

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE THEORY OF 'INDIVIDUAL PERSEVERANCE'

It will be recalled that the aim of the study that is reported in this thesis was to develop substantive theory regarding how parents in remote and rural locations manage the education of the primary aged children in their care. The theory of 'individual perseverance' which is reported in this chapter has emerged from the data and is grounded in the actions and interactions of the parents who were home tutors in the rural and remote setting of Western Australia. What follows is a detailed and careful explanation of the processes, concepts and interrelationships within the theory.

This chapter has been organised in three sections. First, the theory, which was developed, is presented as a story line (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p.116). In the second section the 'core category' of the theory, is explained as a series of logically inter-related propositions. The final section provides an overview of the categories and processes of 'individual perseverance'. Each of the categories and processes is then outlined in turn. This is supported with references to examples found in the data. The decision to proceed in this manner was made in the interest of clarity and depth of presentation.

#### 'INDIVIDUAL PERSEVERANCE' - THE STORY LINE

The way in which parents 'manage' the role of home tutor was the specific focus of this study. The central finding of this study was the development of the theory of 'individual perseverance', which explains how parents manage

their schoolroom work as home tutors. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990) one way in which to present the theory analytically and with a high degree of conceptualisation is through the presentation of a 'story line'. What now follows is the presentation of the theory of 'individual perseverance' as a simple statement of the interrelationships between the categories, processes and concepts that comprise the theory of 'individual perseverance'. Or put another way, the major features of the theory of individual perseverance' are now provided as a 'story line'.

*When geographically isolated parents, who have had no specific training as 'teachers', take on the role of home tutor, they manage the schooling of their children through the process of 'individual perseverance'. This overarching process consists of categories and processes. There are four categories of processes of 'individual perseverance': acknowledging, interacting, surviving and teaching. The first category (acknowledging) comprises processes whereby parents accept that the role of home tutor is one amongst many that they undertake in busy station life. They identify what the role requires of them and give the role meaning (agreeing). Parents accept the role (choosing) and take on the role (engaging). They establish a schoolroom and undertake to teach.*

*The second category (interacting) comprises processes whereby parents develop positive and healthy relationships as parent and home tutor with the child (defining). They ensure that the impact on relationships within the family are maintained (valuing) and seek suitable responses from other adults*

*(usually other parents or teachers at SOTA) about the complexity of the role (understanding).*

*The third category (surviving), is the central or 'core' phenomenon of 'individual perseverance' and comprises processes whereby parents acknowledge the impossibility of managing other aspects of their life such as cooking, keeping the books, and maintaining the household (forgiving). They justify their need for finding personal 'time out' as necessary for undertaking the role effectively. Parents also identify the need for understanding and sharing of experiences from others and for others in similar situations (supporting).*

*The fourth category (teaching) comprises processes whereby parents develop ways in which to manage schooling through developing schoolroom routines and plans (consistency) for their children and the family. They are engaged with rewarding good work and negotiating appropriate behaviours (motivating). Parents choose work from the Sets and adjust the tasks where appropriate to meet individual needs of children (selecting). Home tutors make decisions about the importance of various learning experiences and tend to focus on literacy areas. They tend to select learning experiences that are considered to be essential. Specialist curriculum areas like the Arts and Physical Education are often left out although they are highly valued. Home tutors also encourage the child to be independent learners and develop ways in which to ensure this occurs (strategising).*

*Parents generally proceed through the four categories of 'individual perseverance' in a 'cyclic' manner. They move back and forth, acknowledging, interacting, surviving and teaching. The extent of 'individual perseverance' varies from one parent to the next. As an example, some parents have developed more strategies for managing their own 'survival' than others. However, all parents indicated a need to develop strategies. Furthermore, the immediacy of the role forced parents to respond to and develop ways in which to manage schooling. For parents who undertook the role of home tutor the impact of this extended to all aspects of their life in rural and remote locations.*

#### PROPOSITIONS RELATING TO THE OVERALL THEORY OF 'INDIVIDUAL PERSEVERANCE'

In the previous section the theory of 'individual perseverance', has been offered in the form of a 'story line'. The theory can also be presented as a series of coherent interconnected propositions. These are: (1) propositions relating to the overall theory of 'individual perseverance', (2) propositions relating to the processes of 'individual perseverance' and (3) propositions relating how the categories and processes of 'individual perseverance' can be understood within the context of parents as home tutors. The propositions relating to the overall theory of 'individual perseverance' and explanations of these now follow.

