by the initial findings.

Experience as a facilitator of learning indicated that the roots for the research inquiry lay in the behavioural sciences and, particularly, in the work of Lewin (1946), the social psychologist who began the development of action research as a means of addressing two fundamental questions: how can one successfully produce social change and how can one do research which will aid the practitioner?

The importance of action research to this inquiry lay in it providing a methodology for managing planned change through reflection on professional activity and contributed at least two specific benefits for the inquiry department and its host organisation. Firstly, the study was problem focused: as a reflective practitioner and, hopefully, a change agent, the researcher had to look objectively at the issue of functional conflict and learning. It might be intuitively obvious, but many change activities are not carried out this way - they are usually solution-oriented. However, the intention was not to seek out a problem that the solution fitted.

Secondly, because action research would so heavily involve colleagues in the department, resistance to the potential changes was likely to be reduced. In fact, because the teachers were to participate actively in the research and were involved in the feedback, the research would take on a momentum of its own and the people involved would become an internal source of sustained pressure to bring about positive changes. It was, using the words of Lewin (1946):

.... a type of action-research, a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action, and research leading to social action. (p46)
7.5

The use of functional conflict requires interaction between people and, therefore, the use of action research principles were important to the inquiry.

In the light of the potential benefits of action research and in relation to the inquiry, the following principal criteria formed the backbone of the inquiry:

a learning about the problem directly from those involved;
b the availability of results to all;
c the fact that those involved would learn from themselves;
d as a practitioner, the researcher would be better informed by subjecting practice to critical examination.

To consider (a) first, the study involved the world as seen by the participants as individuals rather than as guinea pigs in a laboratory or a group of participants who would represent the larger world. Gordon et al (1986) challenged the use of college students as subjects in organisational research on the grounds of the lack of validity because they did not represent the world as it was outside the college experience. This was opposed by Greenberg (1987) who expressed a viewpoint with which the practitioner-researcher concurred. Unlike Gordon et al (1986), Greenberg (1987) believed that it had not been the purpose of any one study using college students to explain all that may be going on in a larger organisational context but:

... such research may prove to be a valuable source of insight into some of the psychological processes operating therein. (p157) (Researcher's italics.)

As Oakes (1972) put forward, any research population is atypical and just as the results of this study using a particular group of students may not generalise to the greater population of wage earning people, so may the results of studies using narrowly defined groups of workers be similarly limited. The population of this study could well be considered as a narrowly defined subject group but the researcher considered this better than using diffuse subject groups in approaching the theory-building goal of organisational research.

Criterion (b), the availability of results to all, was valid because the nature of the research and the population, by definition, ensured that the results would be available for use by those directly involved. This was particularly so in the case of the teachers and it was hoped that the student
participants will have benefited from the experience and feedback provided through the process even though they have since graduated from the host institution.

Point (c), learning by the participants, was critical to the study because the research-practitioner is committed to the belief that learning should be self-directed activity because it is humane and likely to be long-lasting: learning will be deep, active, and owned (Marton and Saljo, 1976a, 1976b, 1984). Pope and Keen (1981) supported this view by stating that:

\[ \text{Learner-based learning is self-initiated, has a quality of personal involvement and is evaluated by the learner i.e. he knows whether or not it is meeting his needs.} \]

Such learning applied to the researcher as much as to the participants. As Denicolo et al. (1992) believed when discussing active learning and the challenge of lifelong learning:

\[ \text{.... the key facet of active learning is concerned with looking beyond the point at which students graduate from higher education.} \]

and went on to say:

As an academic, moreover, you will be only too aware of the continuing need to go on updating and enlarging your understanding of your chosen field of study, as the knowledge-base within it constantly shifts and expands.

Item (d), an interest in human inquiry, was important because it would allow for a professional development of the work and subject it to examination by experts and, thus, add to its validity and reliability.

The research methodology was related to the review of the literature both on learning and conflict. That review had indicated that evidence for specific learning styles was somewhat equivocal and that functional conflict, in organisational terms let alone in terms of teaching and learning, was only briefly and superficially addressed. The latter was not because the issues were considered to be unimportant, but because research appeared not to have been carried out in the area. The link between learning/teaching and conflict, therefore, was only made in theory rather than through research. To redress this imbalance and to address
the research question of using functional conflict to bring about learning, an empirical investigation was designed and implemented.

Six principal factors guided the inquiry (see Chapter One) which were, briefly:

a formative years at school and church where the traditional school of thought on conflict was practised, versus the interactionist practices within the home environment;

b the professional role as a teacher with an intrinsic interest in facilitation of learning;

c previous research experience in the field of leadership in organisations which was firmly rooted in the quantitative paradigm and which was found to be personally and professionally barren;

d an interest in human inquiry and a need to explore and make sense of human action and experience;

e the need to learn about the issue directly from those concerned;

f a motivation to use a means whereby those involved would learn from themselves.

Therefore, flexibility was required. Illuminative methods (Parlett, 1981) were congruent with the "perspective of the personal" central to the work of Kelly (1955) and his personal construct theory.

One of the common tenets of those asserting the claim to objectivity in science has been the separation of research from practice in the expectation that research is somewhat tainted by the demands of the real world. This is particularly true in the field of conflict research when attempting to relate it to practice because it is a temptation to apologise for, or hide, the nature of the investigation, as though breaking some unwritten rule.

According to the traditional view of conflict - that all conflict should be eliminated - the research-practitioner did just that by using the general term 'dynamics of learning' when questioned as to the focus of the research. This, in itself, raised ethical questions (see Chapter Five). However, discovery and understanding are not automatically released when divorcing theory and practice. As Sanford (1981) said concerning this distinction:
The categorical separation of research from practice has made it very difficult for a social scientist to study phenomena that cannot be experimented upon in the laboratory, or social structures that can be understood only through attempts to change them. Likewise, it has laid the social sciences wide open to the charge of irrelevance. (p2)

Like Sanford (1981), the answer to the problem of developing the link between theory and practice lay in the model of action research. However, it is the researcher who has the responsibility of ensuring that a research method is appropriate for the inquiry and action research methodology created the opportunity for a humane, revealing research inquiry which, it was hoped, would be of some use to others besides the research-practitioner.

Ethnographic research methods were used being informed by action research methods since the researcher believed, after Pope and Keen (1981), that ethnographic research on students in classrooms had a distinct contribution to make to the understanding of the facilitation of learning and this contribution could provide a basis for future learning strategies.

Such a use of ethnographic research methods might be significant to the quality of data. Firstly, at a descriptive level it proved to be a detailed and empirically grounded account of the way teachers and students understood functional conflict and how they perceived its use within life in the classroom. Thus it had a straightforward value as an input to teaching and learning that helped to explain to students and teachers the nature, source and centrality of the issue of functional conflict to their future teaching and learning.

Secondly, ethnographic methods pointed to possible features of the students' understanding that limited the impact of the use of functional conflict on their learning. In addition they might have suggested some possible remedies to this anxiety by opening up the students' receptiveness to alternative ideas and ways of learning, as they might also have a bearing on the work of those teachers who need to move their thoughts away from "how to teach" to "how do students learn?". The potential to enhance the influence of functional conflict on the quality of learning, nevertheless, might depend on the partnership between teacher and learner if students are to be weaned away from a dependence on classroom experience as the source of their beliefs about the realities and possibilities of learning.
By using ethnographic research methods the researcher was conscious of contemporary macro theory in its direction and choice of topic. The relationship between micro and macro, as Hammersley (1980) indicated, was not found to be at all straightforward or simple:

While it may be almost impossible in a single study satisfactorily to relate micro and macro analysis, as a whole ethnographic work on the classroom does provide the basis for a model of classroom process which is both sensitive to the complexity of social interaction and at the same time provides links with macro level analysis. (p49)

What was being suggested here was not the subordination of ethnography to parameters established by macro theory but a symbiotic relationship between empirical ethnographic research and macro theory in the true spirit of scientific investigation.

Another point of concern here was that, in practice, accounts of classroom life rarely involve a static description of the situation without adding to that picture some analytic framework that locates it within wider social relations and social forces. It seemed reasonable to suggest that, in the case of the contribution of ethnographic research methods to the issue of functional conflict and learning, any accusation of conservative bias would be nullified where the use of ethnographic data to guide and help the practice of using functional conflict in the classroom was coupled with an awareness of how the issue was related to broader theoretical concerns being examined. There was a need to give equal consideration of the students' methods and rationale with that of the teachers' in the use of functional conflict stimulation.

Thus the use of ethnographic research methods appeared to sit well within the action-research methodology put forward by Lewin (1946) particularly regarding social change. Lewin's (1947) three-step model of the change process, as shown in Figure 7.2 over, is a classic piece of work which was suggested as a systematic framework for bringing about organisational change. This model of the change process has stood the test of time and continues to influence the way organisations manage planned change. It was defined by Robbins (1991) as:

.... a change process based on systematic collection of data and then selections of change action based on what the analyzed data indicates. (p648)
Figure 7.2  Lewin's (1947) change model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UNFREEZING</th>
<th>MOVING</th>
<th>REFREEZING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing forces</td>
<td>Developing new attitudes,</td>
<td>Reinforcing new attitudes,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for status quo</td>
<td>values, and behaviours</td>
<td>values, and behaviours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The description and analysis of existing classroom practice, along with its use to improve learning, faced a rather thorny problem because at first glance this focus of attention, and the purpose to which the data might be put, would seem to engulf the research methods within existing social relationships. Because its focus was deliberately on a description and analysis of the existing situation rather than totally on the dynamics of change it was tempting to dismiss the enterprise as one that lacked a critical perspective and one that reinforced a blinkered vision of what was possible.

However, such a depiction of the situation could be far from being ideologically neutral and because the data might well be used as the foundation for prescriptions to aid teachers’ facilitation of learning in their students, the thrust of this research seemed automatically to bolster the control function of both students and those who teach them. The researcher was aware that in choosing the very topic of the research - the use of functional conflict in learning - the use of functional conflict in learning - she might seem to pre-empt the way the data could be used.

By focusing on the issue of the use of functional conflict in the classroom from the viewpoint of the participants (teachers and students) the study valued the students' perspectives, their status, power and rights. Without this full involvement, it could well be argued that research without the use of ethnographic research methods, with their unique and practical contribution to the issue of the use of functional conflict in learning, would serve to perpetuate the status quo - ethnographic research methods require the interaction of all participants with the researcher.

Functional conflict seemed to concern static pictures rather than dynamic relations and, secondly, its use in teaching and learning could be seen only to improve the effectiveness of the organisation as a social control mechanism and thereby serve the interests of the dominant minority. Related to this, the focus on purely a teacher problem would have made the research, implicitly or explicitly, a management exercise. Such issues deserved serious consideration.
In addition to ethnographic research methods there are other forms of research which are both effective and treat the participants as human beings. Participant observation, participant research, grounded theory, endogenous research all testify to the recognition of the problem that the positivist paradigms hold in connection with the availability of humane and accurate methods of research. Action research, the underlying philosophy and principles of which included both faith in individuals' abilities to perform critical self-analysis and recognition of the difficulties of social science research, did not provide a claim of universal suitability or infallibility but played a role in promoting understanding of what was essential for successful social intervention.

7.2 PARTICULAR METHODS: RATIONALE FOR USE

A multiple perspective and reflective methodology was incorporated in this study and certain characteristics of the illuminative method espoused by Parlett (1981) were to the fore. The following considerations were implemented:

a a unique design which would uphold some traditional axioms yet would permit the design details to be appropriate to the specific study;

b a sympathetic approach in that endeavours would be made not to be umbrageous to the needs of the study, its participants, or its readers;

c a phenomenological approach in that it was to be concerned with accepting the validity of an entity as it appears, as distinguished from its real nature as a entity-in-itself;

d a compassionate approach in that it should be sympathetic to the sensibilities of the participants;

e a sequence which was heuristic - iterative - reflexive in that as the study evolved, new information would be used to reflect on previous findings, and to prompt fresh areas of investigation.

The final sequence of research techniques used was questionnaire survey, narrative survey, focus group, and repertory grid as shown in Figure 7.3 over:
Figure 7.3 Particular methods of research used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Year Two</td>
<td>Narrative with all teachers</td>
<td>Questionnaire with a sample of students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Year Three</td>
<td>Individual Repertory Grids with teachers and students</td>
<td>Focus Group with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key

→ Signifies that information from one data source influenced the form of the next research technique.
7.13

7.2.1 **Questionnaire Survey** (Appendix One)

One of the first objectives of the inquiry was to discover how frequently students engaged in conflict handling behaviours (Thomas, 1976) and strategies. Incorporated into this was an inquiry into how stimulating students found teaching and learning elements such as formal lectures, syndicate work, and group work because comments in this area may have indicated relationships with conflict - functional or dysfunctional.

The use of a questionnaire survey was a quick way of getting information and had the potential, if it were well done, of producing data which would act as a springboard to more detailed study. With this in mind it was necessary to ensure that the questionnaire design would provide quality information with results that would not complicate the process of analysis. This presented a need to address such fundamental aspects as "what was the aim of the survey" and "how is the questionnaire to be completed"?

Thus the survey design was given a theme - that of conflict handling techniques (Thomas, 1976) and strategies - with a logically thematic progression of questions. The review of the literature in this area gave a clear picture of the aim of the survey. It was likened to a trawl to see what varieties of techniques and strategies were used by students and it would, by the nature of the questions, indicate the degree to which conflict was *in situ*. If the respondents identified conflict handling techniques and strategies as confined to the subject of teaching and learning then they would have perceived conflict situations to have been present within that domain.

There were a number of conceptual and practical issues that needed to be addressed in the design and implementation of the survey which included the issues of the complexity of the data collection, bias and response rate, and selection of the sample:

- **the issue of data collection** was known from previous experience and from literature (Hoinville et al, 1977) to be a complicated aspect of the survey. Since it had the potential of being expensive in materials and time it was decided to manage it in a way that would ensure the minimum of financial cost yet provide a satisfactory response rate.
By completing the questionnaire *in situ* the respondents would not be able to check out certain facts so, in the final analysis, the design of the questionnaire did not include the need for such information.

The survey would be anonymous and upon completion would be left in a box at the room exit so that the research-practitioner (teacher who was engaged in research) could not see responses but could ensure that each respondent left a questionnaire - they were given the option of crossing through the questionnaire and not completing it if they wanted to but were asked to return it anyway.

**b** The issue of bias and response rate was important because it was necessary to have a sample of students who would be able to reflect on their learning experiences within the Business Studies Department and who would still be available for later and further research - this highlighted students in Year Two of a three year programme of study.

It was decided not to mail the questionnaire because a low response rate might have brought about certain types of non-reponse biases. For example, it would not be known if those who responded to the survey differed from those who did not.

The results from the questionnaire survey may well prove to be questionable from a methodological point of view since research has shown that the phenomenon of social desirability can bias the results (Jaspars, 1978). However, for this study the anonymity of the questionnaire offset the possibility that the respondents' answers might be affected by the desire to appear in a favourable light to the researcher.

A personally administered questionnaire increased the possibility of a one hundred per cent response rate but it also had the potential, in this inquiry, for bias in the perceived relationship of student with the research practitioner. For example, the researcher-practitioner may well be perceived as an authority figure. However, she was known to most of the students and it was felt that since the questionnaire was anonymous there would be a limit on bias although it could not be totally eradicated.

**c** As indicated in (a) above, related to data collection, the sample population needed to comprise students who could reflect on their learning at the time of the questionnaire survey for the whole of their Business Studies Programme
and would be, during the later stages of the inquiry, able to reflect on most of their undergraduate learning experience.

The sample also needed to be within an environment where discussion about the questionnaire topic - conflict handling strategies - with others would be minimal in an attempt to avoid cross-fertilisation.

It also needed to represent the disciplinary areas within the Business Studies Department.

Robbins (1989) highlighted the survey (Organisational Communication Instrument (OCCI), Form B) which was adapted for the purpose of this inquiry since it met all the requirements.

It was, however, to be only one of several research devices which would interconnect with others to follow: narrative survey, focus group, and repertory grid.

The appropriateness of the techniques used is indicated in Table 7.1 over.

7.2.2 Narrative Survey (Appendices Two and Three)

There were three specific issues connected with the use of narrative survey: firstly, the nature of narrative in general; secondly, the reason for using narrative and, thirdly, how and why it was used in this study.

a A narrative is an account or story of events or experiences that relates events. It is the process or technique of narrating - telling a story. The narration required of the participants could be descriptive or explanatory.

Connelly and Clandinin (1993, p2) believed that narrative was "both phenomenon and method".

As such it would allow the students and teachers to construct themselves multivocally in that it was a way of expressing many meanings.

b The narrative survey was designed to find out situations when students felt that their learning had been obstructed and when teachers felt that their teaching and/or learning had been obstructed.
Table 7.1 Generalisation of appropriateness of the research techniques used

Key

H = High(ly)        QS = Questionnaire Survey
M = Moderate(ly)    NS = Narrative Survey
L = Less so         FG = Focus Group
RG = Repertory Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appropriateness of:</th>
<th>QS</th>
<th>NS</th>
<th>FG</th>
<th>RG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Research objectives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>descriptive</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explanatory (providing understanding)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hypothesis testing (common sense)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>action oriented</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>illuminative</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflective</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>taps respondents' creativity</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where research topic is</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sensitive</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>complex</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerned with process</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerned with institution</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerned with department</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concerned with individual</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where research subjects might be</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspicious</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inhibited</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inarticulate</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high status</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low status</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Characteristics of method</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interactive</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretative (by participant)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpretative (by researcher)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependence on verbal communication</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependence on written communication</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>responses constrained by social norms</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial cost per participant</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to Wade and Tavris (1990):

A quick way to get information about people is to ask for it. (p52)

They were relating this to the use of questionnaire surveys and, yet, it is a Kellian (1955) viewpoint - if information is wanted, ask people for it. The questionnaire survey had the inbuilt bias of the the researcher since she had decided upon the questions. At the narrative stage it was necessary to use methods of inquiry which allowed the participants to provide their own constructs of the world and to gauge the salience of these constructs to the individuals. It was at this stage that the principle of Kelly (1955) and his personal construct theory came into operation. He also wrote (1955) at some length on the use of narrative particularly in the form of self-characterisation of which narrative is one variation.

Mair (1989) redefined Kelly's (1955) fundamental postulate that an individual's actions are psychologically transmitted by the way s/he anticipates experiences, as:

Persons' processes are psychologically channelized by the stories that they live as well as the stories that they tell. (p5) (Author's italics.)

The narrative within Kelly's (1955) fundamental postulate needed to be comprehended as a research device. To look at the prospects of functional conflict and learning was intellectually very difficult but the researcher felt that a retrospective view might well indicate what events in the students' and teachers' lives had a lasting impact upon them as individuals. Burr and Butt (1992) felt that individuals were able to reflect and recall because:

[of the] organising, sense-making propensity of human beings ..... (p62)

In Kelly's (1955) view, past experiences served only to assist anticipating future events and focused on how events were perceived in the experiencer's system at the time of disclosure. By asking the students and teachers to reveal something about themselves through an introspective and/or reflective approach they would have to reach out for inner consensus through embarking on a "personal scientist"-like journey (Kelly, 1955).
The use of Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory allowed the researcher certain freedoms which were central to the research inquiry. Kelly's (1955) central tenet of constructivist alternativism was of paramount importance. This contended that no interpretation could be absolute and irrevocable. There may have been an alternative construction of the confronting elements and this might have allowed for movement directly to an alternative rather than spending valuable time arguing upon or disproving traditional notions.

Narrative lay in the field of etymology which as a complex issue would require a study in its own right, but it was relevant here because it was considered to have its importance in connection with the stories hidden in the words that individuals used. It was primarily concerned with language as a communication system but narrative in written form provided the researcher with a vehicle within which to search for shared perceptions by encoding experience rather than as pure communication. This required an accuracy in translation.

