Attachment and Relationship

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**Before structuring the processes for guides, what might attachment theory research suggest?**

In this chapter I focus on the way the adolescent’s mentalisation and self-agency might be best promoted in the context of the school, emphasising the establishment of a secure base for adolescent learners. The most important element in structuring the dialogue between the guide and learner remains the establishment, maintenance and management of a quality relationship between the learner and the guide. In Knox’s (2013) terms relating to therapy, the conditions of affect regulation, mentalisation and self-agency need to be recognised within the relationship of the learner and the guide. Importantly, within Knox’s (2003) framework of attachment theory it is vital for people to attain a mental maturity, to be able to develop their own personal narrative, be intentional by setting goals and plans, be able to reflect on their performance and make appropriate changes, before they can individuate. That is, to become capable of making decisions formulated on the needs of self while considering others and the wider community.

**Attachment theory and relationship**

In this section I concentrate on the work of Phillip Riley (2011). While Riley was largely researching attachment and teachers he, of necessity, gave focus to the student-teacher relationship. He begins his work by saying that education is about the 3R’s (relationship, relationship and relationship). Riley uses Carl Rogers and the person-centred approach to teaching to provide empirical support and follows up with confirming research. Within his own experience as a trained teacher and professional counsellor, Riley is struck with the similarity of the issues facing both sets of professionals who work with young people. He makes the very good point that teachers do not get professional training in relational understanding or skill development in this area. This was brought home by both reviews (Ocean 2002, Henry et al 2003) of the Advocacy Project in the Later Years and Middle School Programs.

The secure base is important for the realisation of potential. The school, I argue, should be attending to the establishment of secure base as an organisation priority, as its absence for the students and the teachers may lead to individual and collective underachievement. If care and empathy are not provided within the secure base the ability of those within the organisation to explore and learn will be curtailed.
This may well be a message for those in the bureaucracy as they load more and more accountability onto schools with little understanding or empathy about how schools may achieve the results. Certainly Riley concludes that the teachers who are supported by the school administration will feel they have a secure base to work from and will therefore show more empathy and caring (2011: 129). While it is obvious that the vast expenditure in education on teachers ensures that they are the most important resource in schools, the OECD (2009) report on Australian teachers found that:

- Eighty-three per cent of teachers report that the evaluation of their work has no impact on the likelihood of their career advancement.
- Sixty-three per cent of Australian teachers report that teacher evaluation is largely completed simply to fulfil administrative requirements. This figure is slightly higher in government schools (69%) where fulfilling administrative requirements is reported as the main factor behind teacher evaluation rather than developing teachers and improving instruction.

These findings are not indicative of an environment that engenders a secure and productive base where the work of teachers is valued.

Riley, a teacher educator, concludes that attachment theory has largely remained in the field of psychology, laments this and aims to show why it ought be more understood and used within education. Although Riley’s recent search of the literature on attachment and education revealed over 300 studies this century (Riley 2011: 131), the vast majority were focussed on measurement of the relationship between attachment style or type, and academic results. This is not the focus of this thesis.

Riley believes that understanding attachment theory will give teachers a much better grounding in relationship building. He emphasises the importance of the secure base for students within the classroom because a lack of a secure base is a predictor of aggression. Finally, Riley argues for a much closer relationship between psychology and teaching as this relationship between psychology and teaching may yield valuable tools.

In defining the difference between attachment and attachment behaviour Riley, following Bowlby (1979), describes attachment as “the bond felt by the care seeker for a particular individual who is thought by the care seeker to be 'Better able to cope with the world'” (Bowlby 1988a: 27). Attachment theory describes the various behaviours the care-seeker displays in staying close to the caregiver. Riley uses Bowlby to provide a statement of why a care-seeker might display certain behaviours. Nevertheless, for a person to know that an attachment figure is available and responsible gives them a strong and pervasive feeling of security, and so encourages them to value and continue the relationship.
This affectional bond is the basis upon which the baby forms all other relationships including, later, the teacher-student relationship. Riley goes on to assert that researchers have found that attachment is not static but, in fact, remains a powerfully robust influence on current and subsequent relationships.

