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COLAISTE NAISIUNTA EALAINÉ IS DEARTHA  
NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION AND THE ART CLASSROOM:  
THE ROLE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

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DONY MAC MANUS

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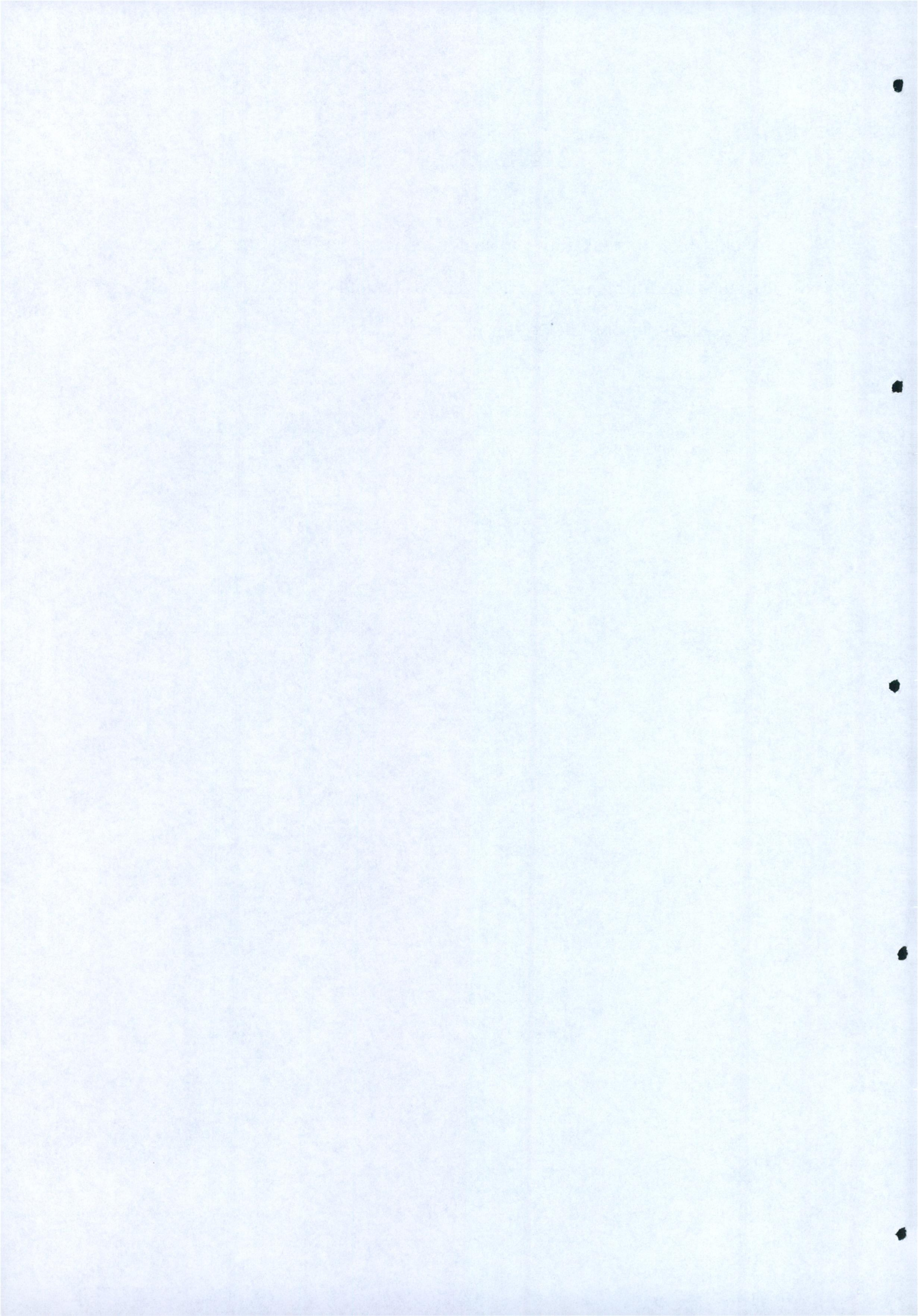
## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
Chapter	
I. INSTILLING CONFIDENCE THROUGH ART EDUCATION: DIFFERENT METHODS.....	1
II. THE NATURE OF SELF-ESTEEM.....	4
III. BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION .....	9
IV. THE ROLE OF ENCOURAGEMENT.....	20
V. THE ART CLASSROOM: BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES AND TEACHER RESPONSES.....	33
VI. CONCLUSION.....	42
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	49



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CHAPTER 1  
INSTILLING CONFIDENCE THROUGH ART EDUCATION:  
DIFFERENT METHODS

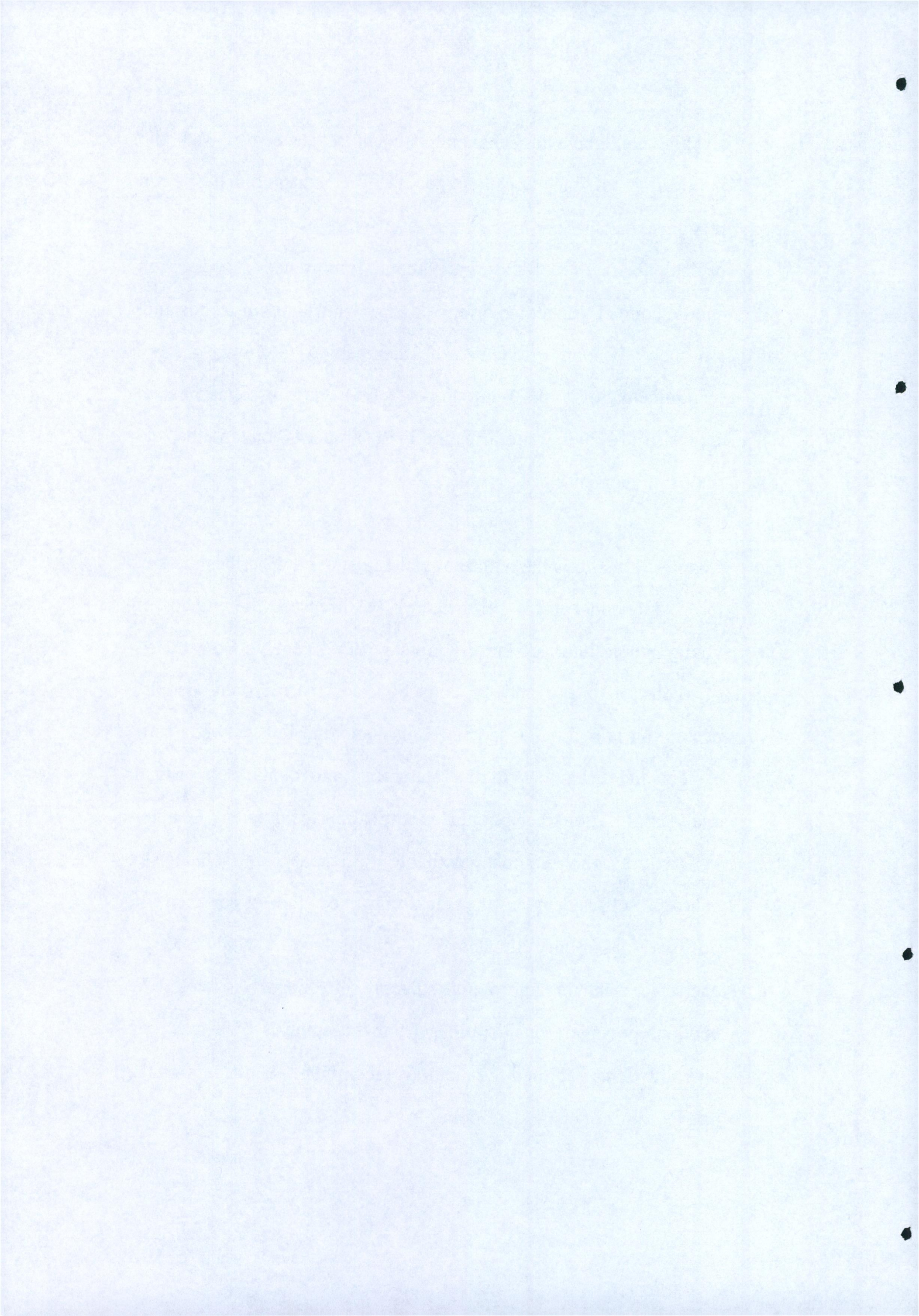
The Green Paper "Education for a Changing World" argues that Arts education develops non-discursive ways of knowing, to counterbalance the emphasis on numerical and verbal modes of enquiry.<sup>1</sup> Art education is ideally placed to enable the teacher to develop in the students creativity and imagination and consequently the development in them of a sense of self-esteem and achievement. The White Paper states that "Artistic and aesthetic education are key elements within the school experience of young people"<sup>2</sup> which emphasises the key significance of art teaching for young people schools in Ireland. Art education should encompass a multidimensional and holistic approach if it is to realise the innate potential of the student. Art education should attempt to harness the talents of all its students and strive to strengthen the students self-concepts. This dissertation aims to consider the issue of self-esteem in the classroom and how it is related to student achievement and behaviour. It attempts to explain how the teacher has the fundamental task of enhancing self-esteem in the classroom and considers several methods the teacher may employ in achieving this task. It analyses whether the school system is effective in harnessing the innate potentials and creativities of the student and whether the accepted pedagogues are





actually conducive to enhancing student self-esteem. With the publication of the Green Paper (1995), education has been recognised as the key to the successful future of the country. This critical awareness of the fundamental importance of education should compel teachers to arrange their own teaching methods and, as such, become students of their own teaching, a key recommendation of the White Paper (1995). This dissertation is an analysis of behaviour modification in the art classroom and the role of encouragement.

Chapter II analyses the nature of self-esteem and describes the key terms and concepts of self-esteem. It discusses the impact of young people internalising the messages they receive from others on their self-image and explains how for many young people, perception is reality. Chapter III discusses the link between self-esteem and behaviour in the classroom and contains a critical analysis of various behavioural modification techniques. Chapter IV analyses the methods available to teachers in seeking to enhance self-esteem in the classroom and the importance of positive classroom climates. It discusses the vital role of encouragement in improving student self-image. Chapter V contains personal considerations from the author's own teaching and how he has applied the methods recommended in Chapters III and IV to his own art classroom.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2)

1. Dept of Education, The Green Paper, Education for a Changing World (Dublin: 1992) p. 26.
2. Dept of Education, White Paper, Education for a Changing World (Dublin: 1995) p. 21.



## CHAPTER 2

## THE NATURE OF SELF-ESTEEM

Teaching is fundamentally a reciprocal interaction between teachers and students. When the interaction is positive and harmonious, a warm learning environment invariably develops but when the interaction is characterised by disharmony and friction, this usually creates a classroom environment in which there is much tension, rebellion and lack of motivation. This low motivation is firmly linked to the inappropriate learning environment that is not conducive to positive self attitudes or success building in the students. Kyriacou notes that "the classroom climate established by the teacher can have a major impact on pupils' motivation and attitude towards learning."<sup>3</sup> It is a fundamental pedagogical task of the teacher to create learning conditions that stimulate students to generate learning goals and the cognitive strategies to accomplish them. The teacher must work at strengthening the students self-esteem, which is critically linked to the learning environment created by the teacher.

Self-esteem originates initially in the messages we receive from the significant others in our lives. "The causes of self-esteem lie principally in the early experiences of childhood"<sup>4</sup> Humphrey's believes that the child's early relationships with significant adults in his life are usually positive or negative. He argues that we



reflect the appraisals of the significant others and internalise them as our self-image. The significant others are those people in our lives whose judgments on us are an important part of our self-understanding and generally these include family, friends and teachers. For students the classroom teacher is a significant other to them, so the value judgments the teacher places on the student consciously or unconsciously, have a significant impact on the students self-image and their self-esteem.

When attempting to clarify the complex issue of self-esteem the terms self-concept, ideal-self and self-image consistently appear. Lawrence considers self-concept as the 'sum total of the individual's mental and physical characteristics and his or her evaluation of them.'<sup>5</sup> He is correctly emphasising the importance of the individual's evaluation of their characteristics and this is evidently a life long process. Lawrence suggests that self-concept is comprised of three aspects; the cognitive, the affective and the behavioural. The cognitive refers to the academic and thinking part of the individual while the behavioural represents the actual actions of the individual. The significance of this for the classroom is that students require a strong sense of their own cognitive, affective and personal worth if their self-image is to be positive. Gwynne Willson Brown believes that individuals evaluate themselves by examining the elements of self-concept they have amassed in a direct response to the evaluations of





significant others in their lives.<sup>6</sup> The result again is that the individual internalises these external images as internal reality which manifests itself as self-concept.

Self-concept can be broken down into two components: the ideal-self and the self-image. The individual's self-image is defined by Lawrence as "the individuals awareness of his/her mental and physical characteristics."<sup>7</sup> It refers to the actual image the individual holds of him/herself. The ideal-self is the idealised notion the individual has of him/herself. Self-esteem arises from the fundamental discrepancy between the idealised self and the actualised self. There exists positive correlations between the level of self-esteem and the distance between the idealised self and the actual self. If the distance is minimal a high level of self-esteem is invariably found. As a result it is an essential pedagogical task of the teacher to reduce the discrepancy between the idealised and actualised self if he wishes to enhance the self-esteem in the classroom.