It was decided that a narrative in the form of a story would give the participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences in an active, constructive and focused way.

It was hoped that each writer would do as Dalton and Dunnett (1992) found in their counselling work that:

..... [let] their pen .... run away with their thoughts.  
(pl29)

Authoring provided a powerful paradigm for promoting and studying the obstruction to learning. Authoethnography had the potential to help the respondents to reclaim the knowledge of self and in the form of narrative self-inquiry helped them to construct a new approach to teaching and learning: in this case as it related to the use of functional conflict.

Pessoa (1991) believed that the individual is seen as a narrativist and that words provide the major vehicle of thought. It is through words that the students and teachers were given the opportunity to present their best means for sorting out and organising their worlds as it related to their teaching and/or learning. Through words they were helped to gain some purchase on the constructivist processes of their thinking.
Through writing, the unknowns, which on their own did not make sense, become meaningful subjects for further development. According to Diamond (1993):

Narrative self-inquiry enables us to speak for ourselves and to feel heard. (p517)

Kompf (1993) also stressed the potency of the use of narrative:

.... researchers and educators might be advised to consider the depths to which they can potentially plunge. (p526)

He also detailed the strength of narrative stating that the researcher needed to be multi-talented when using narrative:

.... skills, empathy, and anticipatory prowess are needed with a large amount of common sense. (p526)

Burr and Butt (1992) made a careful proviso in their work by reminding the reader that it was important not to believe that individuals possessed constructs which were in themselves responsible for the way they behaved. Narratives were used in the ethos of constructive alternativism - as put by Burr and Butt (1992):

Human conduct is a mystery and it is best approached by asking what people are doing, how it reflects their construing. (p119)

The narrative methodology was used in an attempt to understand the teachers' and students' construing of incidents where they perceived learning had been obstructed, and was also an attempt to counteract any potential bias on the part of the researcher.

In this the narrative differed from the repertory grid which used:

.... neatly labelled constructs .... can be analysed mathematically in grid form ..... (Burr and Butt, 1992, p125)

The narrative provided a rich tapestry of information on how each individual respondent construed themselves and their world and thus the narratives brought the area of learning into focus. The foundation of the narrative was the individual's ability to:
.... construe the construction of others. (Burr and Butt, 1992, p125)

It is this very theory of perpetual motion which underpinned Kelly's (1955) idea of how humans work. However, as discussed in Chapter One, definitions are difficult and each individual had her/his own terminology for what was being described - in this case, obstruction to learning.

The request for such a narrative/story was mailed to every Business Studies student and to every member of the Business Studies Department's teaching staff. The accompanying instructions encouraged attention to an issue around which the participants would construct a story around themselves: in theory, any event can be recalled from a memory if it is known where to look (Burr and Butt, 1992). Asking the participants to write their own individual story avoided them viewing the same event through different perspectives.

The disadvantages of a mailed request were the same as the considerations given to the questionnaire survey eg low response rate (see section 7.2.1), but in this case the participants needed a flexible amount of time to consider and reflect. Further, an approach by mail permitted all the population to be approached rather than the sample selected for the questionnaire survey.

The participants were asked to tell their story/ies in the third person in order to encourage them to step back from the situation and to place their own interpretation on how they felt; in the case of the students, on how their learning had been obstructed and in the case of the teachers, on obstruction in their teaching and/or learning.

As put by Dalton and Dunnett (1992):

.... constructs .... are the personal creation of the individual, and may therefore be totally unique to that person. (p14)

It followed, therefore, that the constructs which each participant used within their narrative were those that they individually found most useful in construing the world about them as it related to teaching and learning within the Business Studies Department.

The respondents were reassured that they did not have to prescribe to any set rules (see Appendices Two and Three) but there would be no way of checking whether all the questionnaires had been correctly delivered other than an obvious return address so that those which could not be
delivered would be returned to the researcher - none was so received. The narratives received from both students and teachers were unique and lay in the personal world of the individual author.

Diamond (1993) believed that narrative inquiry promoted the individual and shared transformational and social stories. So asking the students and teachers to write a reflective narrative in the third person was an attempt to get them to restructure and elaborate their thinking - but not in isolation from others. By writing about it the students and teachers had an opportunity to revise their thinking on any obstructions to their learning. By advising them to use the third person the participants would subscribe to Kelly's (1955) "personal scientist" rationality by reconstruing their practice, predicting future action, and weighing up the consequences. Within the narratives of this study were found, as Diamond (1993) had discovered:

Intentions, thoughts, and acts [which] are self-authoring constructs ..... (p517)

In his ethical considerations on the use of narrative and disclosure, Kompf (1993) suggested that the results of narratives have to be carefully dealt with in that:

.... the process and products of such endeavours voice and provide an inside-out view of educational practice, the process and products of such endeavours may be understood and anticipated with increased efficacy through the application of guidelines customarily applied to counselling and psychotherapy. (Abstract p519)

The procedure for the analysis of the narratives needed to be understood within the parameters of the study as it related to learning and conflict. The narratives belonged to the individual authors and had been written within their own reflection of their world but it needed to be remembered that humans work holistically and so each narrative would be, as expressed by Dalton and Dunnett (1992):

.... a collection of discrete processes operating by different laws. (p50)

This underpinned Kelly's (1955) personal construct theory in that the students and teachers do not live in a tidy, logical world but like all humans they are:
.... a collection of ill fitting, overlapping processes, apparently at war with each other at best, or simply ignorant of each other. (pp50-51) (Researcher's italics.)

The narratives asked the participants to give an overall view but, in actuality, they would not be superficial. The participants would select stories from an ocean of possibilities and each narrative, therefore, would stem from the individual's core construing. A difficulty was that the stories might have hidden the real perspective and they would be only be a taster. This was why they formed one of several investigative tools.

The narratives were used in an attempt to get into the perspectives of the writers in order for them to give their view of obstructions to teaching and/or learning which could thus be a potential conflict situations.

The disclosures within the narratives were treated as representing a potential ethical danger to the respondents and to the researcher because their interpretation and record, in what would be a public domain, must not breach trust. As Kompf (1993) put it:

.... the products of [individual] disclosure must be seen as an inroad to their personal processes and the core of their perceiving self. (pp526-527)

The researcher needed to ensure that her own constructs were not imposed upon the interpretation of the received narratives. This remained firmly within the perspectives of the doctrine of reflexivity as expressed by Bannister (1981):

.... you are free to choose personally relevant issues of research, to draw on and make explicit, personal experience, to enjoy the wisdom and companionship of your 'subject'. The wisdom you gain from your researching exists independently of public demonstration, though it is fine if you can publicly demonstrate it. (p199)

This reflective approach (Schon, 1987) cannot be divorced from Kelly's viewpoint (Bannister, 1981) because its very nature as a theory accounts for its own construction as a reflexive theory.
7.2.3 Focus Group

There were a number of issues that needed to be addressed in the design and implementation of the focus group such as general issues concerning its use, why it was to be used and how it would be used.

a Focus groups are widely used in commercial market research and groups are used all the time by the researcher in her role as a facilitator of learning, so the students were familiar with working in groups. It is a relatively cheap and speedy method to implement and minimises the effects of perceived expected responses by providing a forum for extended discussion and exploration of the students' attitudes and perceptions on the use of functional conflict in learning.

The aim of the focus group discussion was to generate ideas and to identify a range of constructs held by the students that they felt were related to the use of functional conflict in their learning. It was to build upon the previous questionnaire survey and narrative survey and would inform the repertory grids which were to follow, thereby ensuring that the students themselves influenced the issues addressed.

Day (1991) used open group discussions in an attempt to find out young adults' views of the library services in a London borough and recommended focus groups because they provide:

.... a forum for a small group of participants .... to exchange experiences and attitudes about a particular topic under the guidance of a trained 'moderator' or 'facilitator'. (p389)

Kelly (1955) considered that group work had strong advantages. He thought that a group, with its contrasting personalities, afforded each participant more scope for the development of a new, more comprehensive role. The students within the focus group had, by the nature of group dynamics, the opportunity for discrimination through which process they were able to discover which of their constructs could be applied to general persons. In this way they were able to find out which were permeable and which were impermeable.

Pre-emptive construing, where a student makes a snap judgment, say, about a certain person or type of person, could also be challenged in a group situation more easily than in a questionnaire or narrative survey where the participant is working in isolation.
The use of the focus group was important because it would provide a variety of validational evidence. In the group the individual participants could value both positive and negative validation. At first the participants would probably have looked for confirmation of how they saw themselves and others, but it was expected that the group would soon work well together and any possible disconfirmation which might have been present would become acceptable and useful.

It was necessary to find out what the students felt about the use of functional conflict and learning within the Business Studies Department. The use of focus group (open group discussion) was used to supplement the questionnaire survey and the narrative survey.

A consideration with the use of focus group was the issue of familiarity between the student participants and the researcher but since the researcher was not responsible for any further assessment of the students her influence was minimalised.

The focus group was intended to provide an arena where a group of students could be gathered together and organised by an experienced moderator and which had the potential of producing results of a higher quality than, say, a stand-alone device such as a questionnaire survey or individual interviews.

In the practical matter of conducting the focus group and in the subsequent analysis of the conversation, one of the most important aspects of the method was to bear in mind the phenomenon of group dynamics. As a facilitator of learning in the area of human resource management, the research-practitioner as moderator was \textit{au fait} with both the theory and the practice of group dynamics and the influence it might have on the focus group discussions. Day (1991) put this quite clearly by saying:

\textit{... [group dynamics] refers to the forces and tensions which exist or develop between participants of the group including the facilitator, which may affect the outcome of the discussion and ultimately the validity of results.} (p391)
It was felt that the involvement of a number of students working together would stimulate individuals in a way that is not always possible in either a questionnaire survey, a narrative survey, or a one-to-one interview.

c A relatively homogeneous group of eight students accepted an invitation to attend at a time and place agreed between all the individuals and the moderator. Characteristics which might affect the discussion such as gender, ethnicity, and age were taken into account at the invitation stage.

The venue was selected for its level of comfort and soundproofing with easy access for the students.

Skilled moderation was to be important in controlling the potential effects of group dynamics on the discussion. It was known that the interpretation of the data would have to consider, for example, the effect of possible dominant members on parts of the discussion, the danger of generalising from what one student said and the need to check one's own assumptions through critical self-reflection.

7.2.4 Repertory Grid

The use of repertory grids as a research technique is now common-place in educational and psychological research, as indicated by Dalton and Dunnett (1992):

> To many people, PCP [Personal Construct Psychology] and grids are virtually synonymous. They have seen that the vast majority of published research using PCP relates to one form of grid or another, and assume that this is what it is all about! (pp127-130)

However, this is not always so. A grid, as Kelly (1955) originally stated, is at its simplest merely a device for looking at how an individual uses a set of constructs in relation to one another.

A more detailed description of the diversification, appropriateness and flexibility available within the scope of repertory grids is given in Slater (1964), Bannister and Fransella (1971) and Pope and Keen (1981) from which much can be learnt to inform the practical use of the technique. Burr and Butt (1992) reinforced the use of repertory grids as a methodological device:
PCP [Personal Construct Psychology] is better known for its methodology than its theory. .... one aspect of its methodology, repertory grid technique, that is so well known, and now indeed has a life of its own. (p119)

Pope and Denicolo (1993) gave a comprehensive list of researchers who have similarly used the technique in educational research when they wrote about the use of constructivist methods, including repertory grids, as being an art and a science. They also reinforced Bannister's (1981) view that:

.... the major significance of the method lies still in the emphasis it places on the meaning which a person attaches to his or her world. (p196)

Rather than call the technique "repertory grids" a more descriptive term might be "repertoire grids" because they have the potential for use in a wide range of situations.

A principal advantage of the use of repertory grids, as was found in the focus group technique, was its potency as a conversational tool. During the elicitation of the individual repertory grids the conversation was taped - with the permission of the participant - so that insight could be gained from the little asides made when discussing the elements and constructs.

Such conversations also provided a useful permanent record of the participant's elaboration on the meaning to them of the constructs because often only a few words or a short summary sentence is actually recorded on the grid.

The particular form that was proposed was partly a negotiated grid and partly a supplied grid. The constructs were elicited from the individual participants while the list of elements was supplied from a review of information from the previously used research inquiries using the questionnaire survey, narrative survey, and focus group. The elements were teaching techniques. It was essential to provide a set of elements which the majority of the group would recognise, eg step-by-step discussion, buzz group, and that they could construe. As Pope and Denicolo (1993) highlighted:

Without endeavouring to ensure this common base, any judgements about similarities and differences in the constructs which individuals in the group may bring to bear on the set of elements, could be inaccurate if not nonsensical. (p39)
The triadic method was used in which the respondents were given three elements at a time, and asked in what way two of the elements were alike (emergent construct), and, at the same time, essentially different to the third (contrasting construct) within the given context of using conflict to enhance learning. Using a matrix of elements against constructs respondents were asked to consider each element in turn and rate it (on a scale of 1 to 7) where it was thought each element lay on the elicited construct. For example, using the randomly selected response grid in Table 7.2 below and continued over, the first elicited construct was "discussion" versus "practical". The student concerned had been asked to ascribe 1 if she thought the elements were "discussion", 7 if "practical", and 4 if she felt that the construct was mid-way between the two. She was also able to use the other gradings (2, 3, 5, and 6) if she did not feel such extremes were appropriate. When each element had been rated against the construct, the respondent went on to rate all the remaining elements against that construct. When this was done, the full process was continued until the respondent expressed a desire to stop the process.

Taking the emergent construct "discussion" and its contrasting construct "practical" it appears by visual inspection that the respondent felt that Group Discussion, Controlled Discussion (Plenary), Free Group Discussion, and Step-by-Step Discussion were "discussion" with Telling of Facts by Teacher, and Questioning nearly as much "discussion". Computer Based Learning, Demonstration, and Role Play were "practical" rather than "discussion". Brainstorming, and Deliberate Provocation were neither "discussion" or "practical", but occupied a mid-point between the two contrasting poles. (Buzz Group was perceived to be more of a "discussion" than "practical".)

Table 7.2 Completed grid from one student respondent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Key to elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E1</td>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E2</td>
<td>Buzz Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E3</td>
<td>Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E4</td>
<td>Computer Based Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E5</td>
<td>Controlled Discussion (Plenary)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E6</td>
<td>Deliberate Provocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E7</td>
<td>Demonstration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E8</td>
<td>Free Group Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E9</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E10</td>
<td>Role Play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E11</td>
<td>Step-by-Step Discussion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E12</td>
<td>Telling of Facts by Teacher</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Thus, elicitation of the constructs allowed the participants to generate the constructs which they normally used in their own world as it related to teaching techniques which might enhance learning.

In order to appreciate the appropriateness of the fieldwork inquiry, an appreciation of the host organisation is given in Chapter Eight which follows.
CHAPTER EIGHT

CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH AND ITS RELATION TO METHODS AND INTERPRETATIONS
8.0 INTRODUCTION

The nature of this study means that confidentially had to be maintained at all times. However, a consideration of the organisation within which this study was carried out is required (8.1). This is followed by a review of the fieldwork plan (8.2) as it was affected by the nature of the organisation and the inquiry. The chapter is brought to a conclusion by a discussion on the negotiation of contracts for entering the organisation (8.3).

8.1 ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

The organisation in context is an institute of higher education situated in England and comprises a federation of four colleges.

8.1.1 Collegiate structure

The collegiate structure is important to institutional life: everyone, students and academic staff alike, becomes a member of a College. Each College provides a different and special community life. Whilst this diversity is seen as one of the great attractions of the organisation, the Colleges, however, all share the common goal of providing a friendly and stimulating environment while attempting to ensure individual care.

8.1.2 Student composition and programme

About one-third of the students are involved in teacher education whilst the majority of students, over two-thirds, follow a two subject undergraduate degree programme from around two hundred combinations of various Arts, Humanities, Education, Science, and Social Science subjects. Students can, after a successful Foundation Year, choose to follow a single-honours degree in one of these two subjects or balance their work between the two subjects as they wish. There is also a wide range of Certificate, Diploma, Masters, and Doctoral programmes which have developed from the research interests of staff within the organisation's particular academic profile - education, the humanities, art therapies, creative and performing arts, and human-sciences.
8.1.3 Business Studies Department

The Business Studies Department, based on one College site, is part of the Faculty of Social Sciences, and provides a "half degree" at Foundation Level in accordance with the organisation's model. The department has proved popular to students wishing to combine Business Studies with a wide range of both vocational and non-vocational subjects e.g. Business Studies and Sports Sciences, Business Studies and Modern Languages. Increasing numbers of students (currently just over 75%) choose to do single honours Business Studies after their Foundation Year.

8.1.4 Relationship to rationale and aims of study

The general aims of the degree programme within the Business Studies Department are to provide a broadly based education at undergraduate level which encourages students to inquire, analyse, argue, criticise, learn quickly and systematically, and to pursue original solutions to problems. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and the intention is to empower them so to do. Each course has specific objectives and learning outcomes.

The aims of the Business Studies Department and those of this study are in empathy because it is the purpose of this study to investigate if functional conflict can be used to help students learn and thus meet the department's aims.

8.2 FIELDWORK PLAN

The general area of interest was the use of functional conflict as a method of enhancing learning amongst students within the Business Studies Department and was defined by the research-practitioner's own experience and expertise.

The first part of the fieldwork involved the choosing of the student population within the department which would most adequately reflect the aims of the inquiry - since the inquiry demanded investigation into what students and teachers do in the classroom. It would also demand time and effort on the part of the participants for the completion of questionnaire survey, narrative survey, focus group meeting and repertory grid elicitation and completion. The population needed to be relatively easily accessible and to be both willing and able to take part in the study. The sample choice would be further
restricted in terms of size by the availability of the researcher, within time and fund limits, to do full justice to the data derived in terms of in-depth, reflective analysis.

From the teachers and students within the department would be chosen a representative range to be studied at various depths using the whole range of reflexive, triangulation techniques described in Chapter Seven and as in Table 8.1 below:

Table 8.1 Range of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research method</th>
<th>Number of Students Targeted</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaire</td>
<td>62 students</td>
<td>Representative of a population of 135 students in Year Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>121 students</td>
<td>Total number of Year Two students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survey</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus Group</td>
<td>8 students</td>
<td>Self-selected sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repertory Grid</td>
<td>9 students</td>
<td>Self-selected sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 teachers</td>
<td>All teaching staff (two teachers had retired; included researcher)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consequently, the first part of the fieldwork, of two months and then six months duration, was the negotiation process with the organisation and the prospective participants (see section 8.3). During this time the research instruments were tested and redefined in differing arenas. Since there was only to be "one go" at this inquiry because of the nature of the topic, a pilot study was not possible. In rehearsing the techniques the researcher found her perceptiveness increased to the research tools and environment.

The plan for the principal part of the fieldwork was to follow the sequences as given in Table 8.2 over:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate time period</th>
<th>Fieldwork component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Two months</td>
<td>Initial negotiation of contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six months</td>
<td>Further negotiation/end of academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1992</td>
<td>Questionnaire survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1992</td>
<td>Narrative survey (students and teachers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1993</td>
<td>Focus group (students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1993</td>
<td>Repertory grid (students and teachers)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.3 NEGOTIATION OF CONTRACT

There were five stages to this procedure:

a The Head of Department was given a verbal outline of the proposed study. Because s/he was going to be part of the population, an overview rather than details of the specific area of interest was given;

b With the Head of Department's permission, each member of the teaching staff was personally approached in the same manner as was the Head of Department - all agreed to participate in the study;

c Members of the senior academic staff were formally approached for permission to carry out the study;

d Replies were received; the Head of Department gave verbal permission.

e At this stage it was highlighted that permission was needed, under the organisation's ethical guidelines, to carry out the study.