Riley goes on to describe the development of working models in children who, working from a secure base, are able to explore and reflect and develop a sense of their world and their place within it. By the age of three a child is able to form reciprocal relationships and uses a range of strategies to remain close to the care-giver. The attachment and relationship formed in childhood is a model which remains relatively stable into adulthood.

Secure base for learners
As stated above, for most humans to learn and develop they require a secure base from which to develop. Bowlby (1979) states that a healthy personality functioning at every age reflects, first, an individual’s ability to recognise suitable figures willing and able to provide a secure base and, second, an ability to collaborate with such a figure in mutually rewarding relationships. Bowlby suggests that:

...findings enable us to understand also why the accessibility of parents and their willingness to respond provides an infant, a child, an adolescent, and a young adult with conditions in which he feels secure and with a base from which he feels confident to explore. They cast light too on the way that, from adolescence onwards, other trusted figures can come to provide similar services. (1979: 148)

This secure base coupled with encouragement and respect for a child’s autonomy provides the conditions in which he or she can best grow.

In a review of the literature on adolescence and attachment theory (Doyle 1999) found that secure attachment during adolescence is related to: fewer mental health problems including lower levels of depression, anxiety and feelings of personal inadequacy; reduced likelihood of substance abuse, antisocial aggressive behaviour, and risky sexual activity; managing the transition to high school more successfully; enjoyment of more positive relationships with family and peers; and, less concern about loneliness and social rejection. These findings are very similar to those reported by Osterman (2000) in her literature review on engagement and connection to schooling.

At the heart of the relationship between a guide and a learner in the model being developed, is the need for trust to be established, for this is the foundation of the secure base for the learner. The establishment and maintenance of a secure base appears to be at the heart of providing the best conditions for young people to grow. As Riley found, “the set goal of attachment is ‘felt security’” (2011: 117). It could be
argued, therefore, that schools should provide an environment in which the trusted adults can provide a secure base for young people to grow. Bowlby gives his explanation of the importance of the concept of a ‘secure base’:

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\text{Evidence is accumulating that human beings of all ages are happiest and able to deploy their talents to best advantage when they are confident that, standing behind them, there are one or more trusted persons who will come to their aid should difficulties arise. The person trusted, also known as an attachment figure (Bowlby 1969), can be considered as providing his (or her) companion with a secure base from which to operate. (1979: 124) }
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Further to this, Waters, Crowell, Elliott, Corcoran, and Treboux (2002) provide this explanation of Bowlby and Ainsworth’s work on secure base:

\[
\text{This secure base control system provided both infants and adults with the capacity to use one or a few primary figures as a secure base from which to explore and, as necessary, as a haven of safety in retreat. With the emergence of representational skills, every individual constructs mental representations of their own secure base experience. Such representations conserve the lessons of past experience and yet remain open to revision in light of significant new experience. (2002: 5) }
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Critically, Bowlby has suggested (1979) that the requirement of a secure base is not confined to children but is required by adolescents and mature adults.

Bowlby argues that two influences are at work in the development of personality. The first is the external presence (or absence) partial or total, of a trustworthy figure willing and able to provide the kind of secure base required at each stage of the life cycle. The second is the internal presence which is the ability of the person to recognise that someone is trustworthy and willing to provide a base, and then to have an ability to collaborate with that person in a way that a mutually rewarding relationship is initiated and maintained. These two elements interact and patterns are established and this is why the early patterns of family life are crucial for the healthy development of personality.

The concept of secure base is developed by the caregiver being predictable and consistently meeting the needs of the child, producing working models that build confidence in the world in which the child lives. The care giver needs to be empathetic and allow the child the freedom to explore and develop a sense of independent operation within their world. The child builds confidence and enjoys the sense of exploration, freedom and sense of self. Riley (2011) uses Winnicot’s work (as cited in Riley 2011) to describe the process of the caregiver failing to give the empathetic response the child wants. If the child
has to fend for him or herself too much, the exploration becomes unfulfilling, dangerous or worse, and soon the child loses curiosity about their world as they learn not to venture out. This has serious implications for the child and their teachers in later life. The development of the secure base is seen as the central tenet of good parenting. It is an imperative in establishing an environment that a child experiences.