In conclusion self-esteem is not a fixed, permanent or determinate thing. It can be a very fragile thing, especially for young adolescents, and can be destroyed or enhanced by the significant other in their lives. Self-esteem in the classroom is often related to a sense of belonging as the student evaluates his competence and worth in terms of how he belongs to the particular peer group. The



undesirable reality is that students are their own worst critics and tend too often to be influenced by what others think of them. The following chapter will discuss the link between self-esteem and the students behaviour in the classroom.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 2

1. Dept of Education, The Green Paper, Education for a Changing World (Dublin: 1992) p. 26.
2. Dept of Education, White Paper, Education for a Changing World (Dublin: 1995) p. 21.
3. Kyriacou, Essential Teaching Skills (Blackwell: 1995) p.65.
4. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher (Goldenbridge: Gill & MacMillan, 1993) p. 17.
5. Denis Laurence, Enhancing Self-esteem in the Classroom, (London: Paul Champman Publishing Ltd, 1989) p.1.
6. Gwynne Wilson-Brown, The Assertive Teacher, (Arena, Hants, England/Vermont U.S.A. 1994) p.45
7. Denis Lawrence, Enhancing Self-esteem in the Classroom, p.1

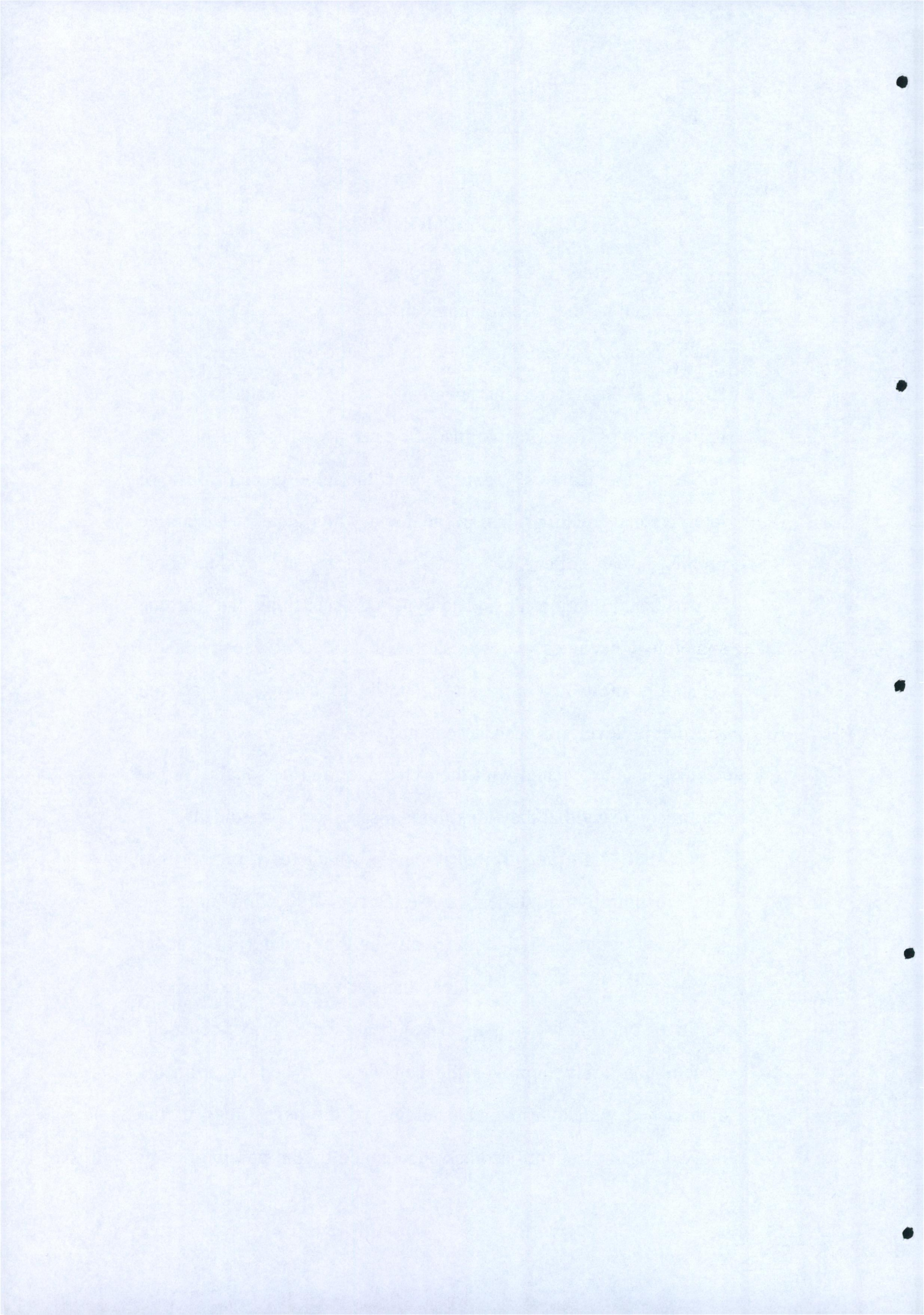


## CHAPTER 3

### BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION

Self-esteem in the classroom is undoubtedly linked to positive relationships between the students and the teacher. Kyriacou Highlights the “increasing awareness amongst teachers of the importance of fostering pupils self-esteem, self-confidence and self-respect as learners”<sup>8</sup> and he notes the importance of positive interpersonal relationships in achieving this goal. Discipline problems can often be related therefore, to dysfunctional interpersonal relationships. The dynamic of teaching and learning sometimes excludes the realisation that students behaviour is constantly motivated by a strong desire to belong, to reach an acceptable level of peer acceptance. All too often students’ behaviour is associated with their character and personality rather than recognising that they must remain separate. The student must realise that “I am not my behaviour”<sup>9</sup> which for Humphreys is vital in improving student self-esteem. Education must be concerned with discipline but only in the context of student achievement and desire rather than adapting an excessively punitive approach which is in no way beneficial to the student self-esteem nor rarely improves the behaviour. When discipline is approached with a firm understanding of the psychology of the individual, the student becomes encouraged by the possibilities of





their improvement and discovers some important things about their own identity and self-worth. Erickson argues that “an optimal sense of identity is expressed merely as a sense of psychological well being”<sup>10</sup> which emphasises the vital role of the teacher in helping the student achieve this well being.

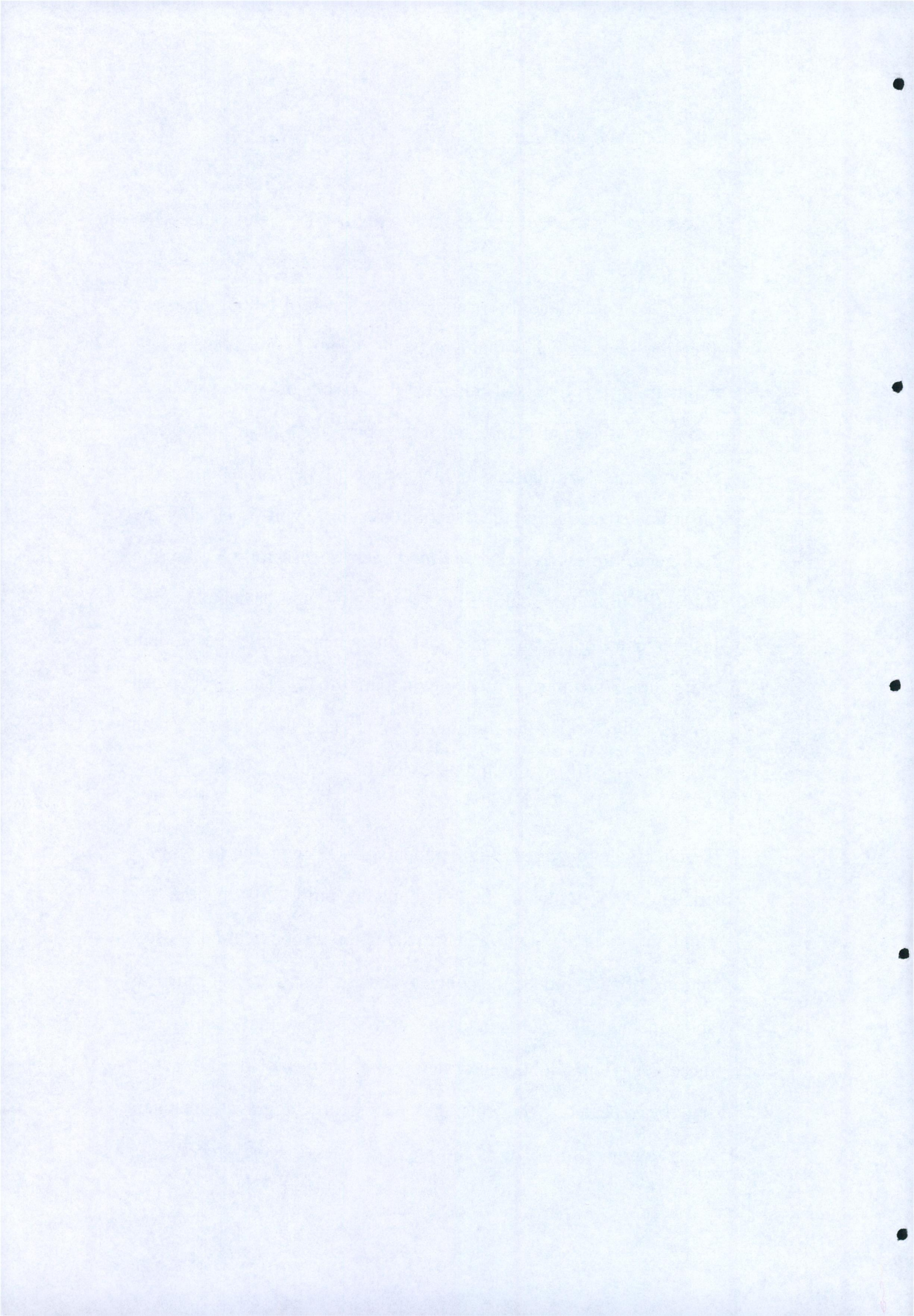
A student's behaviour should not be considered in isolation but rather in a group context which should throw light upon the behaviour. This recognition of the group dynamic is basic to the teacher's understanding of the students deep desires to belong to a particular peer group. A student's behaviour often alerts the teacher to the student's level of self-esteem. A student may engage in a number of disruptive behaviours designed specifically to gain the teacher's individual attention. He may enter the classroom late and noisily (classic attention seeking behaviour) which often elicits a predictably annoyed reaction from the teacher. The student observes the desired reaction and realises that his intentions have succeeded. A student's behaviour is perpetually determined by his understanding, usually misguided, of how his behaviour can function to contribute to his sense of belonging to the group dynamic. A student seeking to reinforce his sense of self-worth and motivated by peer acceptance to indulge in such undesirable behaviours as coming late, failing to complete work, wandering from his seat or persistently asking irrelevant questions, is engaged in a form of attention seeking behaviour which the teacher often



unconsciously reinforces.

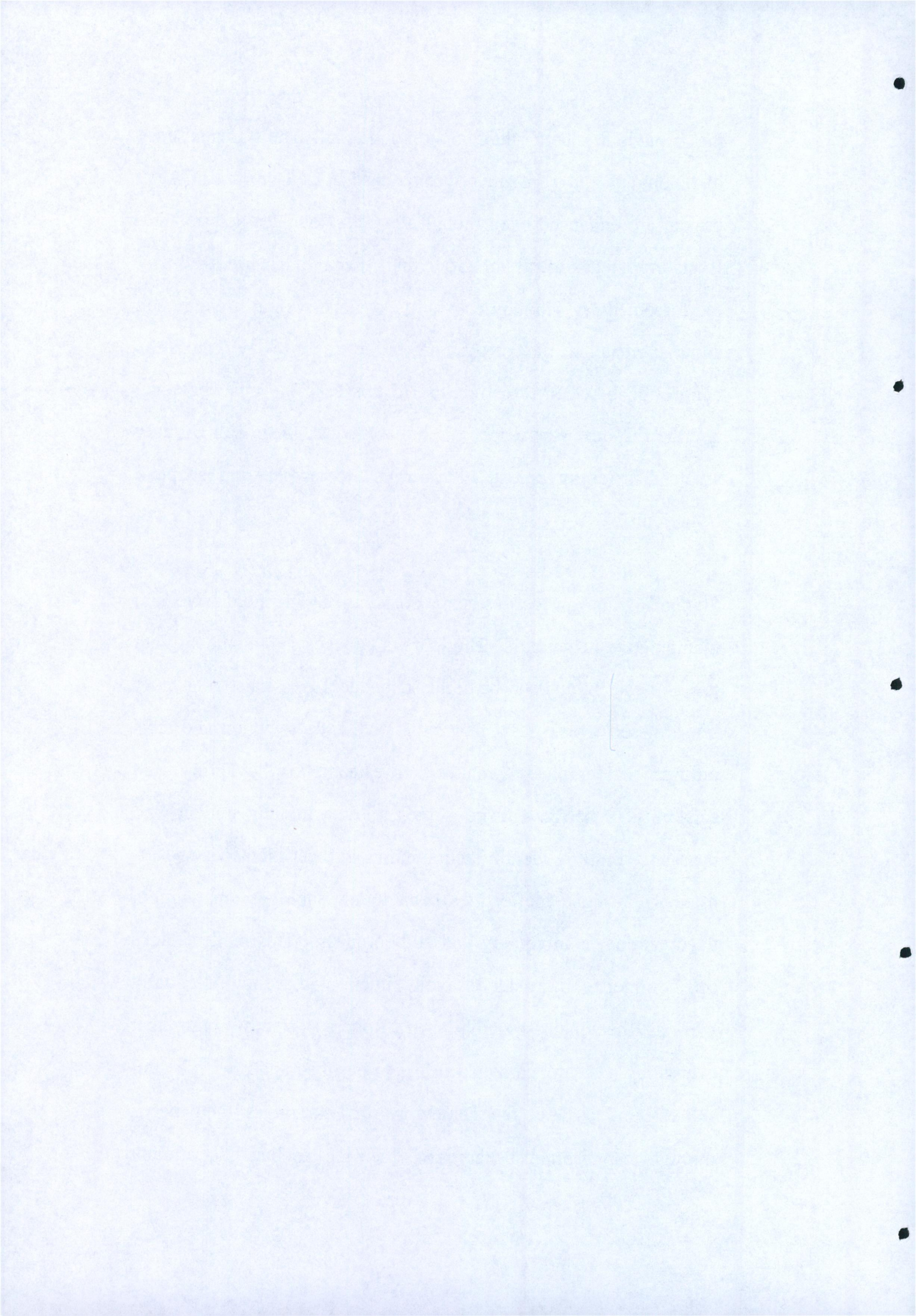
Student behaviour is often a “search for significance for identification for acceptance”.<sup>11</sup> Considering a student’s misguided understanding of achieving a sense of belonging, such attention seeking behaviour is appropriate for them in seeking to maintain a positive self-image. For a lot of young people, perception is seen as reality and if they perceive their inappropriate behaviour as contributing to their sense of peer acceptance the unfortunate reality is, that such behaviours will invariably be continued, unless a teacher intervenes successfully. As the student’s ultimate goal is peer belonging and acceptance the teacher need not change the goal but rather provide the student with alternative means of achieving this goal. The teacher can successfully “utilise the dynamics of the class”<sup>12</sup> to improve both the student’s self-esteem and behaviour.