Once this was achieved the fieldwork commenced.
CHAPTER NINE

PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA: QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY AND NARRATIVE SURVEY
CHAPTER NINE

PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND
INTERPRETATION OF DATA: QUESTIONNAIRE
SURVEY AND NARRATIVE SURVEY

9.0 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Nine presents the integration and interpretation of the empirical investigation as it relates to the questionnaire survey and the narrative survey.

The questionnaire survey carried out with students is discussed (9.1) followed by a discourse on the narrative surveys written by teachers and students (9.2). The focus group and repertory grid data is examined in Chapter Ten. Chapters Nine and Ten together form the full discussion on the participants' interpretation of conflict which appeared to them to mean anything that annoyed/frustrated them.

9.1 QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY - STUDENTS

A discussion on the rationale for the use of the questionnaire survey can be found in Chapter Seven, section 7.2.1, with the questionnaire survey being found in Appendix One and a full tabulation of results in Appendix Four.

9.1.1 Student Description

Section A of the questionnaire was designed to find out the composition of the sample and the academic programme of individual students.

The class which formed the sample group contained 62 students out of the total Year Two Business Studies student population of 135 ie almost half of the Year Two cohort.

On the day that the questionnaire was administered 44 (71%) of the class were present and all completed the questionnaire (100%).

Eighteen questionnaires were mailed to named absent students (using the regular teacher's register of attendance) with a return addressed envelope and four were returned thus giving a total return of 48 (77%) of the class.

Full details of the composition of the sample and return rates are given in Table 9.1 over:
Table 9.1  Questionnaire survey sample and return rates

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in Year Two of Business Studies Programme</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in sample</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students present when questionnaire issued</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires completed when issued</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questionnaires mailed out for completion</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed questionnaires returned</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total questionnaires completed</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The sample of 48 was predominantly aged 20 with a balance between the sexes as detailed in Table 9.2 below:

Table 9.2  Age and gender of questionnaire survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All had passed their Foundation Year (Year One) in both Business Studies and their second subject as given in Table 9.3 over:
### Table 9.3  
Course programmes of questionnaire survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Studies and</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>French</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Administration</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Studies</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Biology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

48

Other Year Two Business Studies subjects being studied by students within the sample can be found in Table 9.4 below:

### Table 9.4  
Courses being followed by questionnaire survey respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management of Business*</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics of the Firm**</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Behaviour</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organisational Behaviour</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Law</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Economic Developments</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Accounting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Compulsory course  
** Class within which questionnaire survey carried out
Section B was designed to find out how often the students used the three conflict-handling strategies of solution-oriented, non-confrontational, and control (being synonymous with competition). A full table of results for all three categories can be found in Appendix Four, Table One.

Table 9.5 below gives a breakdown of responses according to solution oriented. A full breakdown by question can be found in Appendix Four, Table Two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46</td>
<td>308</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Solution oriented is synonymous with Thomas' (1976) two conflict-handling behaviours of collaboration and co-operativeness. It is the way that the students use conflict-handling techniques to solve perceived conflict situations in teaching and learning. The collaborating style represents a combination of assertiveness and co-operativeness. Collaborating involves an attempt to satisfy the concerns of both parties through honest
discussion. Creative approaches to conflict reduction - for example, the sharing of resources - may actually lead to both parties' being materially better off. For this style to be successful, trust and openness are required of all concerned. Related terms here could be problem-solving and integration: to use the illustrative proverb "come let us reason together" - might be appropriate (Thomas 1976).

Linked in this is compromise which involves intermediate amounts of assertiveness and co-operativeness and strives for partial satisfaction of both parties' desires by seeking a middle ground. In order to succeed at compromising both parties must be willing to give up something.

There is, according to Robbins (1974), a distinction between collaboration and compromise. To him, collaboration is related to mutual problem-solving and the opposing parties must have:

...... the potential to achieve a better solution through collaboration. (p60)

Although students may find this difficult to achieve, where it does exist, fundamental points of differences are sought rather than a determination of who is right, who is wrong, who wins, or who loses. In collaboration it is through sharing and communicating that the problem is mutually defined.

The student participants in the classroom would thus consider the full range of alternatives, and similarities in views would become emphasised in teaching and learning. Thus through such a process, the causes of doubt and misunderstanding that underlie the perceived conflict would become outwardly evident.

Compromise is a separate consideration. It is compromise techniques which make up the major proportion of conflict resolution methods found in conflict literature. A compromise decision does not result in either a distinct loser or a decisive winner. A compromise decision would be executed by rationing the object of the perceived conflict or, where not divisible, by rewarding the other by yielding something of substitute value. What is distinguishing is that it requires each party to relinquish something.

Of the respondents, 58% felt that they usually used solution-oriented techniques when handling perceived conflict situations in their learning environment. This
was a significant percentage. In all of the eleven questions related to the use of solution oriented techniques, the score formed the highest of all the ratings.

It appears that the students have a high level of behaviour which is geared towards trying to find a solution to the perceived conflict through collaboration and compromise.

This is particularly evidenced when the eleven questions related to solution-oriented techniques are separately considered (see Appendix Four, Table Two). It seems that the students "usually always" or "always" try to see the views of other students and reach some form of compromise or collaborative solution. This could well be seen as a desire to co-operate. According to Greenberg (1989) this pro-social behaviour - carrying out actions which benefit others in various ways - means that individual students will engage in actions which are designed to benefit others, groups or the entire organisation. However, whilst collaboration is common, co-operation does not appear to be widespread amongst the students.

It appears from the results that assistance amongst students is mutual and that they collaborate to enhance progress toward a shared goal - learning. The underlying principle appears to be that the students co-ordinate their actions in order to reach the levels of performance or goals they might not be able to obtain alone. It would seem that once the students reach their mutually desired goals, they share the benefits amongst themselves in some agreed-upon manner. The result could be that the students perceive that collaboration yields positive outcomes for all concerned.

However, it is not obvious from this set of results that co-operation has developed. There may sometimes be a lack of co-ordination in co-operation brought about because the students cannot share the goals they are seeking. In this case, an alternative behaviour often develops - competition which, according to Thomas (1976), is synonymous with control.

b The second area of investigation was in the area of control which is, as stated in (a) above, according to Thomas (1976), synonymous with competition.
From the results it appears that the students do not feel that they are usually in competition although there is a marginal split. Using the responses to the five questions related to this area given in Table 9.6 below, it appears that 42% do not use control very often whereas 38% usually do. An equal percentage (10%) are at each end of the continuum of "always" and "never". A breakdown according to control questions can be found in Appendix Four, Table Three.

Table 9.6 Breakdown of questionnaire survey responses according to control

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, however, competition is not perceived to be in evidence. This might well not be at all surprising since people are in competition in situations which might not be evidenced in the learning environment. When competition is evidenced each person, group, or unit strives to maximise its individual gains, often at the expense of others. Tjosvold (1986) believed that each side tends to view gains and losses by the other side as being linked, so that their wins would constitute the other's losses, and vice versa. In the students learning environment they perceive that they are not generally competing for a scare resource.

Competition is only applicable in certain situations. According to Thomas (1976) such situations would be:
when quick, decisive action is vital eg emergencies. (p487)

on important issues where unpopular actions need implementing eg cost-cutting, enforcing unpopular rules, discipline. (p487)

on issues vital to company welfare when you know you're right. (p487)

against people who take advantage of non-competitive behaviour. (p487)

It would seem that in the learning situation competition as understood by Greenberg (1989) - a process in which individuals seek to attain desired goals at the expense of others seeking the same goals - is not perceived by the students to be relevant.

It is important to this study that competition and co-operation are understood. The interaction between competition and co-operation can have an enormous influence on the effectiveness and survival of the group within which the individual student is learning. The members of the group rely on each other for information, assistance, and co-ordinated effort, and this interdependence may well foster either a competitive or co-operative relationship. It is usually more apparent in intergroup behaviour rather than within individuals in one group.

Greenberg (1989) defined co-operation as:

working together for a joint goal or mutual benefit. (p429)

and it can be seen that probably students do not perceive that they are all striving for a goal that can be obtained by only one of them. In their desire to gain a degree, they are not all in competition for a limited resource - they all have equal opportunities to achieve their goal. There is no intragroup competition because they are not all competing against each other for a limited reward. However, students could be participating in individual competition (sometimes called non-competition) when the students, as individuals, work independently against an external standard.

c The final conflict handling strategy which was investigated was that of non-confrontational. Moustakas (1972) believed that a person perceiving a potential confrontational situation has two sets of problems which he described thus:
Let us think of the individual as a unified system with two sets of problems - one the problem of maintaining inner harmony within himself, and the other the problem of maintaining harmony with the environment, especially the social environment, in the midst of which he lives. (p102-130)

In coming face-to-face with opposition the students appear to deal with it. Taking the responses detailed in Table 9.7 below, 69% deal with confrontational issues head on and do not avoid disagreements by keeping their views to themselves or by avoiding difficult situations. They do not appear to downplay the importance of disagreement nor do they shy away from topics which are potential sources of dispute. A breakdown according to non-confrontational questions can be found in Appendix Four, Table Four.

Table 9.7 Breakdown of questionnaire survey responses according to non-confrontational

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Tot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tot</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>528</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

d Section C was designed to discover how well students managed perceived conflict in their learning. Five conflict-management techniques were addressed in an attempt to provide a check and balance for Section B (see Appendix One) and to introduce other conflict-handling techniques. The
five areas were compromising, forcing, accommodating, collaborating, and avoiding; forcing and avoiding were fresh issues (Thomas, 1976).

The students still appeared to balance their conflict-handling management techniques across the full spectrum as indicated in Table 9.17 below. A breakdown according to these techniques can be found in Appendix Four, Table Five.

Table 9.17  Questionnaire survey responses in relationship to compromising, forcing, accommodating, collaborating, and avoiding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>f</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>u</td>
<td>m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>aa</td>
<td>y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>cc</td>
<td>dd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>379</td>
<td>405</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>419</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The forcing style is used when individuals attempt to overwhelm an opponent with formal authority, threats, assertiveness and unco-operativeness.

This is related to a two-dimensional approach as illustrated in Figure 9.1 over and as put forward by Thomas (1976) after researching into the use of co-operativeness (the degree to which P1 attempts to satisfy the concerns of P2) and assertiveness (the degree to which P1 attempts to satisfy his/her own concerns).
Scoring the same percentage as forcing (21%) the students perceived accommodating (21%) as being relevant. An accommodating style combines unassertiveness and co-operativeness. At its simplest level, this style may merely involve the individual student giving in to another student’s wishes. Accommodating behaviour may be motivated by a desire to be altruistic or prosocial, but it could well be that there is no other approach available for a student who perceives her/himself in a truly weak position. Thomas (1976) put this as moving toward the other person, yielding or losing, or friendly and helpful with the accompanying proverb: it is better to give than receive.

Figure 9.1 Dimensions of conflict-handling orientations (Thomas, 1976)

Assertive

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Assertiveness: Desire to satisfy one's own concerns.} \\
\text{Co-operativeness: Desire to satisfy another's concerns.}
\end{array}
\]
These primary conflict-handling orientations can be indicated on a two-dimension scale as in Table 9.9 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary conflict-handling behaviours</th>
<th>Place on two-dimensional scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>avoiding</td>
<td>unassertive and unco-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accommodating</td>
<td>unassertive and co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>collaborating</td>
<td>assertive and co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>compromising</td>
<td>assertive and co-operative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>competitive</td>
<td>assertive and unco-operative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The combination of unassertiveness and unco-operativeness could lead a student to adopt an avoiding style. It appears from the results (17%) that this style is not generally adopted as often as any of the other four. In adopting an avoiding style the student implies that s/he will either improve on what is perceived to be a difficult situation or attempt to appear neutral. In some learning situations the student may find that it is not possible to adopt a neutral position - for example, in peer-assessed coursework - but the student may, nonetheless, prefer to avoid the situation. Although a student who avoids difficult issues, say in syndicate work, is likely to be resented by other member-students, this strategy may be effective under certain circumstances. For example, a student may initially stay out of a disagreement to avoid escalating the conflict during a particular phase of its development. Later, when the student judges that the time is right, s/he may take a more active role in finding a productive solution. Thomas (1976) cites related terms here as "withdrawing" or "letting sleeping dogs lie".

It appears that when perceiving conflict in their learning environment the students follow a well-balanced situational approach by adopting, principally, a compromising and collaborative attitude. They do not appear to see themselves as being in competition with each other yet they are not reluctant to initiate forcing techniques when deemed appropriate.
Although the highest total suggests a preferred style, all students have the potential to apply various conflict-management approaches depending on the situation and it appears that this is what happens in action.

d Section D was designed to find out how stimulating the students found various teaching elements used within the Business Studies Department with an opportunity to make additional comments. This section was to help the researcher to identify any areas which might be potential sources of conflict. However, it seemed that the only area of concern were those related to the use of computer assisted learning and programmed learning. Full details can be found in Appendix Four, Tables Six, Seven and Eight.

9.2 NARRATIVE SURVEY - STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

A discussion of the general principles of the use of narrative survey is given within Chapter Seven, section 7.2.2 with results in Appendices Five and Six.

9.2.1 Student Description

Section A of the narrative survey was designed to find out the composition of the sample and the academic programme of individual students.

The population consisted of 121 students registered in Year Three within the Business Studies Department. Table 9.10 over gives the composition of the sample and record of return of the narrative surveys.

Included in this number could have been some of those students who had returned a completed questionnaire on conflict-handling techniques. Because the cohort was fragmented and did not meet together in any one large group, the narrative survey was despatched individually addressed, to each student in a sealed envelope addressed to their respective college mail boxes. An addressed envelope was included for the return of the completed narrative so that no financial cost needed to be incurred by the students for the return of the survey. Since the survey was anonymous, individual reminders were not possible, but large notices to remind students to return the narratives were put on the Business Studies Department notice boards. Fourteen surveys were returned this being 12% of the total population.
Table 9.10  Sample and return rates of student narrative surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students in Year 3 of Business Studies Programme</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students in sample</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students sent narrative survey</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative surveys returned</td>
<td>14 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were predominantly female and aged 21 - detailed in Table 9.11 below:

Table 9.11  Age and gender of student narrative survey sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>86%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From an analysis of the results it did not appear that gender was a significant factor this being considered to be a possible area of future study. Thirteen of the respondents were continuing with their second subject (as regulatory requirement) with one student (having gained distinctions in the higher National Diploma in Business Studies) entering directly into the third year to be a single honours student studying Business Studies - refer to Table 9.12 over:
### Table 9.12  
**Study programme of student narrative survey respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Studies ....</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as a single subject</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a major subject</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as an equal subject</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a minor subject</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a range of second subjects represented as can be seen from Table 9.13 below:

### Table 9.13  
**Composition of course programmes of student narrative survey respondents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business Studies and ....</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|                      | 14                 |

and all but the HND student had followed the traditional route of study whilst at the organisation as shown in Table 9.14 over:
Table 9.14  Course programme followed by student narrative survey respondents since joining the organisation

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| a | Yr 1 Business Studies and Second Subject  
    Yr 2 Business Studies and Second Subject  
    Yr 3 As Table 9.13 above | 13 |
| b | Joined Yr 2 Business Studies and Second Subject  
    Yr 3 as Table 9.13 above | 0 |
| c | Gone directly into Yr 3 as Table 9.13 above | 1 |
|   |   |

There was a representative range of department courses being followed by the cohort as indicated in Table 9.15 below:

Table 9.15  Courses being followed by student narrative survey respondents within the Business Studies Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Economics</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Project (Compulsory)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Management</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Management</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics and Government</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Communications</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microcomputers in Business</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Research</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Law</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Relations</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Section A of the narrative survey was designed to find out the composition of the population and the biographical details of the teachers in case it was needed when the stories were analysed. At the time of the fieldwork, the Business Studies Department had twelve teachers one of which was the researcher, thus there were eleven teachers in the cohort.

The narrative survey was sent to each teacher at their home address and included a first-class stamped addressed return envelope to the researcher's home address. This was in an effort to maintain totally confidential communication. Because the teachers realised that the researcher would, as a colleague, be able to recognise them and, also, they all agreed to be recognisable by the researcher, the teachers were not to be anonymous. As previously stated in Chapter Eight, all teachers had individually agreed to participate in the study.

The teachers had worked in the Business Studies Department for an average of seven years with the longest server having been teaching within the department for fourteen years and the least length of service being two months - see Appendix Eight, Table One. The cohort comprised seven males (64%) and four (36%) females. Full details of previous teaching and work experience can be found in Appendix Six, Tables Two and Three respectively.

**9.2.3. Data Interpretation**

In order to ascertain what both students and teachers felt about perceived obstruction to teaching and learning, the results of the narrative survey have been integrated for the purpose of interpretation. Student respondents are coded S and teacher respondents are coded D. The latter have also been randomised in both code and gender to protect the identity of the individual teachers. Appendix Six gives the students' verbatim narratives but because the teachers could easily be identified from their stories, the verbatim narratives have been excluded from the appendices.

The instructions on the student narrative survey explained the purpose of this part of the inquiry; for the students it was:

Think of a time when you were in a learning situation within the Business Studies Department at the (name of institute) when you felt that someone else had obstructed your learning. (Appendix Two)
Table 9.16 below gives a breakdown of the students' responses to the narrative survey:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Wrote narrative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No narrative but made statement (*see below)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Direct entry into Year Three so not been in department long enough to be able to make a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>comment but gave contact details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No narrative but gave contact details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>*I have had no obstruction to my learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructions on the narrative survey for the teachers explained the purpose of this part of the inquiry. It differed from the student's survey in that it asked the teachers to reflect on their learning and/or teaching:

Think of a time when you were in a learning situation within the Business Studies Department at (name of institute) when you felt that someone else had obstructed you from teaching and/or learning. (Researcher's italics.) (Appendix Three)

Of the eleven replies, ten wrote narratives with two teachers distinguishing between teaching and learning. The one teacher who did not write a narrative had only been in the department for three months and noted:

My experience in education is too limited to answer your questions.

although the narrative section was the only part of the survey not completed by this teacher.

The participants had the opportunity to see things through the eyes of significant others as can be seen from the narratives:

.... was one individual .... who kept only writing down and saying out loud the things he had thought of ....

(Respondent S1)
Group work. This is one topic which should interest you .... (Respondent S14)

.... lecturer exchanged words with technical staff. (Respondent D1)

.... I have tended to work with .... who has been extremely helpful. (Respondent D4)

The narratives indicated that there was a perception of conflict in that the respondents gave stories of incidents where obstruction to learning - and in the case of some of the teachers, teaching - had taken place. This conflict could have been generated from a variety of sources but appeared to fall into three general categories: communication, organisational functioning, and personal behaviour variables.

a Traditionally, a sizeable proportion of the conflicts that arose could be attributed to poor communications (Robbins 1974, Nelson and Quick, 1994). If effective communication is defined as:

.... creating a mental picture in the receiver in exactly the same detail as intended by the sender. (Vecchio, 1991, p412)

then true or perfect effective communication is elusive.

Given this inherent imperfection, the respondents identified situations where the communication process obstructed their learning causing them conflict; for example, a student records that in the classroom context verbal communication was obstructed:

.... kept only writing down and saying out loud the things he had thought of, therefore not giving the rest of us a chance to get our ideas across .... (Respondent S1)

In the narrative of Respondent S4 there is an example of a breakdown of communication in the written form. The respondent narrates a time when he travelled to the library at the weekend to find it closed. Library opening hours are displayed throughout the organisation and indicated in handbooks which students are given.