As the child explores their world they build up inner working models of how to deal with the objects and experiences that have entered their life. These inner working models described by Knox (2003) and Kelly (1955) are the basis of the predictive model that comes from secure attachment. While I am not going to pursue the types or styles of attachment in this thesis it is enough to say that research suggests that the secure child is one who can separate from home easily and find a secure base at school and commence explorations in new learning environments. The insecurely attached child will spend much time either waiting for the care giver to reappear or in seeking to build a secure relationship with the teacher as a substitute care giver.

Riley has shown that adult attachment styles match those of childhood. The major point being made by Riley is that teachers need a secure base to work from so that they can best achieve the professional results. When we place the adolescent in the school setting we know that they are going through massive change physically, mentally, socially and emotionally and neurologically. We know that they face social challenges in dealing with new power bases outside the control of the normal ‘agencies’ of influence (parents, schools, law, churches, etc.) as the forces of social media impact on the lives of young people and peer to peer contact occurs often within the cyber environment. It can be argued that, in order to succeed at school, adolescents need a secure base to work from, particularly at a time when they are changing their attachment allegiance from parents to peers and are egocentrically focussed (Fuller 2006; Garvey Berger 2006).

Consequently, there is a need to establish a new way of thinking about the best arrangement for ensuring that a secure base is established for each individual student. My experience across secondary schools suggests that they struggle to offer a one-to-one relationship to individual students as they organise their teaching resources to ensure coverage of each class or group in order to meet legal obligations and implied or real accountability standards. It may be time for schools to ask different questions about how to establish the best outcomes for students, particularly when they assess the needs of the adolescents they are serving. When a secure organisational base is established, which includes ensuring that teachers are working within an environment they perceive as secure and rewarding, the teacher might then be able to work with the student to better connect them to their learning, provide a sense of belonging to the learning environment and establish the essential long term professional relationship. This relationship is aimed at creating an autonomous learner whose curiosity about their world is
aroused. The secure adolescent is better able to construct meaning by bringing into conscious focus, aspects of life as a learner that may remain undiscovered at a personal level.

This thesis focuses attention on establishing a one–to-one relationship, rather than the organisational aspects of schools. The most effective way to establish the one-to-one relationship is to focus on the development of the reflective function of the learner, developing positive inner working models for the students in relation to learning and dealing positively with the number of personal challenges the student may face over the period of secondary schooling.

**Teachers to be guides**

Throughout the thesis I have referred to ‘guides’ for adolescents, as the research suggested that adolescents were particularly vulnerable, due to the significant amount of challenges they face in the adolescent years. Research on relationships, attachment, secure base, and dialogue would suggest that the person best able to assist adolescent learners through these challenges is someone who is going to be able to offer an ongoing one-to-one relationship. Since young adolescence are required by law to attend school until 16 years of age the best person (outside the family) to guide them through these years to reach their maximum potential is a teacher.

Teachers have some training and understanding of developmental models. They are focused on teaching the content of the curriculum and understand learning models. Teachers are a constant in a young adolescent’s life. Teachers, I am suggesting, could provide a closer relationship and a dialogue around notions of learning than currently their role in secondary education suggests, even though the role of teacher stipulates that teachers have to demonstrate knowledge of their pupils (VIT 2013). The role of a teacher-guide has been well established in ‘The Advocacy Project’ (Ocean 2000; Henry et al. 2003). A number of meta-analyses concerning engagement of students in schooling (Lawson & Lawson 2013; Martin & Dowson 2009; Brooks et al. 2007) support the central notion of a caring adult, outside the family, in a one-to-one relationship with the adolescent and the importance this can have on attitudes to schooling, their learning progress and their likelihood of completing schooling.

Further “(t)here is evidence to suggest that young people ‘at risk’ are most likely to be assisted when the approach to front-line practice is person-centred, inclusive of natural networks, responsive and flexible, inquiry oriented and institutionally supported. Crucial in the implementation of these practices is a joined-up response from both educational and human services spheres if young people considered ‘at risk’ are to be supported effectively” (Crane & Livock 2012: 51). The Lawson and Lawson (2013) meta-analyses and the Advocacy Project Reviews by Ocean and Cauley 1999, Ocean 2000, Henry et al 2002 all support the view that role of teacher can be central to the establishment of a supportive one-to-one relationship. Hutchison (2015) in her meta-analysis of the role of teacher guides concludes that
teachers “involved in mentoring and advocacy programs experienced a deep professional satisfaction through this dimension of their work” (2015: pp 41). Hutchison’s research also reports that the role of teacher-guide is challenging and gratifying.