Teachers are engaged with students in a diversity of ways - praising the bright student, rebuking the bully, coaxing the shy child, urging the lazy one and criticising the disobedient one. Most actions of the student that engage the teacher can be termed as spontaneous behaviours and the consequences that result from these behaviours consistently determine whether or not the action will be repeated. Students that persistently aggravate teachers often continue to do so as the negative attention they receive for



the behaviour is better than no attention at all. The students sense of belonging and consequently his sense of self-worth and self-esteem are enhanced even though his behaviour has deteriorated. It is a pedagogical reality that behaviour followed by reinforcement (which may be positive or negative), is strengthened and perpetuated as the consequence of the response strengthens the connection between the stimulus (in this case the misbehaviour) and the response (the teachers reinforcement). Gage and Berliner assert that reinforcement will always "strengthen and shape a behaviour."<sup>13</sup>

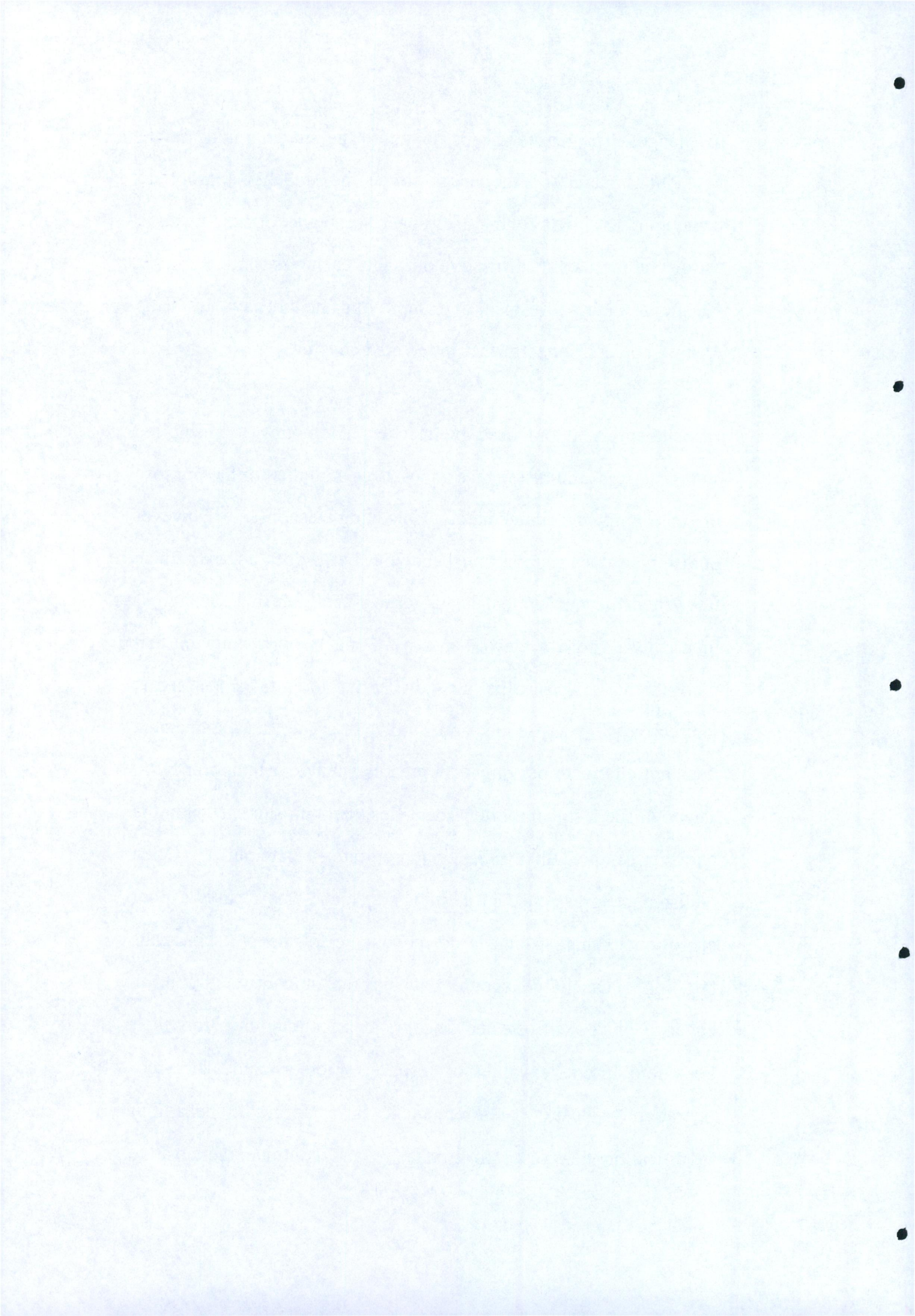
Students with low self-esteem often engage in submissive and manipulative behaviours. Humphreys believes that a student with low self-esteem tends to be highly dependent, pessimistic, have no sense of self-worth, fears new situations, fears rejection and feels unlovable. Humphreys relates self-esteem to "lovability and capability"<sup>14</sup> so the student is often a low achieving student who possesses a failure identity and attempts to meet the needs of self-esteem through ineffective behaviours such as inattention, daydreaming, complaining and stubbornness. This student lacks self confidence and tends to avoid situations that they potentially view as personally humiliating<sup>15</sup>. Rogers correctly argues that everybody has a fundamental desire to be liked and preserve their self-esteem.<sup>16</sup> The low achieving students meet their needs through inappropriate behaviours which the teacher must attempt



to change. The teacher needs to ignore the students undesirable behaviour and attend to and reinforce the students appropriate behaviour. By giving the student peer acceptance for his positive actions rather than his disruptive ones the teacher is simultaneously enhancing their self-esteem and improving their behaviour. This idea will be developed further in the next chapter.

Punishment is a tool used by teachers attempting to discipline students. It is administered as an aversive stimulus for the purpose of inhibiting the immediately preceding response. However punishment does suppress misbehaviour but it does not extinguish it. When the punishment is withdrawn the undesired behaviour invariably returns, a view shared by Kyriacou who believed that punishment is basically a short term tool that is largely ineffective<sup>17</sup> or as Beihler and Snowman argue, that punishment does not eliminate but only "suppresses behaviour temporarily".<sup>18</sup> The punished student often identifies the punishment with the punisher rather than the inappropriate behaviour. Often punishment is assigned in a fit of anger and this creates a poor classroom climate which is not conducive to positive self-image building. Discipline should develop the students self-control, enhance their self-esteem, encourage accountability for their behaviour, promote values of respect for others and affirm co-operation. Positive reinforcement is a form of behaviour modification that seeks to emphasise and continue the positive





behaviour while punishment excessively concentrates on negative behaviour. Positive reinforcement is defined by Beihler and Snowman as "strengthening a target behaviour...by presenting a stimulus immediately after the behaviour has occurred"<sup>19</sup>. This is an approach recommended by this dissertation and will be developed further presently.

Behaviour modification has been explained as "shaping behaviour by ignoring undesirable responses while reinforcing desirable responses."<sup>20</sup> B. F. Skinner's work studied reinforcement as a means to control and motivate student's behaviour as he found that certain stimuli caused an organism to repeat an act more frequently. Skinner felt that what you do is influenced by what follows what you do. This represents the key aspect of behaviour modification and reinforcement theories. We can break complex behavioural patterns into meaningful successive steps and reinforce the acquisition of each step until the whole sequence is mastered. The student is first reinforced for mastering the basics and then reinforcement is made contingent on behaviours that reflect an understanding of more than the basics. A teacher should never take a student's manifestation of acceptable behaviour for granted by not systematically rewarding such behaviour. When the teacher wishes to protect the learned behaviour from extinction he must use a variable schedule of reinforcement while when he wishes to extinguish undesirable behaviour he must never



unconsciously reinforce such behaviours in the student.

A teacher must decide whether an undesired behaviour actually interferes with the class and then observe the intervening behaviour closely to determine how it is being reinforced. He must then set up a programme so that the reinforcers are never allowed to follow such behaviour. Reinforcement should be rather dependent on the manifestation of appropriate behaviours thus reinforcing the behaviour the teacher is planning to increase. Glasser correctly highlights that "to use rewards and punishment effectively requires a knowledge and judicious application of the principles of behaviour modification".<sup>21</sup> The appropriate behaviour must be reinforced immediately so that the teacher does not unwittingly reinforce inappropriate behaviours. During the initial stages of the behavioural change process the appropriate behaviour must be reinforced each time it is exhibited so that the desired behaviour becomes part of the student's behavioural repertoire. When the newly acquired behaviour reach a satisfactory frequency level it should be reinforced intermittently. If the student knows that reinforcement will be given but doesn't know when, the desired behaviour will continue. This variable reinforcement schedule should maintain the appropriate behaviour.<sup>22</sup>

Such a behavioural modification technique is difficult to



implement at times because a fit of anger from the teacher can render all previous reinforcement efforts ineffective. When the established methods of gaining attention become non-functional the behaviour may at first increase before extinguishing. This requires a lot of confidence from the teacher in his behavioural objectives. If the reinforcements are applied intermittently or inconsistency, this may confuse the student and reinforce the undesirable behaviour. The teacher needs to be aware that different students are motivated by different reinforcers. Beihler and Snowman note that "what is an effective reinforcer for one student may not be for another"<sup>23</sup>. They respond therefore selecting "with student assistance a variety of reinforcers."<sup>24</sup> When the desired appropriate behaviour is not manifest the teacher needs to reinforce the behaviour that is closest to that he wishes to reinforce. Kohn alerts us to the danger in behaviour modification that "over an extended period of time ...learning may come to an abrupt halt when no one is around to supply reinforcement"<sup>25</sup> It is very difficult for teachers to ignore some undesirable behaviours as they can be sometimes detrimental to the learning environment. Often the best course of action is to remove the student from the class, so that the student is denied the opportunity of the negative reinforcement which they seek. Behaviour modification can be criticised for attempting to manipulate students behaviour and this raises the problem of excess control and the consequential ethical issues. This technique should perhaps only be used when teacher's



attempts to reason with the student fails.

Students with high self-esteem usually engage in assertive behaviours and retain personal power and self-belief. Humphreys believes that these students tend to possess independence and acceptance of self and others, can take criticism and trust and value self.<sup>26</sup> They will invariably be confident in social and school situations, possess a strong work ethic and will be eager and enthusiastic with regard to school work. Their behaviour is usually more acceptable in the classroom as they possess a strong sense of belonging. However their assertive and confident behaviour may also reflect the positive reinforcements they invariably receive from the teacher in the classroom for their scholastic competence. These students usually possess success identities and meet their needs for self-esteem through constructive ways as their capabilities encourage them towards unconditional self-acceptance. Behaviour is strongly linked to self-esteem so the teacher must work to improve self-esteem in the classroom if he wishes to improve students' behaviour. The following chapter deals with the many ways in which a teacher may enhance self-esteem in the classroom.