Respondent S5 gave three narratives, each of which told stories of communication process breakdown on three different occasions which she attributed to the noise around her:
A group behind her were muttering and laughing causing a strain on her ears.

.... [lecturer] did not make the information clear .... did not try to understand the information given. If her attention was not gained in the first five minutes she was never going to listen at all.

.... a foreign student jabbered onto a friend so could not hear the lecturer clearly as the others sat closer to her and this came clearer to her ears than [lecturer] words, so her attention slipped and learning ceased.

More evidence of communication failure was apparent in the following synopsis:

In group work .... finds it difficult to convey what she really thinks about other students' work .... (Respondent Code S1)

Many more foreign students than he expected .... were working in a different language .... (Respondent S10)

.... learning has also been obstructed by fellow students chatting in class .... [who are] too shy to ask [questions] in front of 100 plus other students. (Respondent S11)

.... [named students] regularly engaged in horseplay during lectures. Finding their behaviour tiresome [named lecturer] asked them - in front of the whole class of 50 - whether their behaviour reflected signs of sexual frustration. The class roared with laughter (and approval) and (named students) obviously decided not to disrupt (named lecturer) sessions with horseplay again. (Respondent D3)

.... [named lecturer] was fed up with trying to compete with the general noise level issuing from students during lectures .... called for quiet and threatened to walk out if it wasn’t maintained. After a brief respite the noise level increased again [named lecturer] walked out. Thereafter getting "quiet" was much easier. (Respondent D3)

[named student author] gets very annoyed when the "Rugby Lads" always contradict & dispute what the lecturer is saying. This is because she feels it wastes time. (Respondent S6)
Noise distortion again appears to obstruct effective learning as described in a teacher narrative which considers the students as well as the personal situation:

On more than one occasion [name] has been presiding at a year three seminar when the voice of the lecturer in the adjoining large lecture hall and noise from people traversing the corridor outside has made it difficult for participants in the seminar to hear each other. (Respondent D8)

The narrative provided by Respondent Code S14 indicated a lack of effective communication at all levels.

Both students and teachers therefore seemed to experience conflict stemming from unsuccessful, ineffective communication.

Through incorrect, distorted, or ambiguous information, hostility is conceived. If a teacher fails to communicate effectively with students who are responsible for their own learning, then s/he may well find intragroup hostility taking place as a dysfunctional aspect of conflict stimulation.

The teachers tended to give a more global view of the situation taking ineffective communication out of their own classrooms.

For example, two teachers appeared to have difficulties in effective communication with technical staff supporting class activities and another perceived a bureaucratic organisational communication system as a potential learning inhibitor.

b A second potential source of conflict which was revealed in the narratives was related to organisational factors. Robbins (1974) found that conflict tended to be more evidenced in larger organisations. It is probable that the unexpected increased number of students within classes gave increased opportunities for information to become distorted as it passed through different levels and also within increased sub-group sizes.

The nature of this study is that it is centred on intragroup conflict but the external environment cannot be ignored. Both students and teachers authored concerns related to the sudden increased size of classes:
She [self] is also very annoyed when too many people in the [subject named] group mean that she can’t get a seat by a desk (unless she gets there at 6am) & so has no desk to lean on has difficulty in getting good notes. (Respondent S6)

One particular student, Respondent S11, seemed to find the increase in group size in conflict with learning:

Enormous numbers of students including HND who hadn’t covered the same core courses in Years 1 and 2.

.... many more foreign students than he expected ....

.... lack of chairs and desks. Rooms too small or so many chairs packed in that he couldn’t see overhead projector.

.... due to enormous classes, an even larger strain on the library & media resources.

The teachers indicated their concern at the increase in class size and this is evidenced particularly by Respondent D9:

.... reached saturation with double the previous year’s student numbers.

.... cramped into ... room, sitting on cupboards and on the floor.

The third principal area of concern in the narratives appeared to relate to personal behaviour variables. Differences among individuals can be a source of conflict because some students and teachers values or perceptions of situations could generate conflict with others.

Narratives given earlier suggested that individuals impose values on others and this could create serious conflict. For example, punctuality at lectures (Respondent S5). Similarly if a student or teacher tends to perceive people in a certain way (for example, if s/he is quick to infer laziness or incompetence from only a limited view) the responses could well be a source of conflict.

It may well be that conflict-prone individuals are likely to possess certain traits. They suggested, for example, that highly authoritarian individuals are prone to antagonize their colleagues by escalating otherwise trivial differences. Also, individuals with low self-esteem may more readily feel threatened by others and therefore over-react.
Both authoritarianism and low self-esteem can predispose people to feel the need to defend their corner against trivial threats.

The fact that narratives belong to the author makes a systematic analysis difficult, but those written by the students and teachers indicated that the students felt that their learning was obstructed, this being a source of conflict in three specific areas: conflict as related to their learning was a function of communication (C), organisational factors (OF), and personal behaviour variables (PBV):

\[
\text{Conflict} = \sum [C + OF + PBV]
\]

These variables have been figured as additive for simplicity but they could be "multiplicative" - a slight increase in one could well exacerbate the conflict affect of another. Other related factors were lack of homogeneity in class groups and increased competition for scarce resources.

The teacher's narratives indicated that they perceived that their teaching was obstructed by the lack of organisational support in the form of minimum resource provision for rapidly expanding student numbers and lack of staff development opportunities. The latter linked in with obstructions to their own learning.

The totality of the narratives highlighted the perspective of conflict proposed by Thomas (1989) which confirms it as a complex issue which involves the thoughts and emotions of participants, and their intentions to behave in specific ways, as well as overt actions.

The narratives alerted the researcher to a separate issue. Conflict involves the presence or perception of opposing issues. To take an issue from the narratives (Respondent S5 refer to Figure 9.2 over:)

\[
\text{Conf1ict + OF + PBV}
\]
From this modelled example it can be seen that the presence or perception of opposing interests is not necessarily a sufficient condition for the occurrence of actual conflict. This seems to concur with the views of Robbins (1989) who believed that conflict had taken place as soon as the clash started. However, De Bono (1985) believed that conflict had taken place even if the clash had not yet occurred. Further discussion on this can be found in Chapter One.
The narratives seemed to support the view that open confrontations fail to develop despite the existence of incompatible interests. Conflict can also emerge in situations where opposing interests are not present, or where, at least, ambiguity exists in this regard. It is clear that there are a number of factors and conditions which contribute to its occurrence. Whilst, as previously stated, there were three principal areas of potential conflict highlighted in the narratives - communication, organisational factors, and personal behaviour factors - they were principally categorised in two areas: organisational causes and interpersonal causes of conflict which obstructed learning.

The narratives highlighted what could well be suggested as an obvious organisation-based cause of conflict - competition over scarce resources. Like all organisations and departments within organisations, there is a limit to available resources, and the students and teachers perceived a limited availability of resources such as the division or distribution of space as a potential for conflict.

.... She is also very annoyed when too many people in [subject of lecture] mean that she can't get a seat by a desk .... (Respondent S6)

.... Rooms too small. Or so many chairs packed in that the [writer] couldn't see overhead projector. (Respondent S11)

.... overcrowding wears him down. (Respondent S11)

.... failure of [name of institute] to instal (sic) - promised PA system that would have made formal lecturing to large groups of students a slightly less unsatisfactory experience .... (Respondent D5)

It is possible that such conflicts are intensified by the self-serving bias (see Chapter Three) where each side tends to inflate its contribution to learning and, therefore, its fair share of the available resources. There is evidence from the totality of the research inquiry that the result of this lack of resources might well be a long period of intense, prolonged conflict.

The teachers narratives highlighted two closely related factors: ambiguity over responsibility, or jurisdiction. In the former case there is a conflict over who is actually responsible for performing tasks or duties. One teacher narrated at some length continuing difficulty in gaining technical support for class activities as did two others - all three at some length.
This is strongly related to another factor which exhibits itself in the narratives in the form of interdependence and events stemming from them. In the learning situation the students and teachers must depend on each other in order to perform at their best.

The narratives appeared to centre on this point, namely that when such input is delayed or delivered in an incomplete or unsatisfactory form, strong conflict resulted. This is hardly surprising; groups or individuals faced with this situation perceive that their major goals are being blocked or interfered with by others. It is little wonder that students and teachers then retaliate in kind and that productive learning grinds to a halt (or at least slows appreciably) in the spiralling conflict that follows.

The interpersonal causes of conflict are complex and beyond the scope of this study, but the narratives suggested that conflict can stem from the relations between individuals and from their personal characteristics as well as from underlying organisational factors.

Following on from the surveys came the inquiry into conflict and learning through the methods of focus group and repertory grids which are addressed fully in Chapter Ten.
CHAPTER TEN

PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA:
FOCUS GROUP AND REPERTORY GRID
CHAPTER TEN PRESENTATION OF INTEGRATION AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA: FOCUS GROUP AND REPERTORY GRID

10.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter continues the discussion on the presentation and interpretation of data commenced in Chapter Nine relating it specifically to the inquiry made using focus group (10.1) and repertory grid (10.2).

10.1 FOCUS GROUP

A discussion of the general principles of the use of focus groups is given within Chapter Seven, section 7.2.3. Details concerning the focus group itself can be found in Appendix Seven, Tables One to Five inclusive.

10.1.1 Student Description

The eight students comprised a relatively homogeneous group in their final year of study. All had accepted an invitation to attend at a time and place agreed between them and the facilitator. The students were invited because they had identified themselves through the narrative survey (see section 9.2): thus the focus group members were self-identified. Characteristics, such as gender, ethnicity, and age, which might affect the discussion were taken into account at the invitation stage.

10.1.2 Data Interpretation

The students had been asked to address their discussion to the question:

Do students and/or teachers in the Business Studies Department use functional conflict to enhance students' learning?

No interpretation was put on the question by the researcher-moderator who left it to the participants to construe their own world as it related to the issue under discussion. An analysis of the verbatim transcript of the group discussion highlighted two areas where students perceived that conflict was present and which, in turn,
affected their learning. Rather than discussing functional conflict the students centred on dysfunctional conflict despite the fact that the moderator reminded them of the question. One concern perceived as dysfunctional was a structural factor: lack of communication, and the other was a personal factor: a lack of resources as shown in Figure 10.1 below (Nelson and Quick, 1994). All such factors do not have to be present for conflict to take place.

**Figure 10.1 Causes of conflict in organisations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Factors</th>
<th>Personal Factors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>specialisation</td>
<td>skills and abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interdependence</td>
<td>personalities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>common resources</td>
<td>perceptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>goal differences</td>
<td>values and ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>authority relationships</td>
<td>emotions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>status inconsistencies</td>
<td>communication barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jurisdictional ambiguities</td>
<td>cultural differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The students have to share common resources to facilitate their learning and any time multiple parties must share resources, there is potential for conflict (Walker and Poppo, 1991). This potential is enhanced when the shared resources become scarce which is what happened when there was an influx of direct-entry (including international students) students into Year Three thus, according to the perceptions of the students, bringing about a high demand for scarce resources.

I haven't seen the extra books in the library or the extra teaching staff employed ....

It's the extra people coming in .... there's just no books in the library, it's terrible, I've got to go to [name of another university library] tomorrow, I was in their business library yesterday because I can't get any books here because of all the extra students.

However, the students did feel that the student body itself was partly responsible for the lack of some critical learning resources:

.... a fortune spent on journals .... I'm really disheartened at the moment because for my course they rip articles out of journals ....

.... I don't know why [teachers] bother recommending articles because .... it will have .... gone. Someone will have ripped it out.
[teacher] recommended about five articles and I came straight across to the library but not one was there .... they'd gone ....

It was apparent from the verbatim transcript of the focus group that delineation between conflict factors was not easy because the edges were blurred. For example, in the area of personal factors, which arise from individual differences, there was an overlap between skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, values and ethics (see Chapter Five), emotions, and communication barriers. It appeared that the students perceived the personal factors to be of most importance in their learning.

The student body is composed of individuals with varying levels of skills, knowledge and ability. Whilst diversity in these areas may be positive for the department because students can be encouraged to learn from each other, the students themselves perceived that skills and abilities held a potential for conflict, especially when the teachers were encouraging the students to be interdependent in their learning through, for example, syndicates and peer-assessment. The indigenous students found it difficult to work alongside new students who had come from overseas or were direct-entry students from other institutions. The students became resentful when such new students were perceived to be hindering their own learning:

.... they'd covered different things ....

We're under the impression that you're going into a third year and .... a lot of people come to [name of host organisation] because it's small ....

.... and we're back to the size groups we had in our first year for all our Foundation Courses ....

I found also that the HND people hadn't covered the same courses .... it's very much become "them and us" ....

.... perhaps if they hadn't done the same Foundation Courses I think they are holding us back and everything is being diluted, essays suddenly take weeks longer to come back to us and this kind of thing, I was really, well, nose put out ....

Suddenly triple-size classes

The staff are run off their feet.
It should be noticed that even though the students concentrated on dysfunctional conflict, such instances could be turned, by the facilitator of learning, into positive functional conflict. An example here would be the perceived lack of resources.

The above examples indicate that the students felt that the direct-access students did not share their skills and abilities and this led to conflict in the learning situation between them and the new students.

This perception of the issue appeared to lead to conflict because it was felt that the indigenous students had been forced away from their learning paths. The students were very supportive of the teaching staff in the department stating that they believed that the departmental teaching staff were as unaware of the increase in numbers as the students were. This support of the staff in the department was frequently stated in relation to the influx of direct-entry students:

There seems to be an enormous communication breakdown, especially amongst the staff. I can't believe that staff walked in and weren't aware of it .... and I think perhaps we could have been prior warned that our classes were going to triple in size ....

.... it wouldn't have been unfair if we'd been warned, that's the thing. They just descended on us "Oh, hello, I've just got my HND and I've come to join you".

I would like as a student to have been informed that they were enforced upon the department and this is what [name of host organisation] lacks .... student pressure groups. You could go and question [named Chief Executive Officer] about you suddenly accepting students into an already under-resourced course.

[name of teacher] came in expecting 35 students with the correct handouts and there were hundreds ....

As has been said above, it is difficult to divorce the personal factors in this analysis. The individual students did not leave their personalities at the doorstep when they entered the learning environment - or when they participated in a discussion group.

Effective communication skills would help to overcome some, but not all, barriers to communication identified by the students (See Appendix Seven, Table Six, part g). The barriers to communication as identified by the students may be temporary and can be overcome but at the time of the inquiry they were
perceived to be causing dysfunctional conflict in the eyes of the students. Such perceived barriers were: physical separation, cultural diversity (including language differences).

a The physical separation of students in learning sets for self- and peer-assessment — especially in relation to international students based at any one of the federated colleges — caused difficulties. For example, when put into learning sets (small groups working together on a piece of work for self- and peer-assessment) the students found that each lived far away and they could not meet easily other than in timetabled time. This was evidenced by such comments as:

.... it was just really difficult to meet

.... one girl lived in [name of town about 8 miles away]

This distance separation appeared to dilute the potential richness of the communication to the achieving of learning outcomes: the richer the communication, the less the potential for confusion or mis-understanding.

b Cultural diversity, ie different values and patterns of behaviour, can be very confusing barriers to communication. Important international differences in learning-related values probably exist (although not directly addressed within this study) between students who come principally from the United States, Spain, Italy, Netherlands, Greece, and France (Hofstede, 1980a). An example here would be the value that the indigenous students held concerning one-to-one tutorials with teacher and student. Even though implicitly invited to participate in the focus group discussion, international students declined to accept. These value differences have implications for teamwork in the organisation (Hofstede, 1980b) and thus for the student groups. Habitual patterns of interaction within a culture often substitute for communication. However, one student found the international students per se supportive for learning:

.... the European students are great because you get the first hand European perspective on things.

but goes on to support the other students by saying:

.... but they don’t participate in class.
However, the students felt that the increase in such students made it difficult for them to learn. As has been stated earlier, they felt that they should have been prepared but understood that the department staff were not aware of the arrival of so many international and direct access students.

The issue of globalisation and conflict is of importance to the students. The department hosts many different ethnic and cultural groups and the widely differing cultures represent vast differences among individual students, so the potential for conflict increases (Raizada, 1981).

There was no evidence that the students felt that individualism was in place in the department ie they did not seem to believe that their individual interests take priority over society’s interests. It was encouraging to see that they did believe in collectivism in that they put the good of the group first:

.... the three of us are really good friends but we had a big problem because one person wanted to put in all their ideas and when you said "No, I don’t like that - I want to do this ..." 

Yea, but then again I felt I didn’t want to argue with them too much in case, I mean, I didn’t want to argue with the one girl I knew because I didn’t want to fall out with her ideas seeming to match mine whereas the other two wanted to put in things that I didn’t think were particularly relevant and when we split it up into subjects we wanted to cover they went off and did .... 

.... and it was a nightmare trying to run round and say "Well, look, we don’t need this or half of this is irrelevant" when he thought it was perfectly relevant ....

We’ve had the same thing .... I didn’t want freeriders in my group

Group work is essential ....

.... It was something we didn’t have enough of in the first two years

I think it’s a lot easier to argue with somebody if you know them.
Taking the students' comments on cultural diversity and the comments on group size, it seemed that they were able to manage the potential conflict of cultural diversity by gaining an understanding of cultural differences and appreciating their value to individual learning thus turning perceived dysfunctional conflict into functional conflict which helped to bring about learning.

10.2 **REPERTORY GRIDS – STUDENTS AND TEACHERS**

A discussion of the general principles of the use of repertory grids is given within Chapter Seven, section 7.2.4.

10.2.1 **Student Description**

Ten students were invited, at a time and place of their choosing, to participate in individual repertory grid elicitations. These students had identified themselves at various stages of the inquiry as being willing to proceed with the investigation - they were self-selected. Some of them had participated in all parts of the inquiry and some in one and/or two.

10.2.2 **Teacher Description**

All ten members of the teaching staff were invited, at a time and place of their choosing, to individually participate in repertory grid elicitations. One member of staff was about to retire and did not wish to participate thus leaving a cohort of nine.

All interviews were carried out in the researcher’s study which was quiet and private. Each elicitation was tape recorded for later elucidation of the repertory grids if required.

10.2.3 **Data Interpretation**

Repertory grids were used as a tool for looking at how the individual participants used a set of constructs in relation to one another (see Chapter Seven). In this case, how individuals perceived certain teaching techniques as they related to the use of conflict to enhance learning.
The information in the grids could only be interpreted fully by the participant who provided the information but the use by the researcher of a computer analysis produced maps of correlations between elements and constructs. However, the purpose of the repertory grid in this study was to unlock meaning.

Because of the complexity of the data the full grids were analysed using the FOCUS programme (Shaw, 1980) since this permitted the storage of the original data for later commentary and sifting of developments and repeated impressions. Care was taken to avoid reductionism which might have detracted from the thematic nature of this study and to adhere to the principles of the philosophy which lay behind the study (see Chapter Seven, Section 7.1). This cynosure was divided into five stages:

a examination of element relationships;
b categorisation of constructs;
c investigation of cross categorisation of constructs;
d examination of construct relationships;
e examination of element-element relationships;

which are further discussed below:

a Examination of element relationships

Each of the twelve elements was individually compared with the other eleven elements to see if any of the participants perceived them as the same or similar ie to see how one element related to others in the view of individual participants. This analysis revealed the highest pairings for each element as shown in Table 10.1 over:
Table 10.1  Pairings of elements across all repertory grids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paired Elements</th>
<th>Students (10)</th>
<th>Teachers (9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Free Group Discussion, Buzz Group</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Discussion (Plenary)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step-By-Step Discussion</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling of Facts by Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlled Discussion (Plenary)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buzz Group</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telling of Facts by Teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate Provocation, Questioning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The rest only matched at one respondent per pair.