The following section will highlight some of the processes that a guide might use to bring about the changes in schools which, according to the analysis provided in earlier chapters, an individual teacher could use to better meet the needs of young people. It is not assumed that these changes would be easy to institute but it has been shown as possible to do in schools (Education Department of Victoria Advocacy Project 1999-2002), and done without addition of new resources, but with a rearrangement of the current resources. Machiavelli reminds us in The Prince:

> It must be considered that there is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success....than to initiate a new order of things. For the reformer has enemies in all those who profit from the old order, and only lukewarm defenders in all those who would profit by the new order, this lukewarmness arising partly from fear of their adversaries, who have the laws in their favour; and partly from the incredulity of mankind, who do not truly believe in anything new until they have had actual experience of it (1535: Chapter 6)

If we take the suggestion from Dalmau and Neville (2008) that cultural change cannot take place in a vacuum, and that strategy, structure, and culture all require simultaneous attention, then we know that any change to the teacher-learner dynamic will require changes at the school level. However, despite the warnings, we should proceed to provide an outline of the basic tasks for the teacher-guide to establish the secure environment for students and which might maximise the potential of the individual.

**Teacher-guide tasks**

It is the role of the teacher-guide to point out the way the actions of the students impinge on others (such as peers, teachers, and parents) and raise these issues with the student without imposing a particular point of view. From the research it is apparent that a major task is to establish a communication between the teachers and the individual student. Students need to understand the nature of the relationship in the secondary school, which is very different to the first seven years of schooling.

Teacher-guides need to encourage students to feel that they have a mind of their own and encourage them to explore their world and express their points of view within the one-one relationship. It is hoped that the student would take responsibility for their results and with the teacher-guide, develop strategies to achieve greater success across a variety of fields as they move toward adulthood.
The suggestion is that teachers be held accountable for 12-15 students as a core role in their daily professional lives, and be accountable for the progress and performance of the students. They will be accountable to know each student, providing them a secure base through an established relationship and dialogue. One model of change is for the staff to start with two or three Year 7 students and in each additional year take up two or three more students until the maximum number is reached. This allows for a six year take up of the organisational change.

To enable this role to develop, changes will be required at the school level to incorporate this change in the role of teacher. I am not going to enter the realm of organisational change and teacher training requirements, as these are acknowledged and have to some degree been answered by schools undertaking the Advocacy Project (1999-2001).

Teacher-guides should ensure that appropriate electronic records are kept to demonstrate the affect regulation, mentalisation and self-agency processes undertaken, so that they have records to provide evidence that they know their students. Teacher-guides will provide a constant focus on the client first and foremost, not the content, on the client, not the structure, on the client not the league table.

Teacher-guides should establish an ongoing relationship commencing at Year 7 and continuing through to school completion; establish a secure base for the adolescent; develop the personal learning narrative for each learner; promote a positive intentional stance for each learner, through constant goal-setting facilitating high personal achievement; develop an ongoing sense of appraisal in the adolescent to ensure that personal agency is facilitated; establish and develop in each learner a sense of personal responsibility and care of others in all they do. These responsibilities, and others, should be undertaken by the teacher-guide, and can be categorised into five themes, including relational, narrative competence, intentionality, appraisal and individuation tasks. These tasks are described further below (see Table 7).