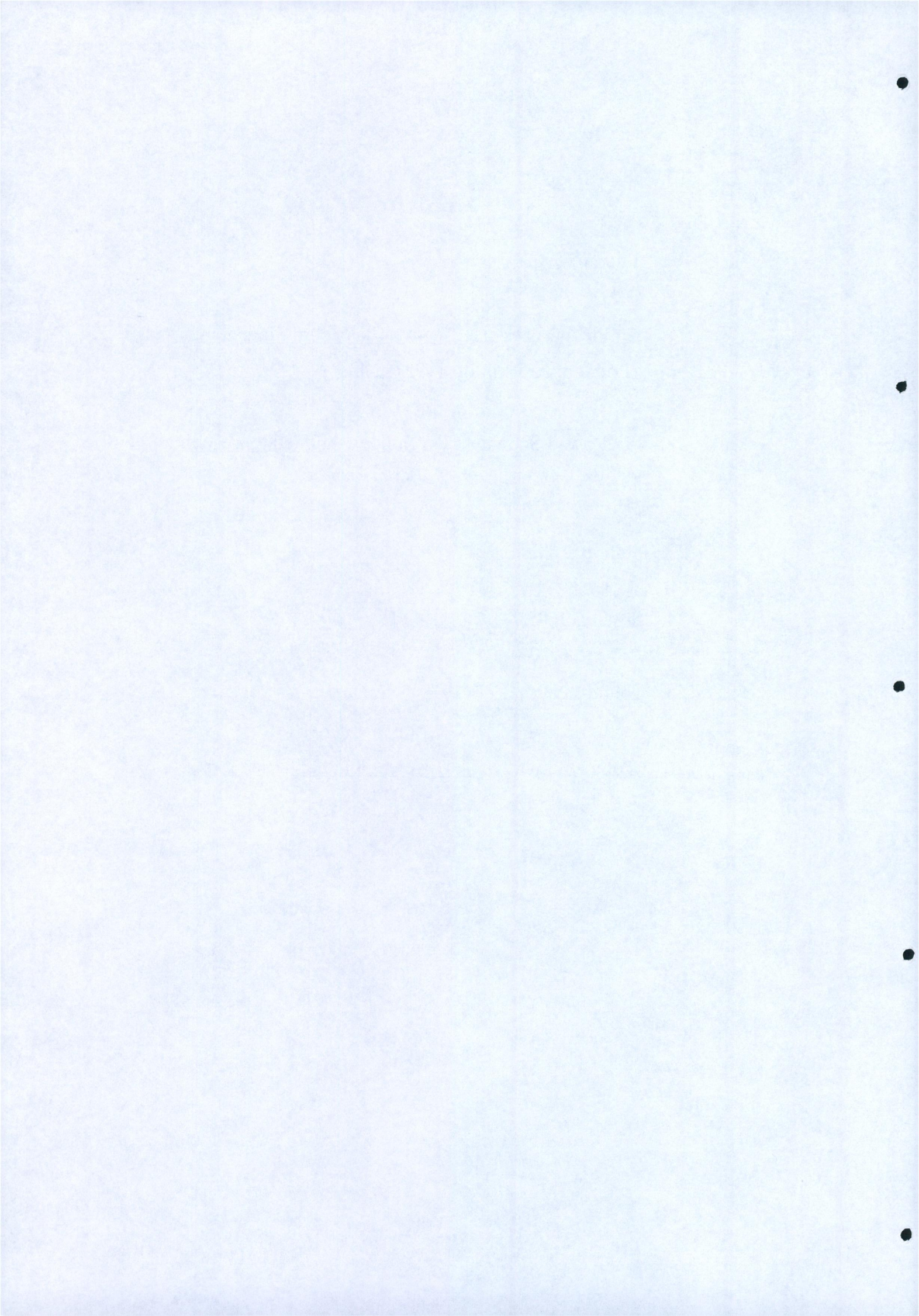
## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 3

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8. Denis Lawrence, Enhancing Self-esteem in the Classroom, p. 73.
9. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher, p. 31.
10. Bieler and Snowman Psychology Applied to Teaching (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1997) p. 76.
11. Maurice Balson, Understanding Classroom Behaviour (Melbourne: The Australian Council for Educational Research Ltd, 1995) p. 63.
12. Ibid., p. 65.
13. Gale/Berliner Educational Psychology (Boston: Houton Mifflin Company, 1992) p. 268.
14. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher p. 28.
15. Denis Laurence, Enhancing Self-esteem in the Classroom p. 78.
16. Carl Rogers, On Becoming a Person (London: Constable, 1967) p. 64.
17. Kyriacou, Essential Teaching Skills p. 67.
18. Bieler and Snowman Psychology Applied to Teaching p. 278.



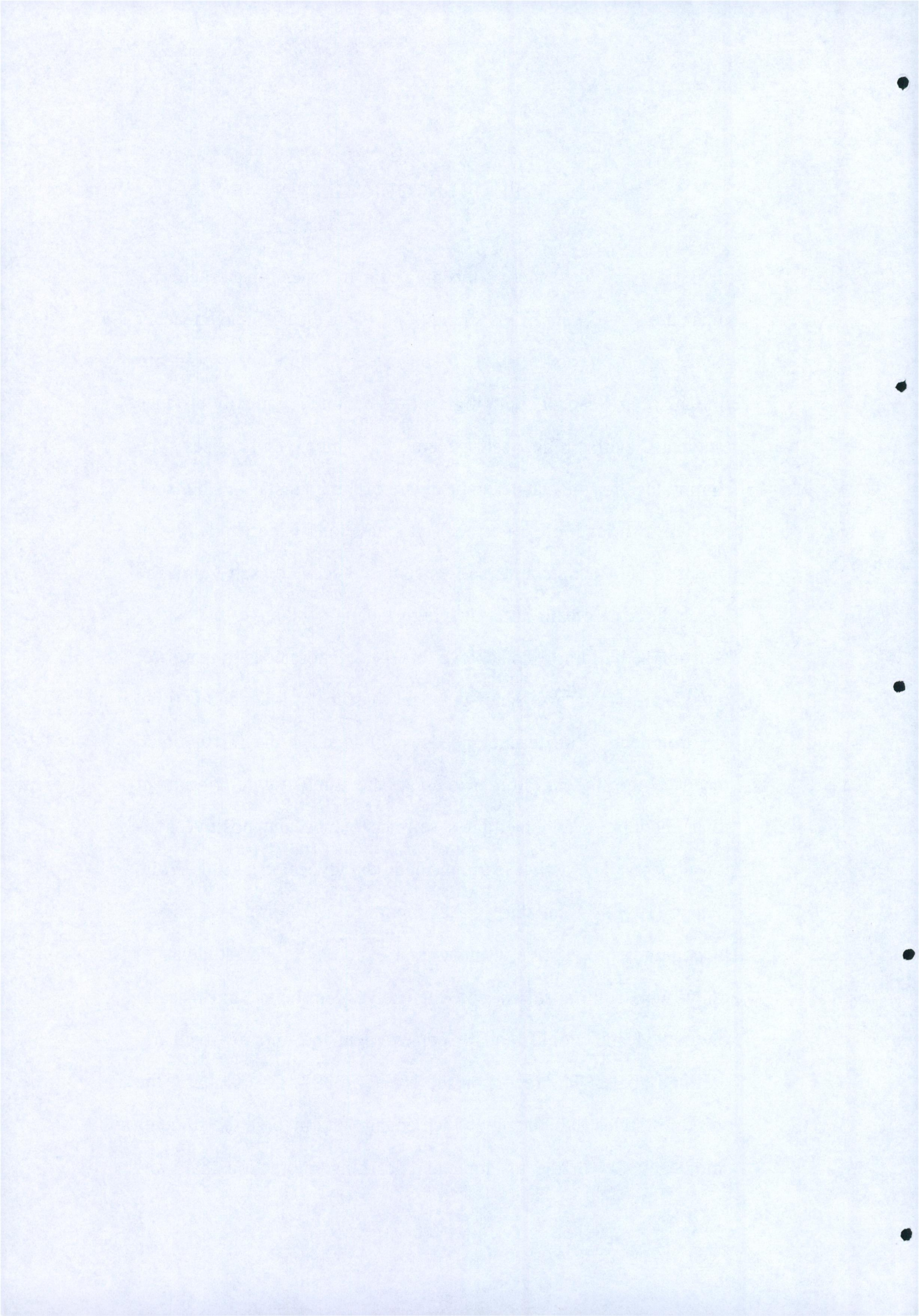
19. *ibid.*, p. 287.
20. *ibid.*, p. 296.
21. Smith and Lasslet, Effective Classroom Management (London: 2nd edition 1995) p. 43.
22. Bieler and Snowman Psychology Applied to Teaching p. 278.
23. *ibid.*, p. 268.
24. *ibid.*, p. 268.
25. *ibid.*, p. 269.
26. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher p. 26.



## CHAPTER 4

## THE ROLE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

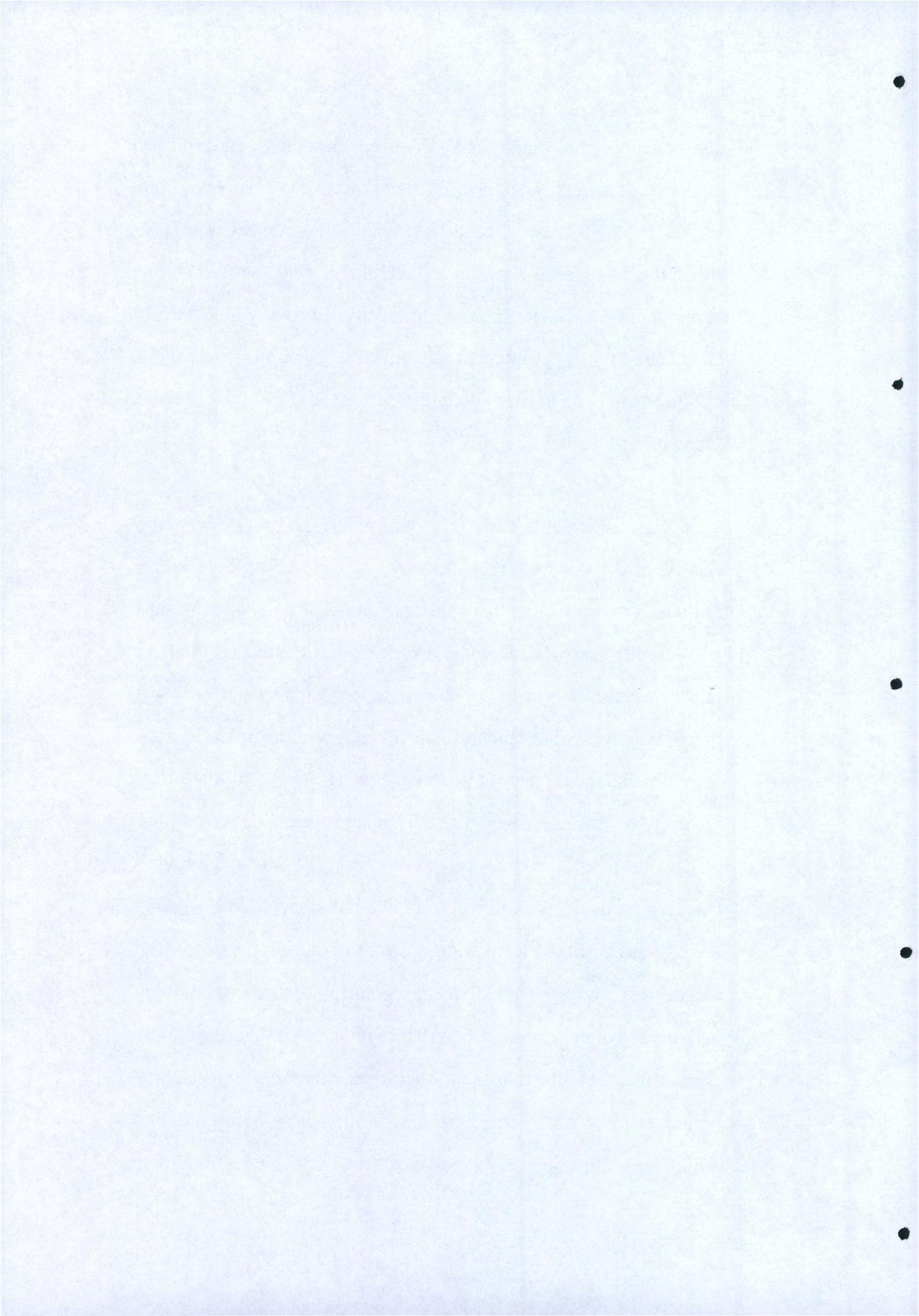
It is an overlooked fact of teaching that in order for a teacher to raise the self-esteem of his students', it is necessary for the teacher to elevate his/her own levels of self-esteem. Humphreys points to the fact that "teachers with high self-esteem automatically produce students with high self-esteem",<sup>27</sup> which emphasises the importance for the teacher to be aware of the impact of his/her self-esteem own level of self-esteem may have on his/her students. In order to enhance students self-esteem and sense of self-worth the teacher must create an atmosphere that is conducive to positive self-image building. To achieve this the teacher needs to empower the students with a sense of personal mastery in a noncompetitive environment. The teacher needs to understand the instructional needs of the student in order to create the stimulating environment that encourages and facilitates self-acceptance and positive self-awareness. The active learning methods advocated by the White Paper (1995)<sup>28</sup> and the N.E.C report (1994)<sup>29</sup> are designed to encourage co-operative attitudes and experiences for students as they would more often see themselves as being intrinsically motivated and would tend to persevere in the pursuit of clearly defined goals. The report on the N.E.C. (1994) asserts that " the need for styles of pedagogy which engage and involve the students more actively in the teaching and learning interaction than was



traditional”,<sup>30</sup> thus emphasising the need for increased awareness of the need to get the active engagement of the students. The teacher needs to create Glasser’s ‘caring’ atmosphere<sup>31</sup> (1987) in which the dynamic of teaching and learning is characterised by the notion that who you are is more important than what you know. If this unconditional acceptance is achieved self-esteem is invariably enhanced and when we maximise self-esteem we increase the capacity for learning.