Analysis indicated that half of the students perceived a similarity between Free Group Discussion and Buzz Group. This is not entirely unexpected because when the data was input into the FOCUS (Shaw, 1980) programme it invited a change to be made to one of the elements because they were "similar". The data being keyed in had already been elicited so it was not possible to change one or both of the elements. During the elicitation process, no participant had verbalised a perceived similarity between these two techniques.

It is perhaps not surprising that Controlled Discussion (Plenary) and Step-By-Step Discussion relate highly for all respondents because it could well be argued that the difference is only in the fact that Controlled Discussion (Plenary) was identified as a plenary activity and the participants appeared to consider that they were related. Bligh (19uk, source text undated) noted that a Controlled Discussion was:
Teaching in which students may raise questions or comment, but the general direction is under the strict control of the teacher. This is normally used after a presentation method with a class, not a group. (p2-11)

It was the latter part of Bligh's (19uk) comment that encouraged the addition of (Plenary) after the technique description.

Yet Bligh (19uk) distinguished between Controlled Discussion and Step-By-Step Discussion by stating that the last technique was:

Teaching by a carefully prepared sequence of issues and questions to draw out the required information from students.

An interesting relationship is that between Buzz Group and Brainstorming because, according to the researcher's professional use of the techniques and Bligh (19uk), a Buzz Group was defined as:

Groups of 2-6 members who discuss issues or problems for a short period, or periods, within a lesson. (p2-11)

whereas Brainstorming was:

An intensive discussion situation in which spontaneous suggestions as solutions to a problem are received uncritically. (p2-11)

It is also frequently used in a large group situation (eg classes of twenty or more).

Perhaps this is because Brainstorming is not often used as a teaching technique by the teacher respondents in the department.

Both students and teachers appeared to have found a relationship between Demonstration and Telling of Facts by Teacher. Perhaps this is not surprising since it seemed to assume that the teacher was carrying out the demonstration rather than another person eg student, or by the use of computer assisted learning. Here again, though, Bligh (19uk) made a distinction world by stating that a Demonstration was when:

The teacher performs some operation exemplifying a phenomenon or skill while the students watch. (p2-11)
and given that definition it might well have been construed as *Telling of Facts by Teacher*.

There was a relationship between *Deliberate Provocation* and *Questioning* by students and teachers.

The students appeared to relate *Telling of Facts by Teacher* with the element *Controlled Discussion (Plenary)*, whilst the relationship was not so pronounced amongst the teachers - only one participant matched this. This may well be because the teacher is normally perceived to "pull together" for a review at the end of a lesson.

To reinforce what was said about repertory grids in Chapter Seven, their use was to look at how each participant used a set of constructs in relation to one another. In doing this they referred to a set of elements which would have been ideally elicited from the individual participants. However, in this case the elements were provided by the researcher having been taken from previous inquiry and common usage within the fieldwork in order to maintain a level of convenience and to ensure the use of common elements between participants. Participants were given the opportunity to add others but none did. Herein lies a difficulty, if the elements are not owned by the participants they could well find it difficult to construe them. That happened in the case of one of the teachers who refused, after the researcher had elicited two constructs, to have anything more to do with *Brainstorming* and *Deliberate Provocation* stating that they:

> did not appear anywhere in .... repertoire of teaching techniques. (Respondent D1)

To some extent this event was forseen and each participant was sent, with the confirmation of meeting, a list of definitions with a supporting note about their use (see Appendix Eight). This list of definitions was based on Bligh (19uk) and it was felt that having provided the elements there might be some that the participants did not recognise and if the researcher was asked for a definition when eliciting the constructs she might define the elements differently for different participants. As Bligh (19uk) himself said:

> There is considerable ambiguity in the literature on teaching methods in the use of some of the most common terms. (p2)
Since the interest of this study is primarily in the use of functional conflict stimulation techniques to enhance learning and the only overt element in this category was Deliberate Provocation, it was then decided to see how this element related to the other elements as Table 10.2 below:

Table 10.2  Elements paired with Deliberate Provocation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deliberate Provocation and ....</th>
<th>Students (10)</th>
<th>Teachers (9)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer Based Learning</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brainstorming</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role Play</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Discussion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A significant feature here is how the students perceived the use of Computer Based Learning as being deliberately provocative whereas the teachers did not and, conversely, the teachers perceived Case Discussion as deliberate provocation whilst the students did not.

It is also noteworthy that Brainstorming was seen as deliberately provocative by approximately one-third of teachers and students.

b Categorisation of constructs

The constructs elicited by all the participants (students and teachers) were categorised in a number of ways, each allocation of a construct to a particular category being obtained from more than one participant.

This illuminates some interesting aspects related to the perceived view of Deliberate Provocation as a technique to stimulate learning.

It appears that the students were more likely to be extreme in their construct ratings perceiving that Deliberate Provocation was either positive or negative with few constructs falling mid-way.
The teachers appeared to be less likely to categorise their constructs in such a characteristic way. They perceived that over half of their constructs related to Deliberate Provocation were positive i.e. they seemed to consider that the use of Deliberate Provocation is positive more than did the students. It may be that the teachers perceived Deliberate Provocation as a potentially positive technique for enhancing learning with the proviso that it could well be situational.

c Investigation of cross categorisation of constructs

The analysis of the number of times a particular construct was mentioned by the participants might indicate the importance or centrality of that construct to the topic of the use of Deliberate Provocation as a way of stimulating learning. This was possible since participants were not asked to rate or rank their constructs. Four principal categories emerged, namely constructs directly related to: learning, interacting, thinking, and helping to cope with the real world. The four classifications taken together tell a saga of the potential of the technique Deliberate Provocation to enhance learning, encourage thinking, stimulate interaction, and prepare students for the real world. These allow both students and teachers to consider the use of the technique to enhance teaching and learning. Granted, this could be a tentative and conjectural view but it does highlight the potential. It would be necessary to explore the results with students and teachers in a further study.

d Examination of construct relationships

Table 10.3 below gives a list which indicates those constructs which were closely associated with Deliberate Provocation by the participants in this study. Pairs of constructs are indicated by an ampersand (&) and clusters by an asterisk (*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct pairings and clusters (Students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>helps cope with the real world &amp; provides most learning *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stimulates thinking &amp; brings out lots and lots of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>generating ideas &amp; confrontational with whole class and teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>off the cuff, nobody knows what is going to happen &amp; what the group decides * combined effort &amp; emphasis on group &amp; generating your own ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
gets a response from more than one person & only method to get an answer * provides most learning

got own opinion with method and used it & if you don't understand have opportunity to catch on later * learner led & leaving open-ended

provides most learning & co-operative technique between teacher and student * learner led & open-ended

provides student with most learning & assertive technique between teacher and student * it flows and pulls the whole thing together

student-based learning, up to you & it's a personal experience so you learn

intercommunication with people & heated discussion, fighting all the time * people talking, including the teacher

you can take any form and go where you want to & creative * interaction with peers & interaction with others & learning on a group level

discussing things & provides most learning * discussion throughout the whole learning process

clear explanation of facts & good OHTs * clear visual aids

students give ideas or solutions & of use in the real world * single co-operative technique

constant ideas come together & given fresh information to put to practical use

a very quiet and peaceful lecture & small group * 1:1 tutorial

all involved therefore motivated to work & have to think * stimulating, more interesting so more likely to work and everyone can participate

under control of students & non-confrontational between teacher and students * small group ideas to solve a common problem
carried out in small groups & small groups solving a problem * give minority view at any time to evoke a response and have to stay alert all the time

student being assertive & student solves a problem * provides most learning

The sentiments given above indicated that the participants perceived that a degree of communication, creativity, and interaction was needed to provide effective learning and that the technique *Deliberate Provocation* might well be the vehicle to achieve this. It was interesting to note that the clusters had some sort of co-operative technique in common.

The next step was to see how the teachers indicated constructs which were closely associated to *Deliberate Provocation* by the participants in this study as Table 10.4 below. Pairs of constructs are indicated by an ampersand (&) and clusters by an asterisk (*).

Table 10.4  Construct pairings and clusters (Teachers)

students can ask others how they understand & encourages collaboration * teacher can use to stimulate conflict in learning

can be confrontational & can bring about a change in behaviour * can encourage creativity in learning

interesting & provides most opportunity to learn * assertive technique & helps student cope with real world deep learning & involves students * encourages competition for attention

activity carried out with other students & co-operative method * can learn by interacting with others students direct and control

structured & thoughtful

teacher in control of process & structured by teacher * planned outcome

teacher controlled & structured

teacher controlling learning of students as a body & questions and answers
very structured & less relaxed atmosphere

works towards providing a solution & provides most learning * creative technique * group dynamics * groups focused on some type of goal

non co-operative technique between teacher and student & obsequiousness

may need to clue people to get them to respond & wanting to bring out certain inherent facts * can ask questions as going along & helps cope with the real world

provides most learning & helps student cope with real world * suitable for large groups

can get students to think individually and conclusion & co-operative technique in small group with teacher observing

involves interaction and discussion & involves the teacher with the class

need teacher there & less control of material by teacher (not process) * creative and active generally helpful to students generally helpful to teachers

segmentation of class & less teacher reliant

suitable for large groups & sequencing of teaching modes * helps students cope with the real world leaves ambiguous confrontational;

assertive technique & stimulating * free discussion by the students to get students to see other part of argument to elicit different points of view

promoting ideas & confrontational technique * students to come up with ideas hostile and aggressive

The teachers appeared to see that there was potential in the use of Deliberate Provocation as a technique to stimulate learning but within their constructs was an indication that it should be used with care. There was no evidence that they actually utilised this technique.
10.17

Examination of element-element relationships: Deliberate Provocation and any other element

The next stage was to examine the elements to see whether there was any relationship between Deliberate Provocation as an element and any other element. The concern was that there might well have been a "petal amongst flowers". Whilst considerable care was taken to provide as many elements from the research inquiry as was possible - including Deliberate Provocation - and to maintain the same level of convenience, it was thought that Deliberate Provocation might well have been an element not at the same level as the others. That is, Deliberate Provocation could be used during all the other teaching techniques given as elements rather than stand on its own as a specific teaching technique. However, this did not appear to concern the participants. This proviso stated, the next step was to see if there was any relationship between the elements.

Table 10.5 below gives a list which indicates elements which were associated with other elements as related to Deliberate Provocation by the student participants in this study. Pairs of constructs are indicated by an ampersand (&) and clusters by an asterisk (*).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 10.5</th>
<th>Relationships between elements as related to Deliberate Provocation as an element (Students)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* comprising Questioning &amp; Case Discussion, Free Group Discussion &amp; Controlled Discussion (Plenary) and a singleton Deliberate Provocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* comprising Step-By-Step Discussion &amp; Controlled Discussion (Plenary) with singletons Questioning and Deliberate Provocation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* comprising Deliberate Provocation &amp; Questioning with singleton Controlled Discussion (Plenary)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>singleton Deliberate Provocation linked with singleton Step-By-Step Discussion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate Provocation &amp; Computer Based Learning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliberate Provocation with singleton Role Play</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
* Free Group Discussion & Buzz Group with singletons
   Role Play and Deliberate Provocation

* Brainstorming & Deliberate Provocation with singletons
   Buzz Group, Case Discussion, Free Group Discussion

* Deliberate Provocation & Computer Based Learning with
   singleton Demonstration

Table 10.6 below gives a list which indicates elements which
were associated with other elements as related to Deliberate
Provocation by the teacher participants in this study. Pairs
of constructs are indicated by an ampersand (&) and clusters
by an asterisk (*).

Table 10.6 Relationships between elements as related to
Deliberate Provocation as an element
(Teachers)

Buzz Group & Brainstorming * Free Group Discussion
   Questioning and Deliberate Provocation

Deliberate Provocation & Brainstorming (100%) * Buzz
   Group

Deliberate Provocation & Role Play

Step-By-Step Discussion & Controlled Discussion *
   singletons Deliberate Provocation and Questioning

Deliberate Provocation & Case Discussion * Demonstration
   Step-By-Step Discussion Questioning

Deliberate Provocation & Questioning * with singletons
   Brainstorming Buzz Group Free Group Discussion

Deliberate Provocation & Questioning

Free Group Discussion & Buzz Group * with singletons
   Buzz Group Brainstorming Deliberate Provocation

It would seem from the above that for the students
Deliberate Provocation matched highly with Brainstorming,
followed by Computer Based Learning and then Questioning.
All the teachers seemed to feel that *Deliberate Provocation* was matched with *Brainstorming*, with all but one matching it with *Case Discussion*, and all but two matching it with *Questioning*.

In summary it can be seen that both students and teachers perceived conflict to be functional and dysfunctional according to situation. However, it is necessary to gather this complex data into a final discussion. This will be included in the next chapter.
CHAPTER ELEVEN

DISCUSSION
11.0 INTRODUCTION

This reflective section will analyse the philosophical basis of the research methodology used (11.1) before going on to discuss the research results as they related to the theory-in-literature (11.2) with a discussion on the relationship with the specific research questions (11.3). The implications for learning within the Business Studies Department follows (11.4) with a examination of the implications of the study for future research (11.5). The study is brought to a close with a discussion on caveats and conclusions as they concerned the inquiry (11.6).

11.1 IMPLICATIONS AND CONSEQUENCES OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From the commencement of the inquiry it became apparent that concessions would have to be made to practical exigencies. Some of these were projected in advance. These included the constraints of collecting and analysing data over the time available in the academic programme of the student participants, not intruding on the professional commitments of the teacher participants, and maintaining the roles of full-time teacher/colleague and part-time researcher. There was the further limitation of working within a restricted financial budget. Others occurred during the process, for instance the unexpected delay in gaining permission to carry out the study (see Chapter Eight). As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) so accurately put it:

Seeking the permission of gatekeepers or the support of sponsors is often an unavoidable first step in gaining access to the data. (p72)

The terms of reference negotiated with the Ethics Committee did not, unfortunately, allow for feedback of the final results to the students (nor yet did the time constraints) for they had already graduated when the final analysis was completed. Consequent student reaction would have provided further rich information and this is a learning experience for the researcher to take on to future research. The use of ethnographic research methods as informed by action research (Lewin, 1947) proved to be successful in that this approach valued the contributions of participants and recognised that each methodological intervention could potentially induce change in views and practice produced further problems, not
further problems, not the least of which was meditative and subjective vacillation as consequences were contemplated.

It also required a considerable amount of sensitivity in interacting with students and teachers. The researcher had to rely upon high levels of intrinsic motivation and well-practised communication skills to maintain fieldwork and analysis over time as was dictated by an illuminative study.

In spite of the limitations noted above, this framework enabled the collection of rich data. The participants did not appear to be in any way resentful regarding their information concerning their experiences as the analysis (see Chapters Nine and Ten) shows.

As the inquiry proceeded, the work of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), Atkinson (1990), Parlett (1981) and Lewin (1946) provided a framework for the fieldwork and the analysis of the data.

11.1.1 Fieldwork

As the fieldwork progressed the researcher began to see patterns emerging and she became more adept at focusing on themes as they related to the inquiry. Throughout the study careful records were kept with no conscious attempt being made by the researcher to select what she perceived to be relevant nor to disregard the perceived irrelevant or ineffectual. This resulted in the collection of a great deal of information.

An attempt had to be made to resolve the dilemma of producing a fair and non-judgmental account of the participants' constructs while nevertheless selectively focusing on areas perceived to be particularly relevant to the research in progress. This was achieved for the purpose of this written version of the research by following substantive themes which emerged from the subsequent data. This supported the view of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) who stated that a thematic approach:

... can be an excellent way of encapsulating a great deal of information .... (p224)

In effect other data, not included here, was not ignored in the process for it provided the "ground" against which the themes "figured".

Selectivity in making fieldnotes became easier as the inquiry progressed and themes emerged. It is important to note that these did not always coincide with the researcher's
preconceived ideas. As an illuminative study, this should be so but such contradiction also served to remind the researcher to set aside personal expectations and to re-evaluate the research process as it progressed. This illumination of the subject of the research occurred contemporaneously with illumination about research to the researcher, supporting the advice of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), when they discussed research design and emphasised flexibility.

As Parlett (1981, p222) advised, the design was "custom built" in that the individual methods used (questionnaire survey, narrative survey, focus group, repertory grid) were chosen to suit the issue under discussion rather than the researcher selecting research methods in which she was already skilled.

The use of different techniques also permitted the carrying out of internal checks. All methods have their individual limitations and by combining techniques it was possible to triangulate on the issue of conflict and learning from different directions in a methodological manner, as well as from the perspectives of different people.

Data from one stage of the inquiry was scrutinized before designing and activating the next stage (see Chapters Nine and Ten). This was done by grouping the elicited major points according to content and then further clustering them to form a tentative theme for organising further inquiry. This method proved to be very enlightening but it required a delicate balance in order effectively to achieve a means by which subsequent new information could be examined openly even if it contradicted expectations. Because the researcher arranged the themes initially as tentative, each underwent sequential metamorphosis as the new data was sought, analysed, and integrated with earlier constituents. This ultimately led to the thesis pro forma having undergone several evolutionary phases which could not all be included in the final written version.

In this it was necessary to highlight the principal themes in the study in order to focus attention on the main issues. As Parlett (1981) said:

Without .... progressive focusing on selected phenomena there would be a wastage of investigatory time and the likelihood of an irrelevant and rambling report. (p223) (Author’s italics.)

A final point worth making for fellow researchers is that a research diary was kept as a separate entity from the elicited fieldwork data. This diary proved to be a useful reflexive
account of the process of the research and provided an opportunity to express feelings in a tangible way thus maintaining the personal, social, and intellectual distance necessary for the analytical work.

11.1.2 Analysis

The fieldwork had its beginnings in the theoretical framework of learning theory and conflict theory (see Chapters Two, Three and Four) and, although this helped to order the data, both soon became a vital part of the analysis as progressive focusing developed. The accurate construction of analytic notes proved to be of supreme importance and this supported the view of Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) who stated that:

The construction of such notes .... constitutes precisely .... internal dialogue, or thinking aloud, that is the essence of reflexive ethnography. (p165)

As it turned out, the development of topics/themes that guided the progressive focusing arose from transcripts and fieldnotes and subsequent analytic notes. Working with such a plethora of written material required an orderly system so that the data could be retrieved and compared effectively.

Whilst issues from the analysis of the students' data provided the starting point for further data collection and thematic category development, work with the teachers was used to provide a different perspective and to check out meaning. In abstract terms, the use of different perspectives seemed a rather nebulous concept, but it came alive in the analysis. Some comments made by students would not have been as meaningful without the comments from the teachers and vice versa. For example, it was clear that in several situations the students perceived dysfunctional conflict in the use of computer based learning per se, whilst the teachers perceived this to be brought about by a lack of technical and media service support.

When it became clear that the problems or challenges induced by the computer based learning sessions were not deliberately intended by the teacher, it clarified the discrepancies between the teachers' and the students' descriptions. The students were focused on difficulties with interacting with the hardware and software while the teachers had priorities concerned with learning the content of the packages. The teachers' explanation also provided further evidence that the students learning was being affected by other parties.
The researcher was at all stages of the research anxious to ensure that the analysis was as rigorous as possible. Whilst doing this she became interested in grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) as a process, with its systematic steps of progression. It was tempting to confuse this with the broader approach to the use of ethnographic research methods which utilises other models such as analytic induction. The differences became apparent as the research moved into analysis and theoretical sampling as a form of constant comparison. In grounded theory, theoretical sampling is used to develop theory whilst within ethnography the purpose of theoretical sampling is to discover and develop categories that seem most likely to develop theory. However, there are various stages where the research may be concluded before the point of theory development as is the case with this study.