### Table 1. Teacher-guide tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of task</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relational</td>
<td>Establish a secure relationship with each learner on a one-to-one basis and keep this relationship over a number of years, ideally for the six years of secondary education. Be accountable for the progress and performance of the students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category of task</td>
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<tr>
<td>Establish a dialogue with each learner, remembering that it is the quality of the dialogue that determines the quality of the relationship.</td>
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<td>Be available for the student should the need arise.</td>
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<td>Be the contact person for all aspects of parental contact.</td>
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<td>Be congruent, empathetic and give unconditional positive regard.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrative Competence</td>
<td>Establish a profile and narrative for the student within a dialogue with the learner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Construct dialogues around different experiences, events, and aspects of learning.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Generate a set of work ready skills for each student based on the notions of employability as agreed by the government, employers and unions.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>These internal and external realities and schemas should be consciously raised within the dialogue, to establish a coherent, conscious narrative for the student.</td>
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<td>Intentionality</td>
<td>To assist the learner to establish an intentional stance toward their learning, establishing their intention to maximise their performance.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Set up, and follow up, short term or weekly goals. These short-term goals need to be drawn from the dialogue and be of importance to the learner.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Construct long term plans using the SAI as a useful guide for the student.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
<td>Assisting the learner to stand outside the narrative that they have developed, to assist in developing new ways of seeing the events and draw new strategies to improve their performance is part of the role for the teacher-guide.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appraisal at the conscious level is something that will have to be modelled by the teacher-guide.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Appraising performance can take on many guises; relationships with teachers before and now, relationships with peers before and now; subject performance before and now; contribution to the wider community through events and extracurricula experiences.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individuation</td>
<td>To assist the adolescent learner to establish self-agency and responsibility for their actions and performance as a learner in and around the school. Engage outside agencies to assist the young learner to develop a sense of independence and interdependence.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Use school based accountability questionnaires as a basis for discussion with questionnaires that target the student and their relationships with others.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Be aware of and use school agencies to assist and encourage the learner to engage in events and experiences that assist in attainment of individual goals.</td>
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Relational tasks involve establishing a secure relationship with each learner on a one-to-one basis and keeping this relationship over a number of years, ideally for the six years of secondary education. A critical component of relational tasks is that they are long term. Riley (2011) reports that a continuous model of attachment is the most powerful model of relationship. This finding should be applied in schools with teachers and learners in a continuous one-to-one relationship. While the research undertaken in the (The Advocacy Project Reviews 1999, 2000, & 2002) suggests that training for teachers will be necessary before establishing the one-to-one relationship, The Advocacy Reviews
(1999-2001) found that neither will the student necessarily feel comfortable with the notion, unless a thorough understanding of the notions of the enhanced teacher-learner relationship has been discussed with them. A shared notion of the learner teacher relationship is essential to success. This is not about other adults ‘messing about with’, or intruding into, the lives of young people. The relationship is to be firmly in the education sphere, with the focus on the learning.

Narrative competence tasks involve supporting the adolescent to establish a profile and narrative. A key narrative competence task for the teacher-guide is to construct dialogues around different experiences, events, and aspects of learning to encourage conscious appraisal that will enable new and dynamic transformations. For example, if a teacher were to use a database developed for the Australian Research Council Project 2008-2011 there are 250 different constructs within the database to bring into conscious reflection and examination. Teacher-guides could establish with each learner why they like or dislike certain subjects to evaluate old events and experiences that may have developed these attitudes. With encouragement and an appropriate strategy students might be encouraged to tackle areas of curriculum they have negative attitudes towards. Another narrative competence task to note is that of working with the student to identify/develop ‘work ready skills’. This is useful in getting students to consciously evaluate that there are wider implications of education and different experiences outside the classroom that are relevant to describing the learner.

It is one thing to develop the narrative, but another entirely to stand outside the experience and make some judgements about the experience, and take a stance about the way the learner feels about the experience. This entails both appraisal and intentionality. Intentionality tasks surround assisting the learner to establish an intentional stance toward their learning and establishing their intention to maximise their performance. Short term goals are a key feature of intentionality tasks. By giving emphasis each week to aspects of the learner’s experience, new neural pathways and connections are being developed, schemas changed and possibilities examined. Appraisal tasks involve assisting the learner to stand outside the narrative they have developed and to develop new ways of looking at and responding to events. This aspect of the relationship is vital as the teacher will have to guide the learner to compare and contrast performance over time, and to appraise this performance in relation to goals set so that the student learns to evaluate their actions. Their behaviour or decision making might have impacted on others including peers, teachers, and parents and this needs to be included in the appraisal. Individuation tasks are the final category of tasks for the teacher-guide and involve assisting the adolescent learner to establish self-agency and responsibility for their actions and performance as a learner in and around the school.
A model for relationship development in schools

Much of the theoretical description of Knox’s (2003) model of reflective function has already been developed in previous chapters. Here I wish to present a possible model of teacher student process, as part of a structured model. The operationalised model for schools is provided in Figure 8 (below).