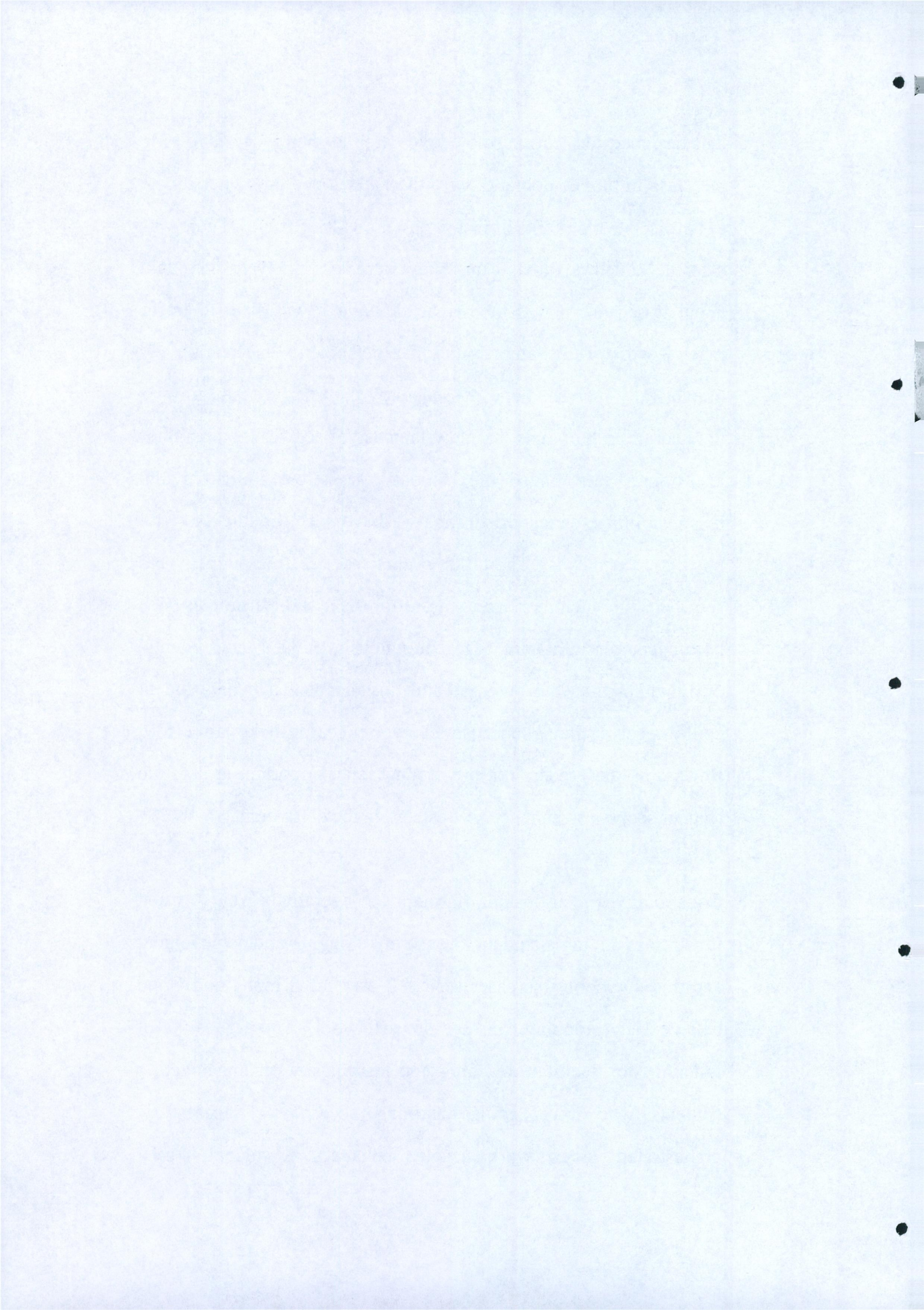
It is a pedagogical fallacy that students’ lack of effort in the classroom derives from their basic lack of underlying motivation as underlying motivation is contextual - it is not fixed or constant - and usually associated with ownership and this is vital in improving self-esteem in the classroom. A fundamental principal of motivation is that students are invariably more interested by learning situations that they have control over and that they themselves set the learning goals. This helps the student recognise “the value of the need as well as the want”.<sup>32</sup> In the author’s teaching he decided to actively involve the students in designing the projects that they were going to work on during the year. The author was aware of the Piagetian concept of learning through activity and direct experience.<sup>33</sup> The author asked them as a group what would they like to make as their theme for their projects, they would mention up to ten themes and from these he would find which were most popular (which most or all of the class voted for)





and designed his learning objectives around them. By involving the class in this democratic way they developed an ownership of the projects which in itself is a strong motivating force. There was also the added advantage that they were less likely to complain about it because it was their own idea and it was up to them to make it work. The author found that the students' motivation had dramatically increased and consequently their self-esteem grew as they achieved the goals that they themselves set. This, the author also found, encouraged the students to exercise initiative and responsibilities, characteristics, as we have seen, of students with positive self-images. The tasks, in this case creating puppets, and sets, became much more meaningful for them and learning as such became more significant. He continuously praised the students' effort rather than the outcome and this meant that every student could receive praise because everyone could make an effort. Rewarding the process not the product is an important task of the teacher seeking to enhance self-esteem in the classroom.<sup>34</sup>

Collaborative relationships through co-operative groups often function by giving a student a sense of belonging and achievement and this invariably increases their self-esteem. Brophy and Good believe that "grouping can be a powerful tool" And argues that it functions to "facilitate teaching and learning by placing together students who have similar learning needs".<sup>35</sup> Successfully orchestrated group work usually enhances a student's self-



confidence as no individual's self-esteem is under threat because of the feeling of interdependence, of shared responsibility. Co-operative learning groups, by meeting the students' belonging needs, consequently enhances their capacity to learn. This helps realise Kohn's prerequisites for successful learning to occur in that the student is allowed to connect and relate with others, made to feel that they count, that they matter and make them feel capable by giving them a success identity often for the first time<sup>36</sup>. Such co-operative groups encourage the student to take risks as the groups generally eliminate the fear of failure and the fear of being wrong. As the tasks contain personally relevant goals which they themselves set, they are motivated to learn. It fosters the important sense of ownership which engenders a positive affective climate in which self-esteem can be achieved. Kyriacou believes that such an approach "gives pupils choice and control to manage their own learning."<sup>37</sup>

Too many students go through their schooling with low self-images. The failure identity as we have seen derives from the student internalising negative external messages from significant others as internal beliefs; being reprocessed as "I am a failure". Students need to experience success within their own capabilities so that their self-estimation is positive. Indulgent emotions of the teacher such as "you idiot!" are detrimental to the students self-esteem. Teachers must adopt a positive verbal style that is



characterised by sincere encouragement and effective praise. When the teacher trusts the students and respects them he can empower them with positive self-concepts. The ambience of security that can be engendered by such a positive attitude and approach by the teacher is crucial in enhancing the student's self-esteem. This positive attitude allows the teacher to perpetually communicate positive expectations to the students which helps to reduce the distance between the student's idealised and actualised selves.

The intellectual co-operative experimenting is a method that particularly suits art teaching which undoubtedly aims to encourage such intellectual collaboration. Art education should be established upon beneficial educational experiences that both enrich and enhance the growth of the student. When the teacher creates learning environments in an imaginative way the art experience of the student should impact upon his further imaginative learning experiences and this consequently fosters a deep desire for further cognitive and affective learning experiences. This cannot be achieved through an authoritarian teaching method intent on rejecting such intellectual collaboration. Co-operative learning environments often function to transcend the modern craze of competitive individualism which so characterises modern schooling. Brophy and Good emphasise the need for teachers to communicate the "legitimacy of individual differences



and emphasising individual improvement over peer comparisons."<sup>38</sup> They believe that competition can be useful at times but extreme emphasis on competitive individualism is ultimately detrimental to student achievement. The holistic education mentioned in the White Paper is the only way to demystify the idea that to achieve academically is to be a winner. Art teaching can achieve this by such intellectual collaborations that involve the students in their learning and has beneficial effects on their self-esteem.

Art education has a tremendous capacity to harness the students' creativity and ingenuity as a contribution to schooling.<sup>39</sup> This invariably gives the student a high sense of self-worth. Students can develop self-images which can cope with criticism if the disapproval is not directed at such feeling of self-worth but instead at the effects which their behaviour could have on others. Self-worth must be harnessed in a non-threatening and non-competitive environment as competition is related to conditional self-acceptance. Positive reinforcement provides a stronger motivation and enhances self-esteem while a threatening environment and a sarcastic tongue from the teacher are detrimental to a students' self-image.<sup>40</sup>

Gage and Berliner believe that motivation is what energises us and directs our behaviour".<sup>41</sup> In the absence of any noticeable form of





motivation the dynamic of teaching and learning should try to foster or develop a sense of motivation which is inextricably linked to self-esteem. Students need to feel that they can achieve and what they achieve will have relevance to them. The learning context must be designed by the teacher to ensure that the student can achieve success and that this success will be valued by them. If the teacher can be sensitive to the needs of the students he can help to motivate them and as motivation presupposes a goal, he can promote student commitment to learning goals and consequently enhance their self-image. The teacher needs to ensure that the students value the task so that it is meaningful for them. The task should be at a certain level of difficulty and they should be actively engaged in the learning task. If these are present the students' belief in their ability can be strengthened and they may become intrinsically motivated by the task. The students should be thought that it is the process that they should value rather than the final product. Consequently the learning task is not a means to an end but rather the student appreciates the intrinsic worth of the activity. The task should be challenging, but not too difficult which tend to undermine the student's self-belief. It is a pedagogical reality that challenges prevent student indifference. The teacher needs to diagnose the situation and set up the appropriate learning task. A student's desire to achieve is often dependent upon his/her estimation of his/her chances of success and the value they place on success. If they perceive little chance of success they become



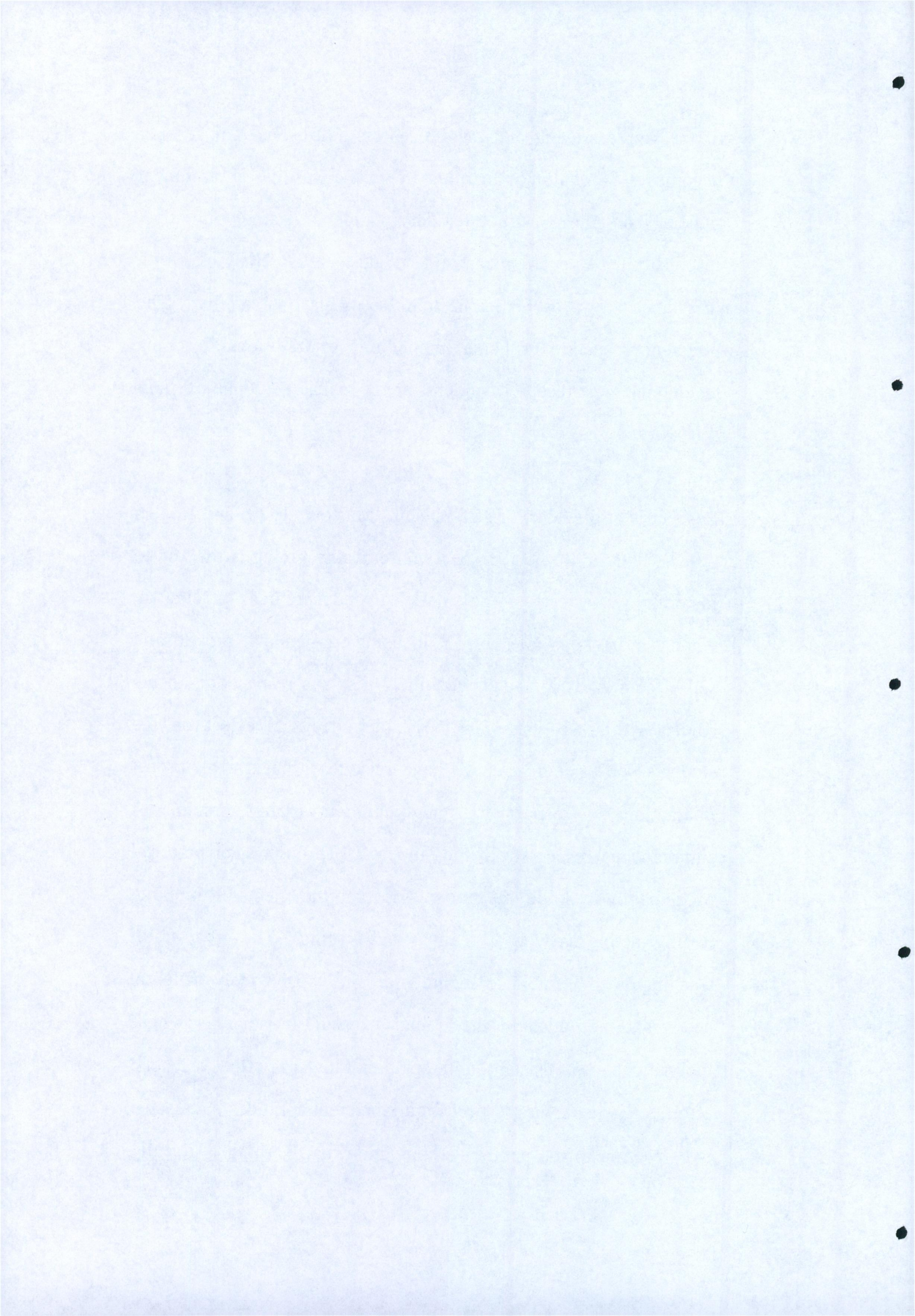
unmotivated and if they do not value success they will not be motivated to achieve. An excessive probability of success may also be detrimental to the students level of motivation. If they perceive a task to be too easy they will not work hard and become apathetic. The corollary can also be true so it is an essential pedagogical task of the teacher to establish moderate probabilities of success so the students work hard as there is a chance of failure. If the teacher succeeds in engaging the student in a personally relevant, challenging goal, this invariably functions to enhance the students self-belief, self-worth and ultimately his self-esteem.