Although this study was not an ethnography in pure terms, it did rely upon ethnographic research methods - the nature and use of which became increasingly salient to the researcher during the study. This was particularly so in the area of attention to detailed documentation and referencing in order that ideas could be retrieved and their source in the data identified to illustrate evidence and links made with other concepts. A useful complementary point in the grounded theory literature is the reminder that category development is carried out at a conceptual level of analysis so that the relationships between concepts can be mapped out in the data. The researcher thought that in doing this she would avoid getting bogged down with the data.

In referring to self-pacing - a concept with which the researcher identified - Glaser (1978) suggested that the analysis of data should be restricted to between two and four hours and that ideas should be written down as well as talked through. These "grounded theory" principles were found to be useful adjuncts to the ethnographic techniques since ideas and their provenance could be returned to iteratively at later stages.

The assumptions of the methodology as discussed in Chapter Seven have to some extent been tested during this research. Studying conflict as it related to teaching and learning was tempered with reflexivity - the recognition that the researcher would influence the setting. The fact that the researcher was often included in the written narratives, focus group discussion, and the repertory grids, or was asked for advice, was an indication of acceptance by the participants. However, it emphasised to the researcher that she could not somehow become invisible. Any attempt to not participate in the elicitation process by non-information or non-conversation is in itself a participation.
In this research reflexivity became important on two counts. Firstly, it became clear that reflexivity had much to contribute to the teaching and learning process within the Business Studies Department in relation to both students and teachers. Secondly, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) stated:

.... reflexivity is .... the key to the development of both theory and methodology in social science generally and in ethnographic work in particular. (p236)

11.1.3 Writing

The breadth of the literature search in the areas of learning, conflict, and research methodology, necessitated that writing was contemporaneous with the fieldwork. A distinction between "writing down" and "writing up" had to be made. Atkinson (1990) when writing on ethnography and the representation of reality stated that:

.... both phases .... involve the creation of textual materials; both are equally matters of textual construction. (p61) (Author's italics.)

The conduct of this study resulted in the accumulation of voluminous data and so this needed to be "written down". However, there was a second area which the researcher began to appreciate and that was that the "writing up" carried stronger connotations of a constructive side to the writing. Atkinson (1990) puts this well by stating:

.... what was written 'down' is treated as data in the writing 'up'. (p61)

The writing up of this study required the author, since she was writing a reflexive account, to remain self-conscious as an author, and not take modes of writing for granted. She did not view the writing as a mere technical summative activity which would have been difficult because of the illuminative nature of the study. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) stated in this regard that:

.... the logic of ethnography, and the data so produced, do not readily lend themselves to such conventions. (p207)

Bertoff (1982) wrote that:

.... composing - putting things together - is a continuum, a process that continues without any sharp breaks. (p11)
and it was to this that the researcher aimed. She certainly found that it was a harrowing and difficult procedure notwithstanding the writings of Rose (1985) who commented in his preface that:

> No one writes effortlessly. Our composing is marked by pauses, false starts, gnawing feelings of inadequacy ....

Ethnographic writing requires specific writing skills and the use of brainstorming and freewriting techniques (Elbow, 1981) enabled the researcher to generate ideas and push her material towards a productive, critical mass. Out of chaos came some order and out of an inchoate sprawl of text and data eventually came the key points and the direction of the study. This reflective activity supported ethnographic writing for the researcher but encouraged conceptual leaps and streams of consciousness which had to be dealt with at the "writing up" stage.

Research into cognitive processes and the writing process (Bridwell-Bowles et al, 1987) suggested that experienced writers tend to have certain established mental schemas to help them in their writing tasks. That is, they have mental representations of the types of works they need to write. This was not the case with this study. Previously internalised guidelines were useful at the outset but proved to be a definite disadvantage when trying to reach the audience of a doctoral thesis.

However, prior writing experience and the intent of this study have a common feature. Both intend to convey to the reader a sense of time, place and persons ie to represent reality as perceived as accurately as possible.

As Atkinson (1990) put it:

> If our appreciation of qualitative research is strongly influenced by diffuse aesthetic criteria then no element of the text is a priori too small or too fleeting to merit attention. (p81)

This applied not only to the fieldwork and analysis but also to the writing - be it "up" or "down" - because:

> The authenticity of the account itself is claimed in and on behalf of texts that vividly construct their social worlds. (Atkinson, 1990, p81)
11.8

Thus, the writing required of the researcher illuminative skills which it is hoped are displayed in the next section which attempts to link the results of this piece of research.

11.2 RESEARCH RESULTS AS THEY RELATE TO THEORY IN LITERATURE

Conflict has been the subject of many books and studies but the scarcity of direct evidence relating conflict to teaching and learning handicapped the researcher from the outset because of the lack of initial material on which to base the inquiry. However, this did not tempt her to produce unauthenticated narratives nor to invent where she could not record.

Whilst there is a wealth of literature on conflict in personal, organisational, and international terms, little material appeared to exist as it concerned functional conflict in teaching and learning at higher education level.

The researcher was not, however, besotted with the idea of utilising conflict to enhance learning but freely allowed that there may be a score of greater researchers than she. No one else, however, appeared to have found the same enchantment. It depends on what enslaves the individual researcher; and while others may be fettered for different reasons, it is the sheer versatility and fluidity of functional conflict which captures her as a reflective practitioner and facilitator of learning. This is stated in order to explain how she came to attempt a study on conflict and learning.

The researcher has attempted to allow as few as possible of her own judgments to obtrude on the literature. But here and there unconsciously, and daresay more often self-deceivingly, the researcher may have fallen to temptation. In general, however, throughout this study the researcher has striven hard to remember her place as an uninvited guest-worker in an advanced and highly complex system of learning.

It was important not to leave the field of study wide open to speculation: on the one hand the data indicated that use of conflict in learning could be potentially positive and intrinsically motivating yet, on the other hand, there were suggestions that conflict should be eradicated.
However, it is also clear that conflict in the classroom:

* can initially appear dysfunctional but on later reflection can be recognised as functional
  eg the influx of international students;

* can be dysfunctional at one level for some people and functional at the same level for others
  eg perceived lack of resources;

* can take many forms at any given time so that some forms, the dysfunctional, may obscure or override the others, the functional
  eg lack of keyboarding skills so students cannot begin to deal with issues related to application of software;

* can be perceived differently by those challenged by it from by those intending to use it positively
  eg self- and peer-assessment of coursework;

* is limited by ethical boundaries
  eg what is perceived to be "good" or "bad";

* needs to be managed to achieve positive outcomes
  eg interaction and discussion involving teacher with the whole class.

These issues are explored for their practical contributions to educational practice in the next section.

11.3 RELATIONSHIP WITH SPECIFIC RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A full discussion on the research questions can be found in Chapter Six and are, in summary: do students and teachers perceive functional conflict within the learning environment and do they practise or capitalise upon functional conflict in their facilitation of learning?
The data in the repertory grid section (see Chapter Ten) indicated that the teachers did perceive the value of Deliberate Provocation as a way of functionally stimulating conflict for all the reasons stated therein eg creative, challenges thinking, provides mental stimulation. However, there was no evidence from the data to support the view that they actually used functional conflict stimulation techniques in the classroom.

The narratives (see Chapter Nine) and the students’ group work and repertory grids (see Chapter Ten) suggested that students perceived dysfunctional conflict in their learning situation but did not always see it as offering a potential for functional conflict stimulation to enhance learning. That is, the teachers are not demonstrated by the data as actually using functional conflict nor are they demonstrated as capitalising on the conflict that naturally arises in interpersonal situations such as the learning environment in the classroom.

So, the teachers acknowledged the role of functional conflict stimulation as positive for learning but did not show that they put it into practice or capitalised on its potential.

The students appeared to see some conflict as dysfunctional. However, in the focus group discussion and repertory grid elicitation, they found some potential for conflict as a medium for stimulating learning.

However, the data did provide evidence of where strategies used by specific individuals or groups were either particularly useful or particularly destructive.

11.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING IN THE BUSINESS STUDIES DEPARTMENT

11.4.1 Definition of Conflict

The inquiry indicated that the participants had experienced what they perceived as functional conflict, so it is possible to tender a suggestion for a definition of conflict as it relates to this study:

Any situation in which incompatible goals, emotions, or behaviours lead to disagreement or opposition between two or more people which, in turn, blocks effective learning, but may, after some temporary hiatus, increase effective learning.
Whether the second phase occurs depends on personal predispositions interacting with situational contexts. Careful facilitation of the situation is frequently required to achieve the second phase.

11.4.2 Ineffective Techniques

The inquiry evidenced some of techniques which were perceived as being utilised in the department to address emergent conflicts in the learning environment.

Firstly, there was non-action which is doing nothing in the hope that the conflict will disappear. This is not generally a good technique because most conflicts do not go away and the individuals involved in the conflict react with frustration. However, the students felt that their increased practice in the use of interpersonal skills enabled them to use non-action as a way of stimulating potentially functional conflict.

Secondly, secrecy, or trying to keep a conflict out of view of most people, only creates suspicion. An example of this was secrecy about available resources. If discussing this is frowned upon and discouraged, teachers and students may suspect that the department, and the organisation, has something to hide. However, students felt that when resources were acknowledged as being limited they increased their lateral thinking and they found alternative sources of information.

Thirdly, due process non-action is a procedure set up to address conflicts which is so costly, time consuming, or personally risky that no one will use it. An example would be where an issue requires detailed paperwork and/or going through complex and appropriate remedial channels with the accuser being branded a troublemaker. Thus, there is a procedure for handling, say, complaints (the process), but no one uses it (non-action). However, the increase in student numbers has brought evidence of an increase in the use of such systems by the students who feel that there is safety in numbers, and thus this is perceived as functional conflict in their eyes.

Finally, character assassination is a process in which there is an attempt to label or discredit an opponent. However, this can backfire and make the individual who uses it appear dishonest and cruel. There was evidence in the data that this technique was used by one teacher and it was perceived by the students to be functional conflict in that it did keep the "rugby boys" quiet. They did not provide evidence that the conflict had disappeared, though.
11.4.3 The Higher Education Classroom

Today’s classroom in higher education may well be an arena with greater potential for conflict than ever before. Undergraduates are increasingly being educated in a market place with its heightening competition and globalisation which appears to magnify differences among the students and teachers in terms of personality, values, attitudes, perceptions, languages, cultures, and nationality. With the increasing diversity of both the student body and teaching staff has come the potential for incompatibility and dysfunctional conflict.

As can be seen from the results of the inquiry, most of the participants claimed that conflict can have positive learning outcomes, yet, when it came to discussing aspects of conflict, there were some who remained uncomfortable.

This supports the theory in literature for participants perceived that not all conflict is bad. Some types of conflict do seem to encourage new solutions to problems and enhance creativity in the learning environment. This is what Robbins (1974) believed when investigating conflict at the workplace.

The students and teachers seemed to perceive the positive use of conflict exemplified by a healthy, constructive disagreement between two or more of their number. They did not put any weighting on whether conflict was right or wrong. Nor did they discuss directly the resolution of perceived conflict. This might well have been because they appreciated the differences between people and situations as a status quo. As Crum (1993) said:

> Resolving conflict is rarely about who is right. It is about acknowledgment and appreciation of differences.
> (pp17-20)

This study suggests that in order to achieve the most effective learning environment within the Business Studies Department the key for the teachers - and the learners as well - is in stimulating functional conflict as opposed to dysfunctional conflict.

According to the data, teachers and, to a lesser extent, students perceive that functional conflict can produce new ideas, improve learning, and encourage growth amongst individuals. When the students and teachers engaged in constructive conflict, they seemed to develop a better awareness of themselves and others. In addition, they perceived that the use of functional conflict had the potential to improve the learning environment, because when two people
work through their perceived disagreements, they seemed to feel they have completed something more than merely the resolution of an argument.

No specific investigation was made into the area, but the experience in toto of the investigation as a professional practitioner indicated that when tensions were released and followed by working together to solve problems, morale improved. A similar finding was highlighted in another context by Tjosvold (1991).

It appeared from the inquiry that a key for recognising functional conflict in the learning environment, ie a healthy constructive disagreement between two or more people, was that its origin was often cognitive; that is, it appeared to arise from a student or teacher challenging old practices or thinking of new ways to solve problems.

There were indications in the data that participants attempted to turn dysfunctional conflict into functional - or potentially functional - conflict, because they perceived that the losses otherwise to both may exceed any potential gain.

Teachers in particular should bear the responsibility for creating a positive conflict learning environment. Tjosvold (1991) argued that well-managed conflict adds to innovation and productivity; this could apply equally to the learning environment. There is, therefore, recommended that a procedure is adopted which would encourage the use of functional conflict in learning.

It appeared from this enquiry that a win-lose, competitive approach was not utilised by the student respondents and this is very encouraging since this helps to avoid dysfunctional conflict. It is suggested that students and teachers could, therefore, positively use conflict to enhance learning.

It is essential for all in the learning environment to value diversity and confront differences. Diversity requires a study within its own right but it is necessary for the facilitator of learning to develop an awareness of the perspective of diversity.

In this study individual students and teachers reflected the values of their own cultures and sub-cultures and narrated misconceptions about how others might think and act in the classroom. Students might be encouraged to explore their own values because this is an important means for understanding diversity, and the differences likely to be represented in the learning environment. However, self-awareness is not
sufficient in itself. All learners need to develop confidence and enhance skills in working with people from different ethnic groups, backgrounds, cultures and interests. Open and honest confrontation appeared from the fieldwork to bring out differences in perspectives which were essential for the development of positive conflict.

It is suggested that teachers could empower the students to feel confident and skilful in dealing with functional conflict or in turning dysfunctional conflict into functional conflict. This appeared to be particularly useful when related to the use of peer-assessed group assignments because through the process, learners felt that they owned their conflicts and controlled them, thus dealing with their differences productively. The study data indicated that when they did so, the group was positively recognised by the teacher.

It is important both that success is rewarded and that students, and teachers, learn from their mistakes. All those engaged in the facilitation of learning ie both teachers and students, should appreciate one another's strengths and weaknesses and talk directly about them.

Tjosvold (1991) believed that a conflict-positive organisation has competitive advantages for the future. The same applies to a functional conflict learning environment - it has positive consequences for the students, teachers, and the department.

11.4.4 The Diagnosis of Conflict

If one believes that dysfunctional conflict can become functional conflict in the journey to achieve effective learning, then it follows that conflict - in whatever camouflage - needs to be diagnosed. This is a very difficult thing to do. The teacher needs to look at the issue, the context of the conflict, and the people involved. It may not be only the teacher who needs these skills. With active learning techniques such as self- and peer-assessed learning, comes the need for students to develop such skills. Whoever wants or needs to diagnose conflict should address four questions which are given in Table 11.1 over:
Table 11.1 Questions which can be used to diagnose conflict with their relationship to functional or dysfunctional conflict

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Functional</th>
<th>Dys-Funct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are the parties approaching from a hostile standpoint?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is any outcome likely to be a negative one for effective learning?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do the potential losses of the parties exceed any potential gains?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is energy being diverted from achieving effective learning as a goal?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If all or most of the answers are "yes" then the conflict is more than likely to be dysfunctional. Conversely, if all or most of the answers are "no" then the conflict is probably functional - or can be made so. It is at this stage that the diagnoser starts to work systematically on whether it can (or should) be resolved or stimulated in order to make the conflict functional.

Some of the research data indicated that participants were unaware that they were reacting emotionally rather than thoughtfully to a situation, sometimes adopting an antagonistic stance which provoked the opponent or situation. Once people become locked into conflict they cannot change their behaviour without external facilitation. The most frequently found behaviour in this study appeared to be, particularly from the students' perspectives:

a retention of information;
b apathy;
c devaluation of the opponent;
e creation of cliques;
f constant criticism;
g lack of initiatives and lateral thinking;

h negligence or carelessness;

i disinformation;

j refusal to collaborate.

There were also social and economic consequences of the perceived conflict which included:

a wasted time;

b lack of innovation;

c deterioration of the social climate;

d poor decision-making;

e drop in productivity;

f deterioration of quality;

g loss of trust;

h deterioration of service to students and teachers;

i consequent effect on successful completion of degree.

These behaviours, or consequences, may serve as indicators of the presence of dysfunctional conflict thus alerting facilitators to the need for action. Where that action is to be directed depends on the system in which it is embedded. The overt antagonists are not interacting in isolation as Figure 11.1 over indicates.

In this systematic approach the people involved (the opponents, people within the immediate environment and within the whole organisation) are defined as the components and their relationship as the flux. The vicious circle has to be broken in order to allow positive movement forward i.e. progression. Progression can be done by acting on the components, the flux, or both. The situation can be affected by a change in the surrounding environment by people who are in direct contact with the opponents. This occurs even if the rivals refuse to allow the situation to evolve.
In this research the participants felt that they needed more information about the system as a whole in order to progress to functional conflict scenarios. Thus there are implications for organisational communication systems.

Figure 11.1  A systematic approach to conflict

THE CONFLICT IS A SYSTEM
WITHIN A BIGGER SYSTEM:
THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT,
THE WHOLE ORGANISATION

THE CHANGE OF ONE COMPONENT OR
ONE FLUX WILL AFFECT THE
CONFLICT
Using this schematic model, it might be possible for a teacher or student to use conflict to enhance learning if they appreciate that functional conflict does not take place without effect on the wider system. An example of this could well be in the elimination of groupthink.

11.4.5 Groupthink

One way that teachers within the Business Studies Department can stimulate functional conflict to bring about effective learning is to counteract groupthink which seemed to be prevalent in some classrooms and desired by some study participants. This is an ever-increasing issue for teachers who manage their students' learning because, with the increased use of learning sets, syndicate work, and peer-assessed learning, working in groups has a high profile in the higher education classroom.

Janis (1982) considered groupthink to be a condition of low intellectual development, reduction in the ability to test reality, and an inability to make moral judgments - all being brought about by pressures from within the group. The teacher needs to ensure that groups within their classrooms do not become too cohesive and thus develop groupthink because it is one of the possible antecedents of cohesive groups. As evidenced in professional practice, such groups tend to avoid conflicts - whether perceived as functional or dysfunctional - and to demand conformity of its members.

The consequences of groupthink include an incomplete survey of alternatives, failure to evaluate the risks of the preferred course of action, biased information processing, and a failure to work out contingency plans.

Other antecedents can include directive leadership, high stress, insulation of the group, and lack of methodological procedures for developing and evaluating alternatives although there was little evidence from the current fieldwork that teachers eradicated these. Such antecedents could cause group members to prefer concurrence in decisions and fail to evaluate one another's suggestions critically - a failing which, particularly in peer-assessed group work - would debar learning. A group suffering from groupthink, according to Janis (1982), has recognisable symptoms and along with these he suggested some guidelines for preventing groupthink.

Teachers could do well to understand the symptoms and to consider prevention of groupthink because they could then use functional stimulation of conflict to bring about learning. As mentioned earlier, students work most of the time both in the classroom and for their assessed work, in groups.
When a student class, or group, fails to consider alternative solutions and becomes stagnant in its thinking, it might benefit from healthy disagreements. Groups exhibiting groupthink should be encouraged by the teacher to activate creative problem solving.

Each group member could assume the role of the critical evaluator (Belbin 1981, 1993) who actively voices objections or doubts. The role of leaders is one in which it is difficult to keep a hold upon because it is contingent to task, situation, and time but the leader could avoid stating his/her issue prior to the group decision. As a practitioner, the researcher has found that an effective prevention of groupthink has been for several groups within the class to work on the decision simultaneously and then to share their results and opinions. She has encouraged groups working on self- and peer-assessed assignment to use outside experts to evaluate the process as well as the product. Where students have done this, they have received constructive feedback which, in turn, stimulated their learning development.