![Diagram of teacher-student process model](image)

**Figure 1. School based model for developing reflective function (Schmidt 2012)**

Rogers (1983) suggested teachers need to be congruent, empathetic and have unconditional positive regard for the student. Knox (2013) asserted that the role of therapist be focussed on affect regulation, mentalisation, and promotion of self agency. Like Rogers et al. (2013) I am not suggesting that teachers become therapists but they can apply the qualities suggested by both researchers around notions related to learning. As Rogers et al. report:

...research by Rioch, Carkhuff, and Rogers has demonstrated that empathic lay-persons such as homemakers, graduate students, and other mentors can conduct effective counseling and therapy with about six months to a year’s training. (2013: 77)

It is apparent that with appropriate training teachers could provide the continuous relationship required to enable learners to develop narrative competence, intentionality, appraisal and individuation, through a process of mentalisation.
Neville (2011) writes that Rogers took both therapy and education to be concerned with consciousness, a consciousness which enables greater freedom of action, but the role of the teacher was to be the guide on the side, accompanying the learner on the journey of exploration. It is the role of the teacher-guide to raise questions around notions of learning and to bring them into conscious clarity for each student so that they can be examined, metalized and an intentional stance developed. It is here that the epistemological transformation can occur for each adolescent, as teacher-guides lead young adolescents through a six year program of developing their reflective function, consciously examining their qualities as a learner across a range of related questions, many of which may arise from use of instruments such as those provided by the Student Advocacy Instrument (2012).

Rogers (1983) put relationship at the centre of the teacher learner experience. This thesis is expanding on that role in this person-centred approach to adolescent development. Bowlby (1979) provides further weight to the notion that the ongoing nature of the relationship is important in establishing a secure base, stating that the relationship between the individuals concerned must persist over a period of time, measured in terms of years.

The difficulty arising from this secure base is the concept that the cost of love is grief, for as Bowlby states, “the unchallenged maintenance of such relationships is experienced as a source of security” (1979: 86). While the threat or loss of such a relationship gives rise to anxiety and often anger, the actual loss of a secure relationship leads to the turmoil of grief. While a case can be made that the relationship between a teacher and a student is a professional relationship and may lack the emotional overtones of the family relationship, one does observe that adolescent attachment to teachers can be a problem when the proximity is removed.

Teachers have been described as significant others in the life of a student at school (The Advocacy Project 2002, 2003). Students reported that they found the one-to-one relationship an enabling relationship when the teacher-guide was able to provide the time. Riley points out that the relationship between teacher and student is dyadic, teachers need students to teach, but students do not need teachers to learn. Nevertheless, at school, students are reliant on teachers to provide care, empathy and instruction.

Teachers of today are taught to first manage a class and the relationships that teachers have with students is, in the first place, based on the dynamics of a group relationship. It may be this aspect, particularly in secondary schools, that meant that some teachers did not feel they could work in a one-to-one relationship with students successfully, as they felt they were unprepared to undertake such a role (The Advocacy Project 1999 Ocean and Cauley, 2000 Ocean, 2002 Henry et al). It does reinforce a point
that teachers need to be trained in relationship development and management and have the appropriate counselling skills.

It is the role of the teacher-guide to be a significant other in a long-term relationship, perhaps providing the sort of cultural and social guidance that Stanner (2009) referred to in the traditional aboriginal community, as well as assisting in the development of the reflective function. Teacher-guides should be responsible, on a one-to-one basis, for the affect regulation, mentalisation and development of self-agency in the (approximately 15) students for whom they may be accountable. There is no need for the teacher-guide to meet the students as a group, as the relationships are founded on a one-to-one basis and there need not be a group relationship. Teacher-guides, as student performance managers, work with them on an individual basis “being their frontal lobes”, establishing a secure base, and establishing a relationship within which an appropriate dialogue focussing on the successful patterns of learning may be created and celebrated.

This role should be the primary role of the secondary teacher and their content or curriculum speciality should be considered their secondary role. Increasingly, content and curriculum can be delivered over the internet, and while this is not a replacement for a teacher in a classroom, it is a new valuable aide to learning.