The teacher needs to tap into the students innate ability if he is to actualise his potential. He needs to reduce excessive anxieties and the fear of failure as a fear of failure was for Humphrys a characteristic of a low achieving student with a low self image.<sup>42</sup> Errors should be made an important and acceptable part of learning and indeed mistakes should become opportunities for learning. As students are highly motivated towards peer acceptance, they must not be ridiculed for errors in front of their peers as this destroys the students self-esteem and creates bitterness in the student. The student must be encouraged to take risks in a non-threatening environment. The student must be placed in such a stimulating environment and guided into reflective channels to augment their personal experiences as unguided discovery can only take students so far particularly in the art classroom. This allows for the growth



of the whole student and maximises his self-belief. The teacher becomes a facilitator of learning in such a positive environment rather than an instructor. The student learns initiative, responsibility and is not afraid to take risks. His self-worth inevitably grows as he learns to trust in his own ability. The threatening spectre of harsh impositions of traditional teaching techniques must recede if students are to realise the value of their self-worth.

Respect is at the heart of self-esteem. Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1983), both argued that respect and empathy giving is the key to fostering self-esteem. They both saw education as placing an emphasis on the whole person, focusing on personal growth and self-esteem.<sup>43</sup> If a teacher genuinely displays respect for all his students, this will have an inevitable beneficial effect on the students self-esteem. As we have seen teaching is a reciprocal interaction so respect for the pupils invariably precipitates simultaneous respect from the students. Through such practical participation in doing the students develop the talents of thinking, feeling, acting as well as reading and writing. The great art of teaching is to be able to include students with widely different needs and aptitudes in the doing; particularly students whose inclinations are resistant and apathetic towards the teachers' efforts. By displaying respect for all different aptitudes the teacher is conveying to the pupils his conviction that learning is for all.



The teacher who possesses high expectations for his pupils will invariably communicate this to his students who will subsequently tend to rise to the expectations. This will enhance their self-esteem as everything harmonises from a positive self-image.

The use of effective praise is crucial for the teacher seeking to enhance self-esteem in the classroom. Skinner saw praise as a positive reinforcer which helped to strengthen a target behaviour.<sup>44</sup> Effective praise is a form of positive reinforcement that is designed to encourage and continue on-task behaviour. Praise helps to develop confidence and a positive self-image in students. All students require a sense of their own personal worth and effective praise is a good source of emotional health for them. Teaching should never damage that sense of self-worth but rather always strive to enhance it. Gage and Berliner believe that for praise to be effective it must be delivered contingently, be specific, spontaneous and sustained and must reward effort rather than outcome.<sup>45</sup> Praise needs to be used discriminately if it is to be most effective. When used excessively it loses its effect and an off-hand "well done" does little to improve the student's self-image. Weak students require a lot of praise from the teacher. The praise should always specify a reason for why it has been given and should be extended so that the student appreciates the sincerity of it. Praise does not just mean a positive verbal reinforcement but





includes positive nonverbal reinforcements which encourage the student. When a teacher correctly praises a student's contribution this invariably encourages the student to contribute even more. A good student is usually an encouraged one who is thought by his teacher to believe in (themselves). Praise is a tool that can be used by the teacher to encourage all students.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 4

27. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher p. 110.
28. White Paper, Charting our Educational Future, (Dublin 1995), p. 12.
29. Report on The National Education Convention, (Dublin: Published by The National Education Convention Secretariat 1994), p. 34.
30. *ibid.*, p.73.
31. Brown, Armstrong and Thompson, Motivating Students, (London: Staff and Educational Development series, 1988) p.32.
32. Bieler and Snowman Psychology Applied to Teaching, p. 73.
33. *ibid.*, p. 75.
34. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher p. 113.
35. Brophy and Good , Looking in Classrooms, 4th Edition (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) P. 56.
36. Glasser, R Schools Without Failure (New York: Harper and row, 1969) p. 51.



37. Kyriacou, Essential Teaching Skills p. 73.
38. Brophy and Good, Looking in Classrooms, p. 294.
39. White Paper, Charting our Educational Future, p. 12.
40. Rogers, B. You Know The Fair Rule, (Australia:2nd Edition, Rutledge, 1992) p. 70.
41. Gage and Berliner, Motivation & Learning p.379.
42. Tony Humphreys, A Different Kind of Teacher p. 23.
43. Kyriacou, Essential Teaching Skills p. 73.
44. Bieler and Snowman Psychology Applied to Teaching, p.282.
45. Gage and Berliner, Motivation & Learning p.370.



## CHAPTER 5

## THE ART CLASSROOM:

ENCOURAGEMENT APPLIED TO THE ART CLASSROOM  
ENVIRONMENT

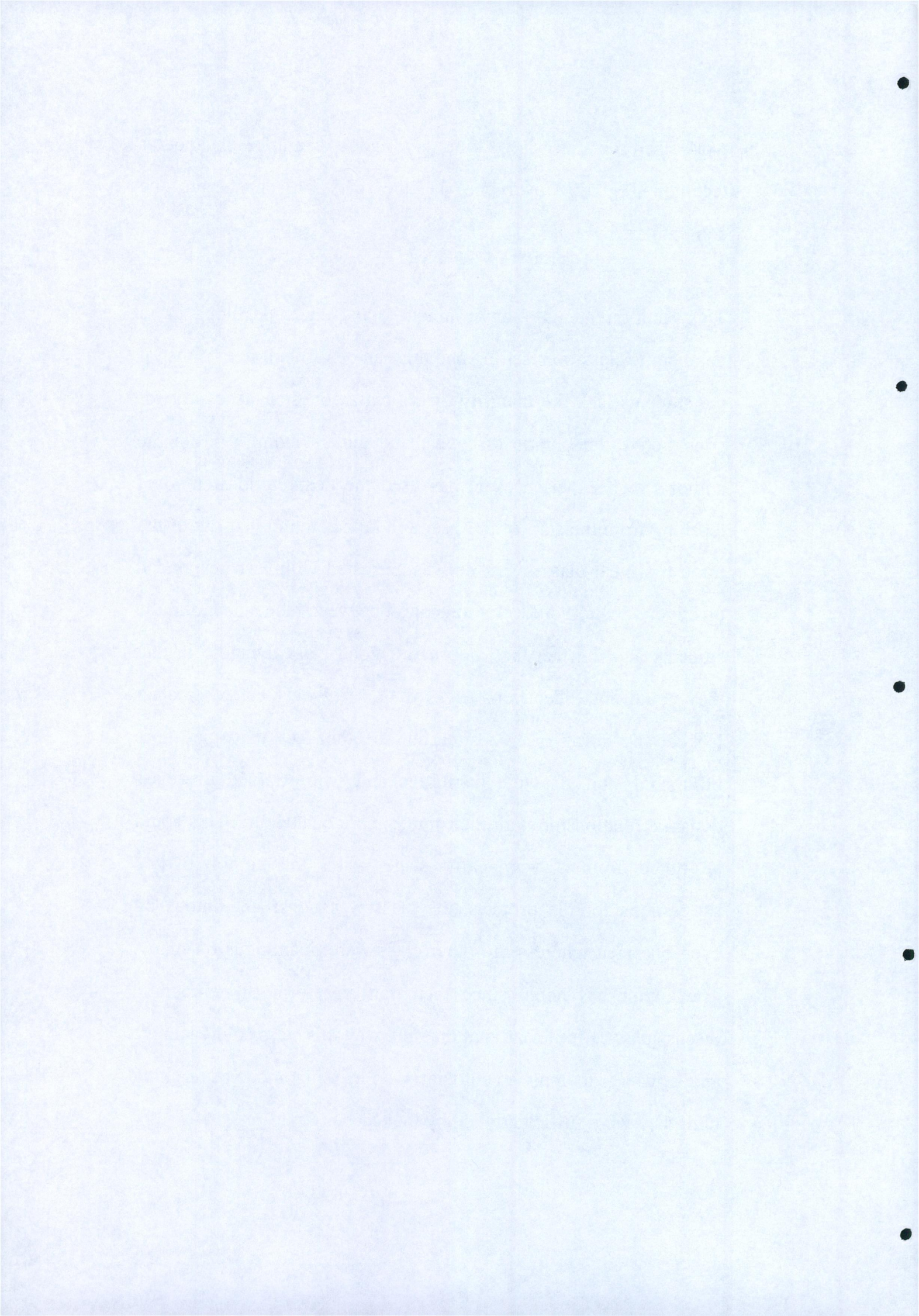
The art classroom holds a very particular place within the total school environment and this is mainly due to the essentially liberal nature of the creative process. An art classroom environment by its very nature needs to embody a degree of freedom of movement and ideas to fulfil its primary purpose of equipping the student with the plastic skills of self expression. Encouragement within such an environment would seem an essential feature in the pedagogical responsibilities of the teacher. For many students the art classroom can be a threatening environment because it may challenge a number of skills which maybe they are not yet equipped to handle. If this is the case, the art teacher has to find a way of encouraging as much development of skills through process centred activities which lay little emphasis on the finished product. Such activities develop skills in a non-threatening environment where only positive accomplishment are pointed out, while taking care to get around to every student on a regular basis. In this way if student (a) during an evaluation sees student (b)'s work held up as an example of how it should be done, and his is not the same then he can take note of this privately without a public humiliation whereas when the teacher gets around to showing student (a)'s





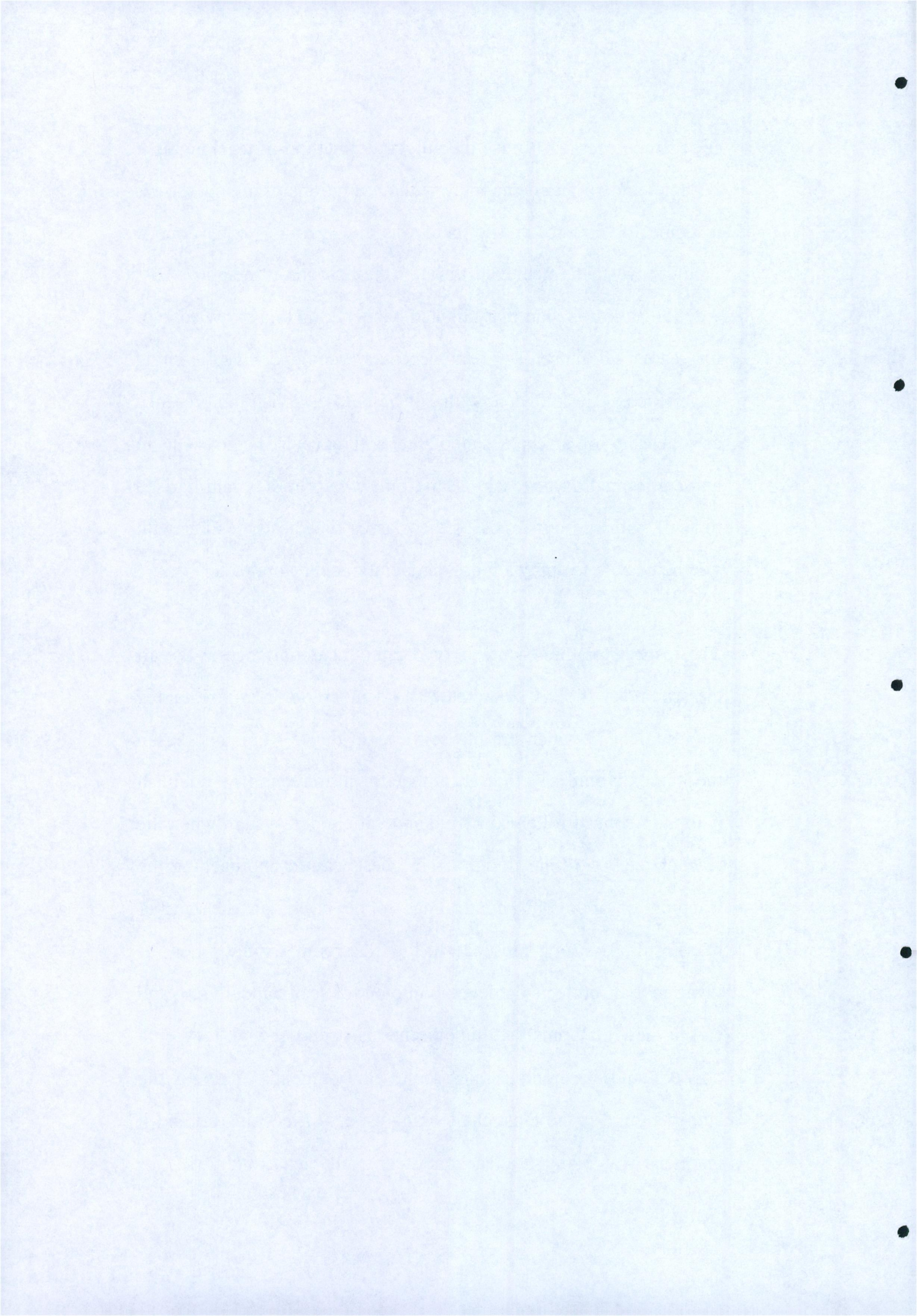
work then he can show him as a good example of another technique, giving everyone in the class a chance to be congratulated.

This non-threatening environment can only develop in a democratic classroom setting and this can be difficult to establish if the students lack the maturity or the class cohesion necessary for constructive democratic discourse and understanding. From the author's own experience, he has used the democratic method of teaching from the start of the year and he has found that out of the three first year classes that he was entrusted with, two responded positively due to good communication between the teacher and the students and the fact that they had a good class dynamic in that they could make decisions as a group. However the other class lacked any form of cohesion due to the fact that the more influential students were disruptive and who strained the class dynamic relationship with their undesirable behaviour. This could be noted from a very early stage when the author invited suggestions for the projects, the class was never unanimous on even one idea whereas the other class were unanimous on many. The author has noted since then that any form of democratic discussion was futile and that the only way this class could achieve any work was to apply an autocratic, no messing, mode of teaching until they were sufficiently led by the teacher.