Another practical way of preventing groupthink is to appoint a devil's advocate to question the group's course of action consistently: once the group has reached a consensus, possible at a very early stage in any decision-making activity such as syndicate case study, the teacher should encourage the group to rethink its position by re-examining the alternatives.

The researcher in practice sends one member of each group to each of the other groups to carry out the role of devil's advocate and thus each group is encouraged to re-assess its points of view and each student benefits from shared learning. Such activities may help to stimulate constructive conflict in a group that might otherwise fall prey to groupthink. An important emphasis here is to realise that an astute facilitator of learning can recognise subtle problems by listening to the inflection of voices and by noticing the types of jokes made about individuals and groups of individuals who spend time together in the learning environment.

Most of these suggestions centre on the notion of ensuring that whatever the student group decides this is evaluated comprehensively, with opportunities for discussion from all group members thus encouraging members, to evaluate one another's ideas critically.
There are few empirical studies of groupthink, and most of those in existence involved students in laboratory settings. More applied research may be seen in the future, however, as a questionnaire has been developed to measure the constructs associated with groupthink (Montanari and Moorhead, 1989).

11.4.6 Using Functional Conflict

This thesis suggests that teachers and students need to use functional conflict in their learning environment. In Chapter Nine the competitive strategies versus co-operative strategies were discussed in the light of the fieldwork inquiry. Table 11.2 below depicts the two strategies and four different conflict scenarios taken from the inquiry: they represent the win-lose versus win-win strategies and indicate how useful conflict stimulation can be as a learning strategy. To take the example of the conflict between the indigenous students and the arrival of a number of international students:

Table 11.2    Win-lose versus win-win strategies in relation to the increase of direct access students (including international students)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Foreign Students</th>
<th>Indigenous Students</th>
<th>Department/ Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competitive</td>
<td>Lose</td>
<td>Lose</td>
<td>Lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus/</td>
<td>Lose</td>
<td>Win</td>
<td>Lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Win</td>
<td>Lose</td>
<td>Lose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operative</td>
<td>Win*</td>
<td>Win*</td>
<td>Win</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The competitive strategy is founded on assumptions of win-lose and entails less than honest communication, trust, openness to risks and vulnerability. In the example given above, both sets of students and the department will lose if no action is taken and this will be exhibited in an unproductive learning situation. Hostilities will continue - a lose-lose approach. If consensus and compromise takes place, this is a win-lose scenario and this does nothing to facilitate learning. Each group gets some of its demands satisfied whereas others do not; therefore, effective learning takes on a losing posture regarding the issue.
To construct a win-win solution, the two student groups must co-operate. The direct entry students could adhere to speaking English and participate in class activities and the indigenous students could appreciate the difficulties of being a student within a different culture from their own. This represents a win-win position following the conflict. However, in using this win-win situation both sets of students have conceded something (note win* in Table 11.2), but the conflict has been resolved with a positive outcome for all.

Members of the Business Studies Department would not be advised to look at the causes of individual conflicts because this has a very limited effect and in many situations could provoke negative behaviour and stifle learning. The study showed evidence of three principal reactions which teachers need to avoid if they are to use functional conflict in which the outcomes are beneficial to everyone - the students, teachers, department, and organisation.

Firstly, there was the authoritarian attitude exhibited in teacher behaviour (as a parent to a child) with the teacher enjoining the student to "grow up" and stop their "childishness". The conflict then becomes covert and potentially more vicious - it does not stop.

Secondly, there was evidence of the use of the surgical way by the organisation in not renewing the contracts of part-time staff who had been criticised by students, this being a clean-cut way of avoiding the issue by making teachers redundant, by resignation of staff or transfer of one or both of the opponents. This simplistic approach could involve the organisation in the loss of technical ability. Students evidenced this in their narratives.

Thirdly, it is necessary to avoid the appeal to positional authority. Members of the Business Studies Department should not support a system where a person in a recognised superior position listens to the parties in conflict, then decides who is correct. This superficially resolves the problem but the anger between the people concerned remains and goes "underground". Thus an appeal to positional authority cannot resolve a real conflict between two people.

In a functional conflict situation the parties could observe the opponent and appreciate the intensity and the direction of the attack. There should not be a reply to the attack but a creation of an emptiness in front of it. That is, to use the opponent’s strength and turn it to one’s own advantage. These three stages and three rules of dialogue (listen, question, give short summaries back) can be put together:
1 accept the attack = to listen
2 create emptiness in front = to question
3 use the opponent's force = to give short summaries back.

Such a method is practical, has effective potential and will always respect the individuals' personal freedom whilst positively enhancing learning.

11.4.7 Conclusion

Teachers and students need to develop an awareness of:

a the indicators of functional conflict within their own teaching and learning environment;

b the consequences within the Business Studies Department and the organisation which functional conflict can provoke;

c how situations which are potentially destructive can be made more productive;

so that they can be enabled to accept and resolve dysfunctional conflicts when they occur.

Both teachers and students need to be able to prevent escalating conflict from within their learning environment. It needs to be appreciated that attempting to find the causes of conflict is a barren activity because knowledge of the causes would not necessarily resolve the interpersonal conflict. This is because such causes are often too numerous and they are iterative with each other, whilst some cannot be eliminated eg differences in age and personality. It is also difficult to break the vicious circle of action/reaction which sets in during a conflict. There is the danger of taking a judgmental stance on the issue which can encourage negative changes of the behaviour. It might therefore be more productive to consider the use of functional conflict in such situations.

Teaching and learning is about relationships and there are no relationships without tensions. Conflict is not a failure but a part of everyone's life, and within the learning environment, interpersonal conflict can affect the atmosphere and, thus, the performance of both teacher and student and, eventually, organisational performance.
Since this is the case, it is necessary for teachers and students to accept that conflict is present and to deal with dysfunctional conflict as they would any other organisational difficulty or problem. The aim of both teacher and student is not to eliminate conflict but to convert the energy spent on destructive behaviour into positive action.

11.5 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Some issues have arisen from this study (see Chapters Nine and Ten) which concern the variety of ways by which students and teachers within the Business Studies Department perceived conflict and, particularly, how it related to their learning and teaching. These suggest, by their general nature, that further information about conflict as it features within the learning organisation might be gained from wider research into the Faculty of Social Sciences within which the Business Studies Department is housed and, subsequently, an investigation into the occurrence of interpersonal conflict within the whole organisation. That is, most of the sources of conflict identified are not necessarily unique to this particular Business Studies Department. Lack of all kinds of resources, for example, are possible and probable in other departments.

Action research with the teachers (in all institutions) in which they learn about being able to recognise conflict, experiment with and evaluate functional conflict strategies and would be a useful addition to staff development activities.

This subsequent research could be sub-divided into an investigation into two specific issues which were raised by the current study: the behaviour caused by the interpersonal conflict, and the resultant economic and social consequences to the organisation.

11.6 PERSONAL LEARNING STATEMENT: CAVEATS AND CONCLUSIONS

One purpose of the study was to draw attention to conflict as it might relate to learning. Another was to try to illuminate the work already done by other writers in the field. During the study process these two methodologies interacted with energy and counter-energy stimulating each other.
Conflict between different purposes and between alternative methods is always painful, but I adopted the process of taking the different ideological stances that underlie conflicts and acknowledged them before formulating ideas as carefully and as honestly as possible, and finally exposing them for debate and possible modification. Thus the prospect of attempting to proffer suggestions utilising functional conflict in learning looked more hopeful.

Such a pathway was supported by Billig (1991) who stated that:

Conflicts are of interest .... not to find out how they might be institutionally resolved or functional for the social system, but to show how they give rise to both problems and opportunities for reflection, doubt, thought, invention, argument, counter-argument. (p163)

My investigation took me, in the role of research practitioner, through theory in literature to fieldwork inquiry. At the end of my journey I find that I am supported by Nussbaum (1985) who stated that:

.... the experience of conflicts can .... be a time of learning and development .... if one allows oneself really to see and to experience them, may bring progress along with their sorrow, a progress that comes from an increase in self-knowledge and knowledge of the world. An honest effort to do justice .... seeing and feeling it in all its conflicting many sidedness, could enrich future deliberative efforts. (p261)

The justification, such as it is, for building a study about conflict and learning must lie altogether in the performance. It is this which made me often tremble at my temerity.

There comes a time to end all research projects and I found that patterns and themes became repetitive even though they managed to maintain reality.

If you look at a thing nine hundred and ninety-nine times, you are perfectly safe; if you look at it for the thousandth time, you are in frightful danger of seeing it for the first time. (Dexter, 1989, p132)

It is time for me to move on ....


BAIN G, "Damned if they do and damned if they don’t" in Financial Times, Friday 15 March 1991, p13


BANNISTER D and FRANSELLA F, 1971, Inquiring Man; UK, Reading: Cox & Wyman

BELBIN R M, 1981, Management Teams: Why They Succeed or Fail; UK, London: Heinemann

BELBIN R M, 1993, Team Roles at Work; UK, Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann


BOUD, KEOGH R and WALKER D (Eds), 1985, Reflection: Turning Experiences into Learning; UK, London: Kogan Page


DENICOLO P, ENTWISTLE N and HOUNSELL D, 1992, "What is Active Learning?" in Effective Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Module 1, Parts 1, 2, 3, Series Ed: CRYER Pat; UK, Sheffield: CVCP Universities Staff Development and Training Unit


DOR O, "Vive les Conflits" in Challenges, February 1989, pages unnumbered

DOR O, "La Gestion des Conflits" in Dynasteurs, February 1989, pages unnumbered


ELBAZ F, September 1991, "Hope, Attentiveness and Caring for Difference: The Moral Voice in Teaching" in Paper presented at Fifth Conference of ISATT held at the University of Surrey, Guildford, United Kingdom


ENTWISTLE N and RAMSDEN P, 1983, Understanding Student Learning; UK, Beckenham: Croom Helm


FESTINGER L, 1957, A Theory of Cognitive Dissonance; USA, Evanston, ILL: Row, Peterson


GIBBS G, 1988, Learning by Doing; UK, London: Further Education Unit

GIBBS G, 1992a, Improving the Quality of Student Learning; UK, Oxford: Oxford Brookes University


GIBBS G, 1994b, Learning in Teams; UK, Oxford Brookes University


GILBERT J and POPE M, 1982, Diploma in the Practice of Higher Education: Module J: Making Use of Research into Teaching and Learning (Extracts); UK, Guildford: University of Surrey, Department of Educational Studies (then Institute of Educational Development)


GLASER B G and STRAUSS A L, 1967, The Discovery of Grounded Theory; USA, Chicago, IL: Aldine


JUMP J D, 1971, Rhetoric; UK, London: Methuen


KNOWLES M, 1981, Developing Student Autonomy; UK, London: Kogan Page


LEWIN K, 1947, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics" in Human Relations 1 pp5-41

LILLIE W, 1955 (3rd Ed), An Introduction to Ethics; UK, London: Methuen


MARTON F and SALJO R, 1976a, "On Qualitative Differences in Learning: I Outcome as a Function of the Learners' Conception of the Task" in British Journal of Educational Psychology, No 46, pp115-127

MARTON F and SALJO R, 1976(b), "On Qualitative Differences in Learning: I Outcome and Process" in British Journal of Educational Psychology, No 45, pp4-11


MERTON R and KENDALL P L, 1956, The Focused Interview; USA, Glencoe, ILL: Free Press

METNER R, 1986, Opening to Inner Light; USA, Los Angeles, CA: Jeremy P Tarchner Inc


NAVRAN F, "Your Role in Shaping Ethics" in Executive Excellence No 9, 1992, pp11-12

NELSON D L and QUICK J C, 1994, Organizational Behavior: Foundations, Realities, and Challenges; USA, St Paul, MN: West

NOWILL J, "Teaching Granny to Suck Eggs or .... The Participative Methods Course" in Transition, May 1992, pp24-25

NUSSBAUM M, 1985, "Aeschylus and Practical Conflict" in Ethics, 95, pp233-267

OAKES W, 1972, "External Validity and the Use of Real People as Subjects" in American Psychologist Vol 27 pp959-962


SHAW M, 1980, FOCUS for Repertory Grids (Version One); Applemac


STARTREK: The Next Generation, BBC2 Television, transmitted on 10 April 1991 at 1812; personal comment from Commander Data to Captain Picard

SUMMERS I, COFFELT T and HORTON R E, "Work-Group Cohesion" in Psychological Reports No 63, 1988, pp627-636

THOMAS K W, "Conflict and Conflict Management" in DUNNETTE M (Ed), 1976, Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology; USA, Chicago: Rand McNally pp889-935


TJOSVOLD D, 1986, Working Together to Get Things Done; USA, Lexington, MA: Lexington Books


ANON, "Guerilla" in Liaisons Sociales Mensuel: Journal des Enterprises, January 1989, unpaged

VECCHIO R P, 1991 (2nd Ed), Organizational Behavior; USA, Chicago, ILL: Dryden Press International


VILLENEUVE C, "SOS Conflicts" in L'Entreprise, January 1989, unpaged


SECTION A

A1 What is your Course Programme?

Business Studies

A2 What are your current Business Studies courses?

BGS101 Management of Business/Spreadsheet Modelling
BGS102 Economics of the Firm

A3 What is your age? (Please tick the appropriate answer.)

19
20
21
22
23
24
25 and over

A4 What sex are you? (Please tick the appropriate answer.)

Female
Male

SECTION B

Indicate how frequently you engage in each of the described behaviour during your Business Studies courses as listed in A2 above. This includes all the teaching and learning situations e.g. lectures, seminars, small group work, tutorials (one student and teacher), programmed learning. For each item select the number that represents the behaviour you are most likely to exhibit.

Draw a circle round the number which indicates your preferred response e.g. 1 2 3 4. There are no right or wrong answers.

The alternative responses (1 to 4) are:

1 Always true.
2 Usually true.
3 Not very often true.
4 Never true.

B01 I blend my ideas with those of others to create new alternatives for resolving a difference of opinion.

B02 I shy away from topics which are potential sources of dispute.

B03 I make my opinion known even if I am likely to find others disagreeing with me.

B04 I suggest solutions which combine a variety of viewpoints.

B05 I steer clear of difficult situations.

B06 I give in a little on my ideas when others also give in.

B07 I avoid others when I suspect they want to discuss a difference in opinion.

B08 I integrate arguments into a new solution from the issues raised in any dispute with others.

B09 I will go 50:50 to reach a settlement.

B10 I raise my voice when I am trying to get others to accept my position.

B11 I offer creative solutions in discussions or disagreements.

B12 I keep my views to myself in order to avoid disagreements.

B13 I give in if others meet me half way.

B14 I downplay the importance of a disagreement.
There can be no tied allocations; each pair must total 3.

**SECTION C**

Listed below are 15 pairs of statements which are sometimes used by people to describe why they behave the way they do.

For each pair, show your assessment of the comparative importance that the two statements have to each other in describing your own method of handling situations you come across in the Business Studies courses listed in E2 above. This includes all the teaching and learning situations eg lectures, seminars, small group work, tutorials (one student and teacher), programmed learning.

Allocate 3 points (not more, not less, no fractions, no decimals), between the first and second statement in each case. You have the following four options:

3 and 0  OR  2 and 1  OR  1 and 2  OR  0 and 3.

There can be no tied allocations; each pair must total 3.

- **B15** I reduce disagreement by making them seem insignificant.  
- **B16** I meet my teachers at mid-point when we have differences.  
- **B17** I assert my opinion forcefully.  
- **B18** I dominate arguments until others understand my position.  
- **B19** I suggest we all work together to create solutions to disagreements.  
- **B20** I try to use the ideas of others to generate solutions to problems.  
- **B21** I offer trade-offs to reach solutions in a disagreement.  
- **B22** I argue insistently for my stance.  
- **B23** I withdraw when confronted with a controversial issue.  
- **B24** I side-step disagreements when they arise.  
- **B25** I try to smooth over disagreements by making them appear unimportant.  
- **B26** I insist my position be accepted during disagreements with others.  
- **B27** I make any differences I have with others seem less serious than they actually are.

- **C01** I am apt to give up something in order to get something.  
- **C02** I am usually quite firm in pursuing my goals.  
- **C03** I usually try to get the help of someone else in working out a solution.  
- **C04** I try to do what is necessary to avoid tension.  
- **C05** I sometimes give up my own wishes for the desires of other people.  
- **C06** I usually press to get my points across.  
- **C07** I sometimes give up my own wishes for the desires of other people.  
- **C08** I always try to get another person or other people to help me in working out a solution.  
- **C09** I sometimes give up my own wishes for the desires of other people.
C10 I am apt to give up something in order to get something. (s) ......
I try to get all of our concerns immediately out in the open. (t) ......

C11 I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions. (u) ......
I usually let other people have some of their wishes if they let me have some of mine. (v) ......

C12 I usually work to soothe the feelings of other people to preserve our relationship. (w) ......
I am usually quite firm in pursuing my goals. (x) ......

C13 I try to avoid taking positions that would create controversy. (y) ......
I usually press to get my points across. (z) ......

C14 I usually try to get the help of someone else in working out a solution. (aa) ......
I sometimes give up on my own wishes for the desirous of the other person. (bb) ......

C15 I try to get all our concerns immediately out in the open. (cc) ......
I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions. (dd) ......

SECTION I

Please state how stimulating you personally find each element listed below in relation to the teaching you have received/are receiving in your Business Studies courses as listed in A2 above.

Draw a circle round the number which indicates your preferred response eg 1 2 3 4. There are no right or wrong answers.

The alternative responses (1 to 4) are: 1 Very stimulating.
2 Quite stimulating.
3 Not very stimulating.
4 Not at all stimulating.

D01 Formal lecture given by teacher. 1 2 3 4
D02 Small group work facilitated by the teacher. 1 2 3 4
D03 Seminar (teacher with a small group of students) 1 2 3 4
D04 Tutorial (yourself and the teacher). 1 2 3 4

D05 Presentations by students. 1 2 3 4
D06 Coursework: Essays. 1 2 3 4
D07 Coursework: Research Reports. 1 2 3 4
D08 Coursework: Other (please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4
D09 Coursework: Other (please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4
D10 Coursework: Other (please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4
D11 Computer based learning and/or computer assisted learning. 1 2 3 4
D12 Programmed learning eg via a workbook 1 2 3 4
D13 Video 1 2 3 4
D14 Other (Please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4
D15 Other (Please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4
D16 Other (Please specify ______________________) 1 2 3 4

If you wish to make any comments on any aspect of the questionnaire, or any other points you may wish to make to me, please use the space below continuing over the page if necessary.

Thank you for cooperating in this piece of research.
TO: All Year 3 Business Studies Students

FROM: Linda Hound
Senior Lecturer, Business Studies Department

DATE: 9 November 1992

SUBJECT: TEACHING AND LEARNING WITHIN THE BUSINESS STUDIES DEPARTMENT

As some of you will know, since you have already assisted me, I am carrying out a large study on teaching and learning within the Business Studies Department, the results of which will be published.

I would be grateful if you could complete the questionnaire below and return it to me in the envelope provided, via either the Internal Post or the Departmental Office, by Monday 30 November 1992. If you mail the envelope, return the questionnaire in an envelope marked for my attention, and return it by the same way. I thank you in advance for your co-operation.

As with nearly all questionnaires, there may be some questions which seem superfluous or irrelevant; however, I have made the questionnaire as short as possible, and each item has been inserted with a particular research objective in view. I ask you to appreciate that it is impossible to cater in advance for all the diverse facts and viewpoints I am likely to encounter, but I have tried to make the questionnaire as straight-forward as possible for everyone to fill in.

I would very much welcome your comments on any aspects of the questionnaire, or any other points you may wish to make to me. Space has been provided at the end of the questionnaire for this purpose.