The ‘I-thou’ relationship has been established as important (Schmid & Mearns 2006; Rogers et al. 2013; Knox 2003). The important element of the relationship is the dialogue between the ‘I’ and the person, event, or experience that represents the ‘thou’. For the learner, it is the relationship between I and learning in the formal sense. We continue to learn subconsciously and consciously in many contexts but my focus here is the relationship between the learner and their ability (self-image) to see themselves as a learner and engage successfully in learning at school. There are a number of factors that are important within this context. None more so than the establishment of a secure base, a sense of belonging and an established on-going relationship between teacher and learner, where dialogue is possible.

The research, in summary, suggests that to make epistemological transformation possible, there is a need to establish a secure base for each learner through relationship and dialogue, to consciously raise schemas effecting learner performance by examining the current narrative. Through mentalising and creating an improved intentional stance, developing processes for appraisal and personal responsibility and care of others, individuation is developed. To enable this development should be the role of teachers in the twenty first century.
In contrast, it is my experience that, in schooling, those who generally get the attention in our public schools are those who are gifted and those who make trouble, with the vast majority remaining pleasantly within the bounds of reasonable behaviour and performance. Their personal needs and potentials are largely unknown and often ignored. The research suggests the need for another way to be examined. While state and national governments use the national testing figures to defend the use of tax payer dollars, and construct websites to expose schools to scrutiny, the plight of the relationship between teachers and learners is largely ignored, even though evidence already presented suggests that we are having problems engaging young people in learning at a time when they are particularly vulnerable.

The research in this thesis suggests that we should adopt a model that relies on Knox’s (2003) model of reflective function to guide the dialogue between a teacher and a learner, with the relationship being a long lasting relationship and the teacher taking responsibility for the performance of the student. Further, once the learner is able to enter into a meaningful dialogue with a teacher about their learning, having established their own personal narrative, established an ability to set long and short term goals and appraise performance against these goals, needs and personal values, they can then make decisions which reflect self, and a mature attitude to learning and others engaged in this educational journey with them. It is the possibility of a transformative journey that develops the possibilities and the potentials of each young adolescent to contribute to their world. Once this connection between learner and teacher is established and the connection to learning and dealing with subject matter and curriculum requirements is in place, the processes of group learning in schools may be more meaningful and therefore engaging.

**The nature of the dialogue**

The nature of the relationship is that it is a two way relationship between teacher and student, both are learners. It is the dialogue that develops the relational depth, the depth of the ‘secure base’ achieved by the teacher and the student. It is where transition from one mode of thinking to another mode will occur, so the dialogue is vitally important to the development of the relationship between the student and teacher. It is where the subject becomes object and the unconscious is brought into the light and new actions can eventuate, and the new may transcend the old. What better place to hold this dialogue than around the aspects of learning in a school, as we connect young people to learning environments and concepts about the broader aspects of and adventures in our world.

Reflective function is another name for meta-cognition, which has also been used to describe the awareness of oneself and others as psychological and emotional beings as well as physical objects. While Knox (2003) emphasises the role of the parent in the early development of the child, and little is
said about the importance of role models during adolescence, the relationship the child develops with important people in their life will determine the success of the life.

In the model as developed for the thesis, the four elements of reflective function have to operate within a relationship and a dialogue, with a teacher-guide reflecting the three requirements of Carl Rogers (1951) congruence, empathetic understanding and unconditional positive regard. Further the model asks the teacher-guide to ensure that each student has a secure relationship and that a secure base exists for the learner. Without the secure base the student will find it difficult to explore and learn.

It is important to note that the teacher-guide is expected to follow the four elements of reflective function and discuss these openly with the students so that on each occasion the student is challenged to explain their intentional stance to a particular issue and to appraise their success or otherwise, and the way they include others in their considerations. Reflective function provides the structure for the teacher-guide-student relationship and the structure for the dialogue within which the educational experiences and events should be made conscious. It is within the structure of the relationship that the processes of affect regulation, mentalisation, and the promotion of self-agency in adolescent learners will take effect. The structure of reflective function provides the teacher-guide and the learner with a framework for the dialogue. Bringing aspects of the learner’s experience into conscious thought promotes the transformational processes of change for the learner. By extending and deepening personal epistemology, transformational processes are enabled in the young adolescent learner.