It became necessary to use the autocratic method of teaching as it became evident that democracy without a rational thinking class is a recipe for disaster and if there was any learning to be done it would have to be achieved through the autocratic method. In a way the author is glad that this had happened at this early stage of his career because it is a necessary and positive learning experience. He knows now that if he is to establish his presence as a teacher of art in a school, he will have to begin with an autocratic method of teaching and only when he has familiarised himself with the dynamics of the classes that he is dealing with will he be able to apply a more democratic, open approach.

The respect for the teacher is of paramount importance in the art classroom if he is to create a democratic non-threatening environment in which art and self-esteem thrive. For this reason the author would say that an autocratic introduction to establish who is in control followed by a democratic, open system when the teacher feels the time is right is the best way to approaching the teaching of art. This control has to be based on the teacher manifesting a strong presence in the classroom so that when, as invariably art projects do develop into out of seat manoeuvring and exciting new materials that his presence is strong enough to keep a positive and harmonious classroom environment. This to the author's mind is the most challenging aspect of teaching art and it is often why many art teachers steer well clear of any 3D or



'messy' activities for fear that it will only end up a mess with both students and teacher disillusioned in the end. This is an area of the art syllabus which has been rightly identified as needing urgent attention in the White Paper. It is in this area that the author hopes to establish an important emphasis, because it is an area which as the author has mentioned is being unfortunately avoided by some. If the situation continues as it is then there will be a large part of the art syllabus relatively discounted because it causes too much trouble for the teacher when such active engagement is an essential part of the art syllabus.

As a solution to this problem of control in the classroom, encouraging self-esteem must play a leading role. For as we have established if there is to be an improvement in behaviour then the raising of self-esteem is an essential prerequisite.

In the case of working in clay with a class of first year boys, the temptation to throw the clay around the room is very strong and only if the teacher has a sufficiently strong presence in the classroom can this be avoided. From the author's own experience of such a class, he caught four students indulging in the latter activity and due to the presence he had established with this class this misbehaviour was quickly stopped. The author knows that if he was to attempt such an activity with a class in which his presence was not as strong, that this would result in misbehaviour

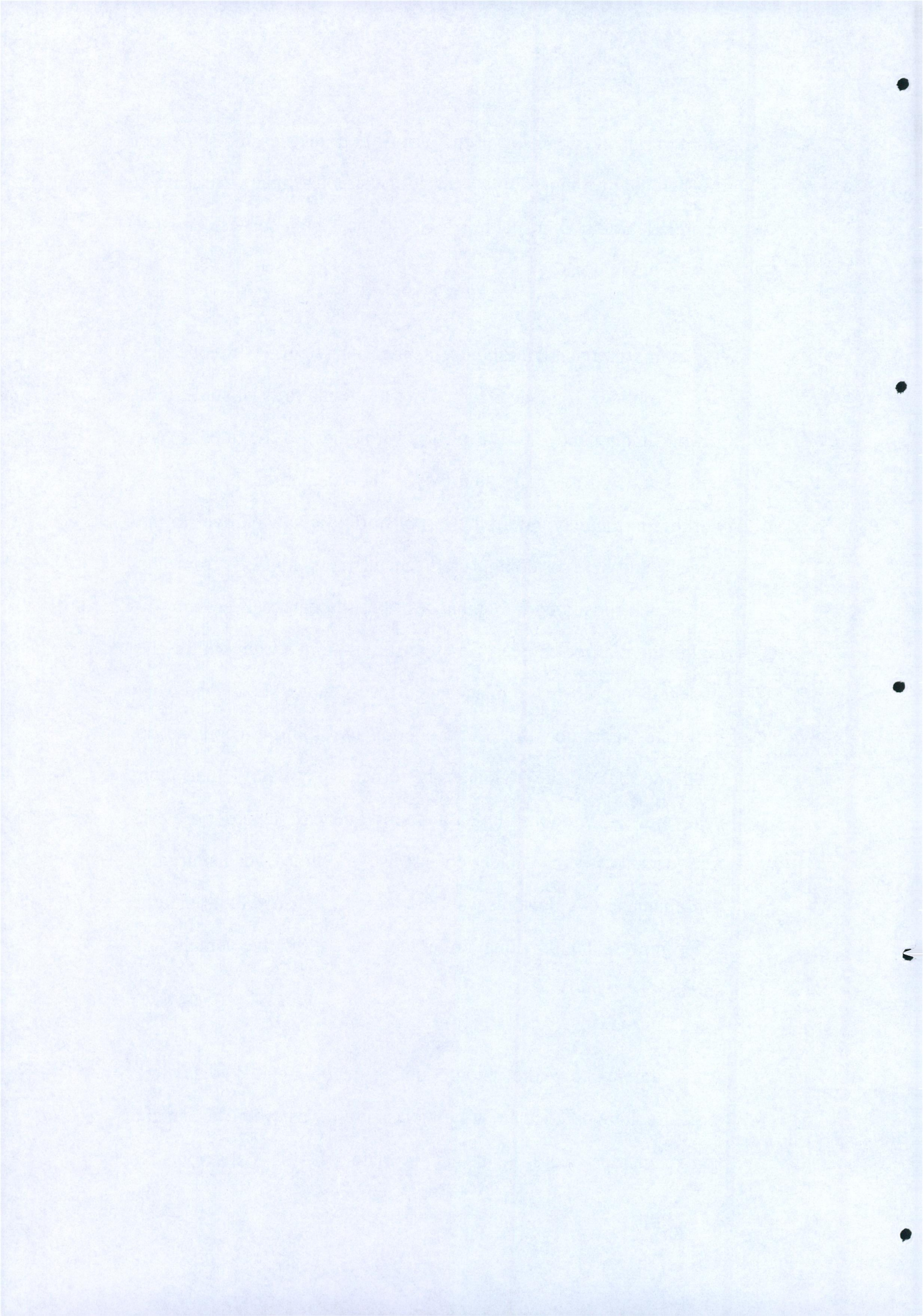


ending in disillusionment on the part of both teacher and students. It is here that we must apply a discipline structure that establishes a positive learning atmosphere which enhances both self-esteem and good behaviour.

It is in this area that the establishment of behavioural consequences can be applied. If the desired activity of the majority of students is to work in clay, they must be clearly warned that if the rules set out are not adhered to totally then they will be denied the privilege of working in the clay. Here the responsibility is handed over to the student and by so doing, the teacher frees himself from the judgmental position and enhances the students self-esteem by giving them a free choice. Here the stimulation is from within, the student does not want to misbehave because he will be denied what he wishes if he does so. Here nobody is forcing anybody to do anything, but if they violate the order, they know that their behaviour will produce unpleasant consequences. There is a clear, free decision being made consisting of choice, decision and consequence. As Balson says "The logic of the social and natural order impress the individual rather than the authoritative demands of another"<sup>46</sup>

An example how the author put a recommended discipline structure into practice in his art classroom was when he caught some students indulge in inappropriate off-task behaviour by



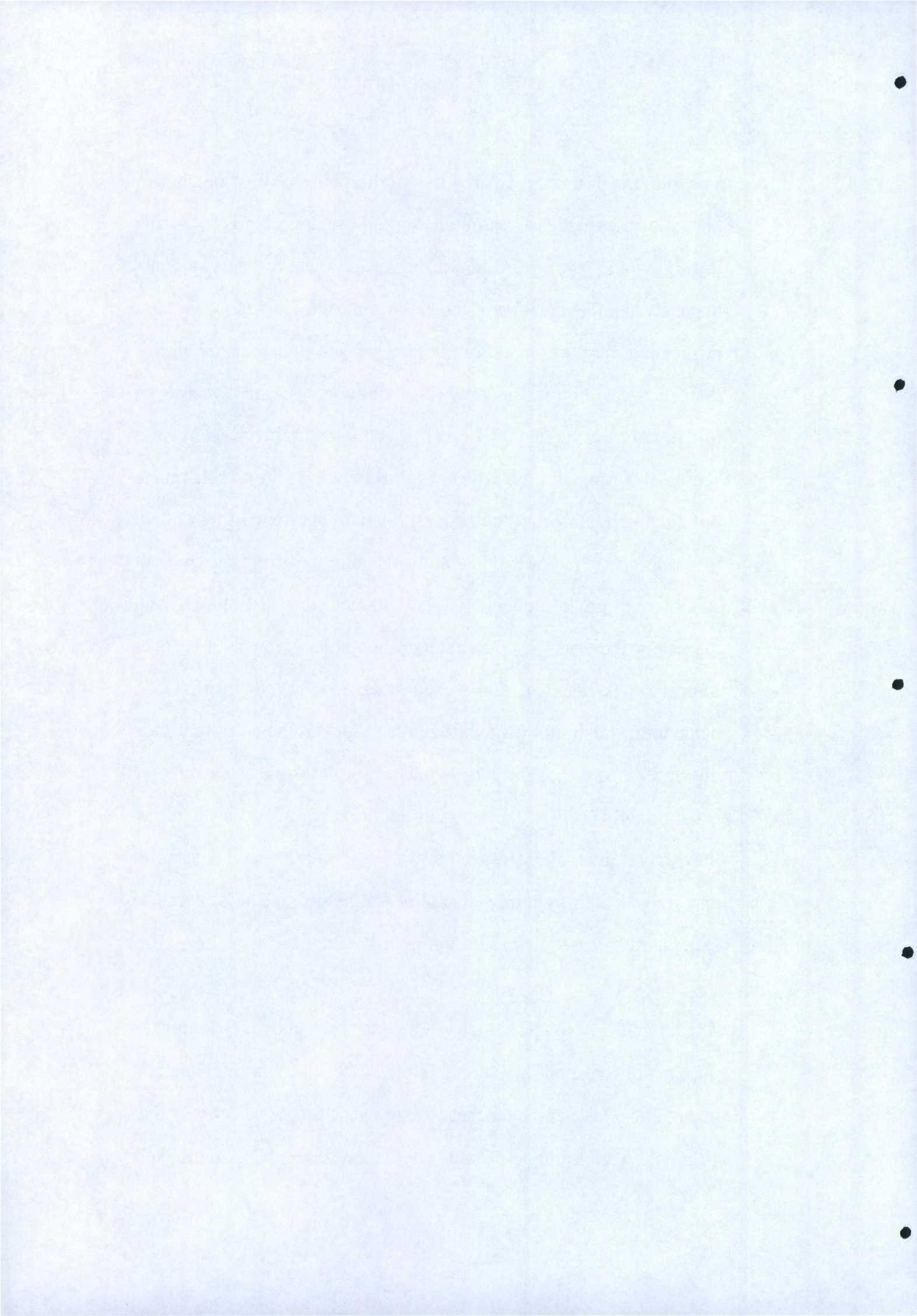


throwing clay around the room. He quickly assessed the situation and fully aware that the whole class was waiting for my reaction, he decided that a minimal approach was most appropriate. It would be all too easy to lose his temper and shout at the misbehaving students; such a temptation always exists but this usually escalates the problem rather than defusing it. What the author felt he needed to do here was examine his reactions and keep his emotions in check. He felt that if he was to create an ambience of security and encouragement in the class, he could undermine this by a flash of anger. He sensed that the least intervention necessary, that would encourage a change in behaviour was to use his presence in the classroom to let the misbehaving students and the rest of the class know that this behaviour would not be tolerated. Without saying anything, the author decided to isolate and defuse the situation by beckoning the students over while telling the rest of the class to continue their work. Without saying anything to them, he looked at them disapprovingly and waited for them to speak. Sure enough they quickly expressed their regret and they started to clean up immediately. The author praised this attitude while letting them know that he would not tolerate such behaviour again. This example shows that both discipline and encouragement can harmoniously co-exist in a classroom environment intent upon enhancing the students self-esteem and avoiding situations or confrontations that can damage this self-esteem.



The author felt that he created the vital ambience of ownership in the art classes which is essential for self-esteem to thrive. At the beginning of the year he decided to involve the students themselves in the creation of the classroom rules, so that when they misbehave they are breaking their own rules. His reasoning was that such an approach would essentially encourage a sense of initiative in the students. He feels that this invariably gives them a sense of responsibility which is linked to positive self-image building. He collected the suggestions and shortened them down to respect teacher, the other students and the property of both school and other students. They agreed that a student who interrupts the class should be punished, but given a chance to improve. Whenever the students have engaged in off task behaviour, the author always reminded them of the rules that they all agreed on. This has worked for most of the classes exceptionally well as the students feel that the class is theirs, so they have invariably respected it. The author has constantly encouraged them within a disciplined structure and this works to safeguard their self-concepts and improve their self-esteem.

The Socratic heritage, which views teaching and questioning as inextricably related activities, implies that it is a fundamental pedagogical task of the teacher to employ questions effectively that stimulate a wide range of cognitive responses.<sup>47</sup> The author has



approached his teaching with the understanding that thinking itself is learning which reflects the idea that the art of questioning is the art of guiding learning. He feels that he has successfully employed appropriate questions in the class which have ensured a varied intellectual atmosphere which has facilitated the active involvement of the students in the learning, so much recommended by the White Paper. This precipitated a very effective and powerful learning environment characterised by high student achievement which has obvious beneficial effects on their levels of self-esteem. The author's approach he believes, successfully stimulated the required range of cognitive responses that have encouraged the students to analyse their own thinking: a key recommendation of the White Paper.



## FOOTNOTES CHAPTER 5

46. Maurice Balson, Understanding Classroom Behaviour  
p. 130
47. Morgan & Saxton Teaching, Questioning and Learning  
(Rutledge: 1991) p. 67.