I hope that all questions will be completed by all respondents. If, however, you are unable or unwilling to answer any questions, I am anxious that your replies to the others should remain unaffected.

You might make some points which I would wish to talk to you about and I would therefore appreciate it if you could complete your name and contact address. HOWEVER, if you wish to remain anonymous that is perfectly in order. I reassure you that your answers will remain absolutely confidential and will not be associated with your identity at any stage.

Thank you for co-operating in this field of research. The questionnaire starts opposite.

SECTION A

This section deals with factual information about the Course Programme you are following. Indicate your response by placing a tick [✓] in the box which represents your situation.

A01 What is your current study programme? (Tick only one box.)

| Business Studies only. | [ ] |
| Business Studies as major. | [ ] |
| Business Studies as equal. | [ ] |
| Business Studies as minor. | [ ] |

A02 What is your other Course Programme subject? ...........................................

A03 Indicate which Course Programme you have followed since joining the Roehampton Institute. (Tick one box only: a or b or c.)

a Yr1 Business Studies and Second Subject
   Yr2 Business Studies and Second Subject
   Yr3 A01 as above [ ]

or b Joined Yr2 Business Studies and Second Subject
   Yr3 A01 as above [ ]

or c Gone directly into Yr 3 as A01 above [ ]

A04 What are your current Business Studies courses?

...................................................................................................................

...................................................................................................................

...................................................................................................................

...................................................................................................................

A05 What is your age? (Tick the appropriate answer.)

| 19 | [ ] | 23 | [ ] |
| 20 | [ ] | 24 | [ ] |
| 21 | [ ] | 25 | [ ] |
| 22 | [ ] | 26 and over | [ ] |

A06 What sex are you? (Tick the appropriate answer.)

Female [ ] Male [ ]

PLEASE TURN OVER ............................................................................
RFPZ-Z

Wish to make comments on any aspect of SECTION A which you may find objectionable or the personal situation, please use the space below.

Thank you for your co-operation in this piece of research.
TEACHING AND LEARNING

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

A01 Name ........................................

A02 How long have you been a teacher in the Business Studies Department at (Org name removed for retention of confidentiality) (Complete the appropriate box/boxes.)

Years [ ] Months [ ]

A03 What other types of organisations have you taught in? (Tick and complete the appropriate boxes.)

Primary School [ ] Number of years [ ]
Secondary School [ ] Number of years [ ]
Further Education [ ] Number of years [ ]
Higher Education [ ] Number of years [ ]
Other (Please specify.) ........................................

A04 If you have worked other than in education, please give brief details of the type of appointment, length of service, and where if fitted chronologically in your teaching experience. Otherwise, please cross this question through.

........................................................................
........................................................................
........................................................................

SECTION B

Examples of learning situations
Lectures, seminars, small group work, tutorials (one student and one teacher).

Instructions
Think of a time when you were in a learning situation within the Business Studies Department at the Roehampton Institute when you felt that someone else had obstructed you from teaching and/or learning. You may find that this happened to you on more than one occasion - you have the opportunity of using all examples you have experienced.

Write a story (or stories), using the third person, which will tell the reader all about the incident (or incidents). Each story can be of any length; grammar, spelling, and presentation are not important but please ensure your writing is legible.

PLEASE TURN OVER ............
You can use real names if you want to - I am the only person who will ever know. However, you may prefer to adopt pseudonyms throughout. Whatever is most comfortable for you.

Example
I've given an extract from an actual story I was asked to write. The subject was - how I got on with computers.

Linda calls her computer TOM because it is a Totally Obedient Moron since it only does what she asks it to do having no mind of its own. Linda is not afraid of TOM because even when she sat on the keyboard, TOM made lots of noise but didn't break down....

Write your story (or stories) on the paper attached - add more if you wish but please ensure that you enclose it with the rest of the questionnaire.

When you have finished complete SECTION C below:

C01 Name ........................
C03 Date ........................
C04 Time ........................
C04 Place  eg study, home, park ................................

If you wish to make any comments on any aspect of SECTION A which you may feel clarifies your personal situation, or any other points you wish to make about this section, please use the space below.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION WITH THIS PIECE OF RESEARCH.
## RESULTS OF QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

### Table One

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>SO</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total**

83 548 510 148 7 1296
Table Two  
Table to show breakdown according to solution-oriented questions

B02 I shy away from topics which are potential sources of dispute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11
37
Difference 26

B05 I steer clear of difficult situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3 (INR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14
33
Difference 19

B07 I avoid others when I suspect they want to discuss a difference in opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6
42
Difference 36

B12 I keep my views to myself in order to avoid disagreements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7
41
Difference 34
### B14 I downplay the importance of a disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference: 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B15 I reduce disagreement by making them seem insignificant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference: 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B23 I withdraw when confronted with a controversial issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference: 40</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B24 I side-step disagreements when they arise.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference: 36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B25 I try to smooth over disagreements by making them appear unimportant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B26 I insist my position be accepted during disagreements with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference 24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B27 I make any differences I have with others seem less serious than they actually are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Table Three

**Table to show breakdown according to control questions**

**B03** I make my opinion known even if I am likely to find others disagreeing with me.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difference 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B10** I raise my voice when I am trying to get others to accept my position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difference 0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B17** I assert my opinion forcibly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difference 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B18** I dominate arguments until others understand my position.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difference 27</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B22 I argue insistently for my stance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Difference} 8\]

Table Four

**Table to show breakdown according to non-confrontational questions**

B02 I shy away from topics which are potential sources of dispute.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Difference} 26\]

B05 I steer clear of difficult situations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[(1NR)\]

\[\text{Difference} 19\]
**B07** I avoid others when I suspect they want to discuss a difference of opinion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference: 36

**B12** I keep my views to myself in order to avoid disagreements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference: 34

**B14** I downplay the importance of a disagreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1NR)

Difference: 7

**B15** I reduce disagreement by making them seem insignificant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Difference: 4
### B23 I withdraw when confronted with a controversial issue.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Difference 48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B25 I try to smooth over disagreements by making them appear unimportant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Difference 2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B26 I insist my position be accepted during disagreements with others.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Difference 24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### B27 I make any differences I have with others seem less serious than they actually are.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Always True</th>
<th>Usually True</th>
<th>Not Very Often True</th>
<th>Never True</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Difference 16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Five  Table indicating how stimulating students found various teaching elements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q</th>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Stimulating</th>
<th>Quite</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D01</td>
<td>Formal lectures given by teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D02</td>
<td>Small group work facilitated by teacher</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D03</td>
<td>Seminar (teacher with a small group of students)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D04</td>
<td>Tutorial (yourself and the teacher)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D05</td>
<td>Presentations by students</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D06</td>
<td>Coursework: Essays</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D07</td>
<td>Coursework: Reports</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D11</td>
<td>Computer Based learning and/or Computer Assisted Learning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D12</td>
<td>Programmed Learning (eg via a Workbook)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D13</td>
<td>Video</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Six  
Table to show Coursework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Stimulating Very</th>
<th>Quite Not Very</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Studies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Preparation</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminars</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spreadsheet Project</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roleplays</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentations</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table Seven: Table to show Other Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
<th>Stimulating Very</th>
<th>Not Very</th>
<th>Not At All</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roleplays</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Discussions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relying on Library Texts</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS OF NARRATIVE SURVEY (STUDENTS)

VERBATIM NARRATIVES

Respondent S1
When we did small group work in OB last year, in our particular group there was one individual (named) who kept only writing down and saying out loud the things that he had thought of, therefore not giving the rest of us a chance to get our ideas across and it was only when he wasn’t there that all ideas were grouped together and used.

Respondent S2
I have had no obstruction to my learning.

Respondent S3
No story.

Respondent S4
Once upon a time (name) visited (named college) library and came across a book he much wanted to complete an essay - the book was full of animated case studies on precisely the subject he was looking for. Pleased he grabbed the book off the shelf and flicked through it. He found that the book was a 24hr loan, so he replaced the book on the shelf and left the library.

Another day (same name) who by the way lives in South East London, decided to spend the whole weekend working in the library. So he boarded the train to London, changed at Waterloo, continued to (town) waited for a bus and arrived eventually at (named college). Unfortunately the library is shut over the weekend.

Respondent S5
1 (Name) was sat in a lecture in (room) listening to a lecturer explaining a method of analysis. A group behind her were muttering and laughing causing her a strain on her ears. The lecture fuzzed into a haze and she lost the plot totally through other people not paying attention and distracting her.

2 (Name) sat for the first time in a (named subject) lecture given by a (description would identify individual). (Sex could identify individual) not make the information clear so she did not enjoy the lecture and did not try to understand the information given. If her attention was not gained in the first five minutes she was never going to listen at all.
3 (Name) payed [sic] attention to the details being told, but on a Friday afternoon many people entered the room late, this distracted (name) and others too. Then a foreign student jabbered onto a friend in a foreign tongue so (name) could not hear the lecturer clearly as the others sat closer to her and this came clearer to her ears than (sex could identify individual) words, so her attention slipped and learning ceased.

Respondent S6
(Name) gets very annoyed when the "Rugby Lads" always contradict & dispute what the lecturer is saying. This is because she feels it wastes time.

She also gets very angry when mature students ask stupid questions to lecturers as they are too thick to understand concepts and often have to ask because they haven't read around a topic. This also wastes time.

She is also very annoyed when too many people in the (subject named) group mean that she can't get a seat by a desk (unless she gets there at 6am) & so has no desk to lean on & has difficulty in getting good notes.

Respondent S7
There have been a number of instances when (name) has had to prepare work for business studies lectures and seminars. In her attempt to find articles in the library she often finds that the most recent magazine or journal available is two or three months old and not suitable for her research.

(Name) finds herself becoming extremely frustrated by this regular occurrence as she feels it is obstructing her learning of a subject she has never experienced before coming to (name of institution).

Respondent S8
No story.

Respondent S9
(Unable to include because the three stories identify the individuals.

Respondent S10
Whenever (name) goes into the library she can never find what she wants & has to wait ages in queues at the desk to make a reservation.

In group work she finds it difficult to convey what she really thinks about other students work for fear of annoying someone.
Respondent S11

1. He wanted to do well at College and generally enjoyed his courses - but certain things were very frustrating

   1. Enormous numbers of students including HND who hadn’t covered the same core courses in Years 1 & 2.

   2. Many more foreign students than he expected, who hadn’t covered the core subjects & were working in a different language & tended to give NO class participation.

   3. Lack of chairs & desks. Rooms too small. Or so many chairs packed in that he couldn’t see overhead projector.

   4. Due to enormous classes, an even larger strain on the library & media resources. Not enough books to go round. Some times one essay title with the same deadline was given too 100 students, so the library shelves for that topic were literally bare. He also became very frustrated with other students ripping articles out of journals - if only the journals could be bound and security tagged.

2. Decrease in tutorial time due to increased number of students.

3. Members of staff run off their feet.

4. Staff emphasising the importance of presentations and visual material etc (ie named course) but when the students asked to use business studies photocopier to put images onto acetates, they met with a very negative response from (named support staff) & certain staff. Virtually no financial support was offered.

Overall he doesn’t like to moan as he really enjoys his subjects, but the endless frustration of missing books, journals etc - and over-crowding wears him down.

He realizes the college is under-funded, but so is he, so buying endless text books, because the library doesn’t have enough copies is impossible, or taking the bus to (other named institute) or the train into central London to use other libraries is expensive.

His learning has also been obstructed by fellow students chatting in class, not normally because they are bored, but they don’t understand something, and are too shy to ask in front of 100 plus other students, especially students who joined (name of institute) in the 3rd year.

I think this will be a VERY interesting piece of research & wish you all the best. If you want any more information please do not hesitate to contact me - Good Luck!
Once upon a time, a young girl called (named) went to her very first (named subject) lecture. She was a bit apprehensive, because she thought 'This subject might be a bit hard for me, I hope I'll be able to understand it'. However, once the lecture got underway she found she had a different problem, the lecture wasn't hard, it was too easy so to speak. She found the lecturer was talking to the class as if they were primary school children. (Name) thought that this was maybe a one off but she found (sex would identify individual) style of lecturing continued throughout the term. She felt she wasn’t learning anything or getting anywhere fast.

(Name), entering his third year at (named institution), found his avenues blocked by lecture clashes in his two subjects and was very unhappy. Shortie was pretty unhelpful about the matter. (Name) was frustrated, as it was his last year and still couldn’t choose the appropriate courses in this year in (name of other subject).

Work piled up in the various subjects too quickly & (name) got behind, but struggled through knowing he would have done better if he could to the subjects he wanted to do in (second subject) with 2 course classes with business.

I’m afraid to say that your [sic] not the only one to have problems with (Tom) the computer. The thing that I disliked about him was the fact that when you made the slightest of errors, no one was available to sort it out in such a way, that you could sort it out yourself (should it ever happen again) - and it always would.

Enough said ...

Group work - This is one topic which should interest you, as your knowledge on the subject is boundless. The general argument flows around the aspect of working in groups for assignments eg (names two courses).

I can understand how working in groups is an essential learning experience in itself, but what can be done if your group fails to perform as a so called effective working unit (working team).

For (name of course) the assignments are essentially group based. The number of members in my group is four but truthfully speaking, not including myself, only one other person has put the effort into the essay that it really deserved. Is this fair? Or can it be put down as a learning experience?
Throughout the exercise we aimed at sharing the work load. Sections of the essay were distributed equally to allow for, that person to obtain more information and understanding than one person alone. Fair enough, each member did, but it was evident when placing the sections together to make it flow that some peoples work was - in short only a 15 min job.

The only excuse given for this and during the assemblement of the individual sections was that they had other course work to do as well. Don’t they realise that we are all in the same boat.

My big mistake was offering to type the completed essay. It wasn’t even finished and all that was stated was what should be included and what should not, as points in the margin.

In effect, it would have been better off for me to do the whole thing myself.

All I can look forward to now, is going to the allocation of the overall marks - ie the arguements (sic) that will follow on the distribution of the marks as they should be rightfully awarded in relation to the effort put in or not, as the case will be.

Will justice prevail?

No insult intended, but (named teacher) should undergo some sort of training, to make better use of the OHP within a lecture.

The thing is that, although (sex could help identify individual) uses the Overhead a lot, (sex) seems to forget that we are not machines. As soon as an OHP [sic] is put on the screen the tendency for everyone to copy it down is great. As you should know. (Researcher’s note: respondent did not name myself).

Not content with flashing the transparency up for a short while, (sex) carries on talking about what is on it. In short the two things don’t always connect. That is to say, what (sex) says, although very important is always different to the notes displayed on the OHP.

In effect we require the use of two brains at the same time. One to copy the overhead and the other to jot down all the relevant points stated by (sex).

In any case I always seem to get left behind and use someones [sic] elses notes to complete my own. PS I do try to use shorthand, to no avail.

[Sorry for the delay - I lost this form]
Table One  Respondents who identified themselves and offered further contact details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## RESULTS OF NARRATIVE SURVEY (TEACHERS)

**Table One**  
*Length of time respondents have been teachers in the Business Studies Department*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Months</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>76</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*7yrs mean 36% 64%*
Table Two
Other types of organisations within which respondents have taught

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secondary Education</th>
<th>Higher</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10</td>
<td>HE part-time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Industry (13 years)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>FE (2 years part-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Educational Television (3 yrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Senior Executive Training Programme (No time given)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Others no previous work experience in teaching.

Table Three
Work carried out other than in teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Period of Years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banking</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>8 weeks (Part-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>No time given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretarial</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No work experience disclosed by one teacher.
APPENDIX SEVEN
APP7.1

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS GROUP

Table One  Table to show the composition of the Focus Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students invited to attend</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students confirmed they would attend</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students attended</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Two  Table to show the students' current study programme

Business Studies as a major 3

Table Three  Table to show other Course Programme subject

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Four  Table to show Course Programme followed since joining the organisation

Yr 1 Business Studies and Second Subject (equal) 1
Yr 2 Business Studies and Second Subject (equal) 3
Yr 3 Business Studies (major)
APP7.2

Table Five

Table to show current Business Studies courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number following it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Applied Business Economics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business Project</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics and Government</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resource Development</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel Management</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Six

Verbatim comments from Focus Group transcription categorised in stated areas

a  direct entry students into year three eg ex HND
   too many
   not covered same courses before joining
   ill-prepared
   holding other students back
   causing degree to be diluted
   all at [named college], not know about other [three named colleges]
   not know where they are [geographically]
   not know anything about [name of organisation]
   can get two qualifications whilst this is other students' only chance

b  increase in numbers of overseas students
   too many
   holding students back
   causing degree to be diluted

c  working in groups
   working in small groups is more difficult; held back; contains HND and foreign students
   now too large to benefit from conflict stimulation
   some staff unable to put large group into smaller groups
   changes in group membership from week to week

d  assessment procedures
   group assignments difficult because of HND and foreign students
   groups assignments is now difficult when agreeing upon marks
   exam revision techniques disappeared
   staff not appreciate already proved certain competencies at "A" level
   some exams only a test of memory
   lack of hands-on experience because of large groups
e organisation factors

direct entry of so many non-traditional students to Year Three
[named organisation] grown too large re number of students
classes too large
larger staff:student ratio
work not returned on promised date because of more students
having to wait for tutorials because teachers no time now
no extra resources for larger number of students
extra pressure/work for teachers
registration was a mess
Business Studies only department taking HND and foreign students
no student pressure groups
not hand back work when promised
decisions come form the top
departments (therefore their resources) were moved between colleges
without notification to the students
lack of centralisation
lecture rooms spread about

f lack of resources

no extra library facilities
got to go elsewhere for books and journals
not enough money spent on business journals
students rip articles out of journals
resources available not communicated
no department support for materials for student presentations
cannot afford materials so work suffers'
department not resource-riented
some staff waste overhead transparencies
books and journals on split sites

g barriers to effective communication.

no prior warning of large groups
enormous communication breakdown
no foreign language so cannot direct exchange overseas
no common magazine for students
no feedback on why there are large numbers of students
poor visiting lecturers
some lectures waste of time because visiting lecturer cannot communicate
some teachers spoonfeed too much
deliberate conflict stimulation to provoke statements/questioning
some poor teaching skills
because of large numbers getting help is difficult
students deliberately provoking discussions
most students are apathetic
lazy British students
TEACHING TECHNIQUES DEFINITIONS

DISCUSSION Topic
Teaching techniques which can be used to stimulate/facilitate students' learning.

TECHNIQUES AND DEFINITIONS
The following specific techniques will form the basis of our discussion.

Brainstorming
An intensive discussion situation in which spontaneous suggestions as possible solutions to an issue are received uncritically.

Buzz Group
Groups of 2-6 students who discuss issues or problems for a short period, or periods, within a lesson.

Case Discussion
Real or simulated complex problems are analysed in detail for students to suggest their own solutions or decisions.

Computer Based Learning
Student and computer interaction.

Controlled Discussion (Plenary)
Teaching in which students may raise questions or comment, but the general direction is under the strict control of the teacher. Normally used after a presentation method with a class, not a group.

Deliberate Provocation
Deliberately provoking, inciting someone or in some way that causes indignation, anger, grievance, or similar.

Demonstration
The teacher performs some operation exemplifying a phenomenon or skill while the students watch.

Free Group Discussion
A learning situation in which the topic and direction are controlled by the student group. The teacher observes.

Questioning
The form of words addressed to teacher/student in order to elicit information to evoke a response.
Role Play
Students are given certain social roles and freely dramatise them in a group i.e. they act out their specified role.

Step-By-Step Discussion
Teaching by a carefully prepared sequence of issues and questions to draw out the required information from students.

Telling of Facts by the Teacher
Teacher telling the students facts.