## CHAPTER 6

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation has examined Behaviour Modification in the art classroom and the role of encouragement. Chapter II examined the nature of self-esteem and how it originates. Humphreys asserted that the fundamental causes of self-esteem lay primarily in the "early experiences of childhood". He believes that we look into "Cooleys looking glass" and develop an image of ourselves from our interaction with significant adults in our life when we were young. This has profound effects on our later levels of self-esteem and that Lawrence argued that such internalisation of other peoples views of us is a life long process. He believes that the disparity between the ideal-self and the actual-self is an indication of our level of self-esteem, when this disparity is large our self-esteem is invariably low. Because of the ostensible gravity of self-esteem, Kyriacou highlighted the increased awareness among teachers of the internal importance of enhancing a students self-esteem in the classroom and the importance of positive intrapersonal relationships and a positive affective classroom environment in achieving this goal.

Chapter III looked at the concept of behaviour modification and its significance for the art classroom, it drew on Erikson's idea that an



optimal sense of identity for a student can provide him with a "sense of psychological well being". The essence of the chapter could be said to lie in Kyriacou's idea that the teacher must convince the student that "I am not my behaviour," which helps the student to separate his identity from his behaviour in order to enhance their self-esteem. The chapter analysed how much student behaviour is ultimately a "search for significance, for identification, for acceptance" and how this is often played out in a group context. Certain characteristics of students with low self-esteem were examined drawing upon Humphrey's work. The fundamental ineffectiveness of punishment as an improver of behaviour was shown drawing upon the work of Kyriacou and this has been borne out by the present authors own experience. Skinner's idea of behaviour modification was examined in great depth. The idea consisted of the use of positive reinforcement to strengthen and reinforce a particular behaviour by presenting a stimulus immediately after the behaviour occurred. The idea was basically to reward good behaviour while ignoring undesirable behaviour, thus only giving the student attention for on task behaviour. The teacher was basically catching the student being good rather than when he is misbehaving. Behaviour modification was recommended but only when the teachers attempts to reason with the student failed. Some problems with behavioural modification were highlighted, namely the difficulty in its application. The teacher must be absolutely consistent in his



application of rewards if he is not to unwittingly reinforce undesired behaviour.

Chapter IV looked at the role of encouragement in improving self-esteem in the classroom. The present author has tried to implement these recommendations in his classroom, attempting to create Glassers "caring" classroom environment. The author believes strongly in showing that the teacher cares about them and he has experienced the benefits of such an approach. The author employed the active learning methods advocated by the White Paper and championed by Piaget, and has been astounded at the benefits such an approach incurs. This chapter looked at the concept of motivation and how involving the students in the creation of their learning goals invariably enhances their motivation to learn. The use of co-operative learning groups was strongly recommended as a means to involving the students in their work and teaching them initiative and responsibility. Again the benefits of such an approach have been experienced by the present author in his art classroom, primarily an interest in the subject from the pupils that is self-fulfilling for the teacher the role of praise was examined and extremely recommended as a means of enhancing student self-esteem. Gage and Berlirer's characteristics of effective praise were looked at and also borne out by the author's own experiences. Maslow's idea of respect was looked at and was shown to be extremely important.



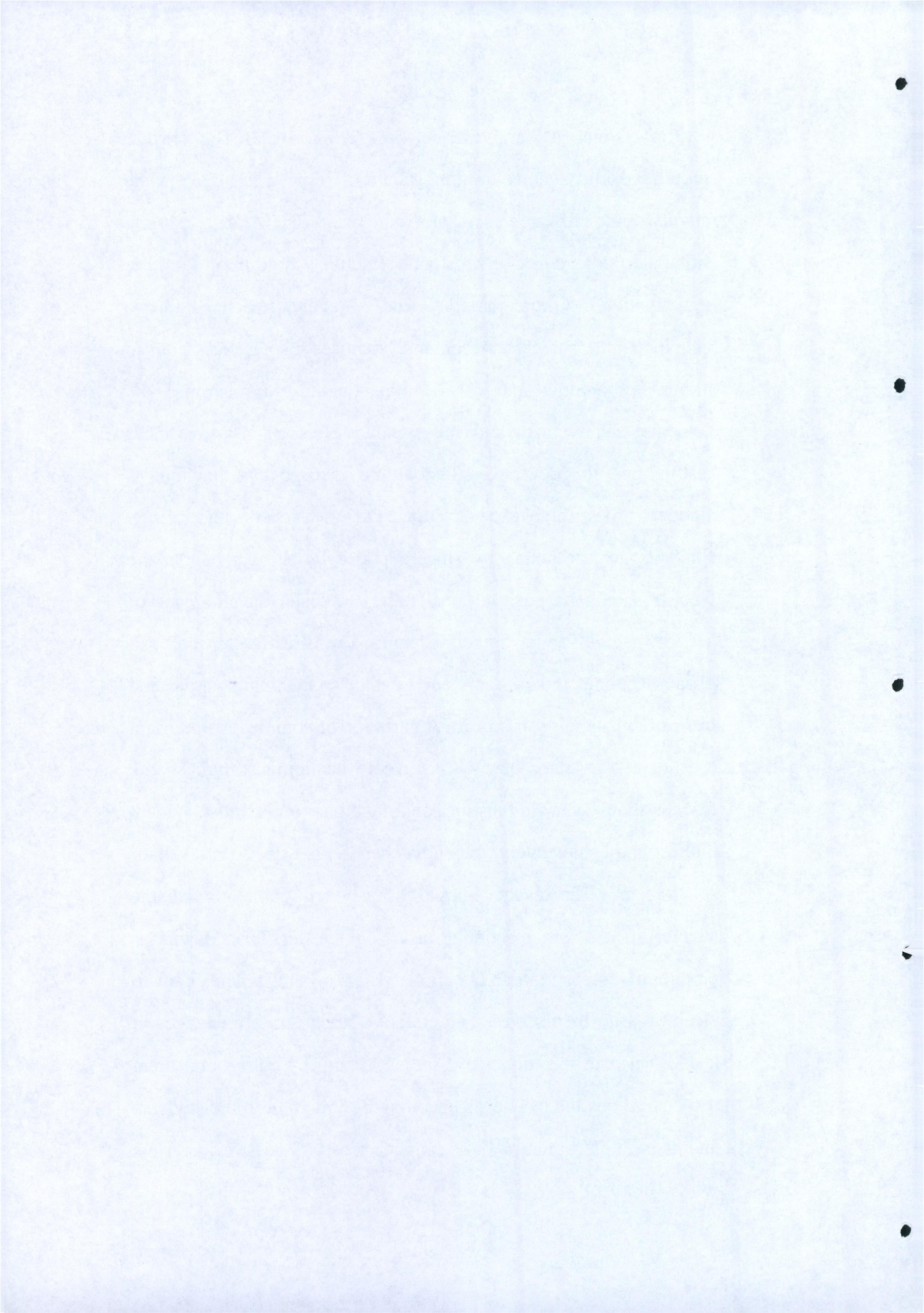
Chapter V looked at the application of the key concepts of self-esteem to the authors art classroom. The teachers own experiences were drawn upon and it was shown how he had to learn by experience the most effective way to approach his class. The authors use of active involvement was looked at and also how such a democratic method did not suit all of his classes. The authors own experience of behavioural difficulties in the classroom as examined and his responses scrutinised. An approach of minimising was recommended whereby the teacher employs the least intervention necessary in order not to escalate a problem he is attempting to defuse.

Self-esteem can, as we have seen be enhanced in a diverse number of ways by the teacher. Emphatic and non-evaluative listening by the teacher is highly recommended. Positive interpersonal relationships can appropriately facilitate a discipline without tears. this dissertation has argued that student engagement in lessons and activities is the key to successful classroom management and the creation of a positive classroom environment that is conducive to positive self-image building. A disciplined educational environment is a supportive environment. By increasing the students on task behaviour the teacher is encouraging achievement which simultaneously minimises disruptive behaviour and enhances self-esteem. When students are engaged in instructional activities they themselves helped set up, their motivation levels

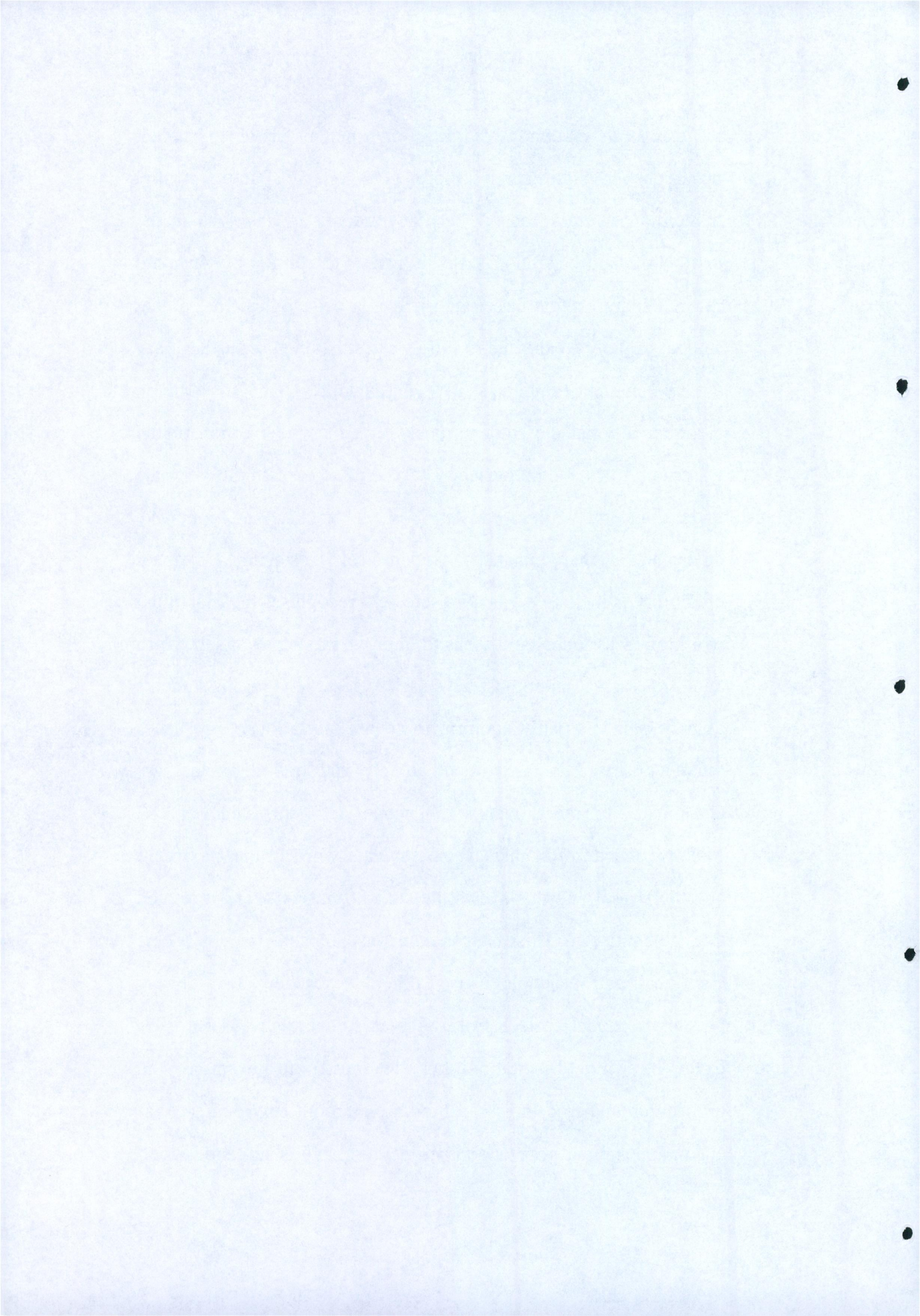




invariably increase and the self-image improves. The teacher should work to achieve an atmosphere of respect, to maintain the dignity and self-esteem of the students. The teacher should stimulate the students' interest and effectively hold their attention by positive reinforcement. The effective teacher always anticipates the students' needs and organises his/her classroom to minimise boredom and off task behaviour and maximise the students' achievement and self-esteem. He/she must give clear instructions to prevent confusion and disruptive behaviour as students invariably take advantage of a teachers uncertainty. Students are motivated by sincere praise by the teacher so the teacher should be positive at all times to foster an ambience of security which is vital to self-esteem. The effective teacher will always channel the students energy into something positive and this improves their self-worth. A variation of stimulus is important as students are particularly sensitive to changing stimuli so the teacher should vary his instructional methods to maximise student interest and achievement, which has beneficial effects on levels of self-esteem. The teacher should whenever possible involve the student in the organisational tasks of the lesson and this is particularly appropriate in the art classroom where students have to clean up after themselves. The effective teacher rarely engages in tasks that can be done by students and by assigning them responsibilities the teacher is encouraging initiative in the students and also helping them realise a higher sense of self-worth. Thus



the teacher is creating a learning environment in which student behaviour is significantly more goal directed and potential disruption is minimised. When the students are involved in the instruction and operation tasks it fosters a sense of ownership recommended in this dissertation. It is a pedagogical reality that student cannot be expected to follow rules that they see as arbitrary as this challenges their sense of freedom. This dissertation recommends that the students be involved in the creation of the classroom rules and that teachers take time to explain the rationale underlying the rules chosen. This creates a supportive environment that enhances student self-esteem. Teacher credibility is increased when he sincerely recognises the individual worth of each student and seeks to improve this sense of self worth at all times. A teacher must have high expectations for his students as they will invariably conform to such expectations. A teacher must work at reducing student anxiety and frustration that are detrimental to the students self-image and self-esteem. The effective teacher will display the students work in the classroom and the school and this shows the student that his work is valued and celebrated. This has tremendous impact on a students emotional and psychological health. A teacher must always personally model correct procedures as students always learn by example. This dissertation has attempted to examine the procedures involved in establishing a classroom environment that encourages mutual respect and co-operation and is and is designed



fundamentally to strengthen each students own sense of self-worth  
and ultimately their self-esteem.



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