***Proposition 1***

*Parents ‘manage’ their role as home tutors in rural and remote locations through ‘individual perseverance’. In its most general sense ‘individual perseverance’ involves parents balancing multiple roles but choosing the role of ‘teacher’ as the primary concern. Parents tend to actively engage in the role of home tutor. Parents are prone to manage the challenges of family relationships through distinguishing the role of teacher as only one aspect of home life. ‘Individual perseverance’ also involves parents in developing strategies such as establishing routines, developing relationships with the teacher and other home tutors and developing teaching strategies that are best suited to their child. These strategies contribute to their own survival in multiple roles.*

Parents by default become home tutors as they live in geographically remote locations, which make it physically impossible for their children to attend school. They mostly choose the role and where they decide not to undertake schooling, employ governesses. Most parents undertake to supervise learning and the role most commonly falls to the mother. Mothers were often involved in many aspects of life in general and in almost all cases were contributing to managing the family business. They were busy people, who could be responsible for managing the business accounts, cooking for extended groups of employees during busy times, attending to mustering and maintaining life for the family in the home. Mothers who were home tutors could have a variety of other roles in which they participated which included being wives, cooks, property hands and business coordinators.

Mothers found that it was often more practical that they be elected to the role of home tutor rather than their husbands or partners as they were unable to undertake much of the ‘*heavier*’ work in the business. Once mothers had

decided to undertake the role it was prioritised over other roles as schooling was highly valued and considered to be very important. All home tutors wanted their child to have the best education that could possibly be available and were committed to the process. Although all home tutors at times expressed feelings of anxiety, guilt and inadequacy they undertook the responsibility of supervising all aspects of schooling in compliance with the Department of Education guidelines. They joined the home tutor community within their SOTA district and all networked extensively amongst each other. They were active within the SOTA and attended Seminars and Camps with their child. They sought advice and recommendations from other home tutors and teachers at SOTAs in order to understand the processes of schooling.

The role of home tutor was distinguished amongst other roles within family life, although at times this was not always successful. Home tutors often found that the role impacted on relationships within the family. They were especially concerned at how their children perceived them; disengaging from the home tutor role and being '*mum*' was often impossible. Most home tutors indicated that '*at the end of the day they were just mum*'.

Routines were identified as being a significant contributory factor in managing the role of home tutor. They were developed for managing life in general and impacted on schooling in the schoolroom. Parents had a tendency to develop routines for schooling based on recommendations made by other home tutors and teachers at SOTAs. They were apt to establish life around the school term, although at some SOTAs schooling was arranged at times around other significant events such as mustering or shearing. Children and partners were encouraged to conform to routines. They were able to support schooling

through the allocation of tasks such as *'tidying the house'* and taking responsibility for their own well-being and behaviour.

Husbands and partners were involved in work around the house and asked not to interrupt schooling as it was taking place. Some home tutors required their husbands or partners to supervise younger children although this was a rare occurrence. Home tutors were often frustrated by the lack of understanding for the role by their husbands or partners and undertook to provide explanations of what they actually did. Most home tutors thought *'a day in the school room was enough of an experience to provide their husbands or partners with insight into schooling'*. Home tutors required support and understanding from their husbands and partners. Without this they were less successful at managing the role.

Developing schoolroom routines was equally important as the more general routines. Home tutors established timetables for learning. These were essentially based on the print-based materials sent from SIDE to the SOTA and forwarded to families and the 'on air' lessons provided in conjunction with SOTAs. Teachers at all SOTAs recommended timetables as a strategy for managing schooling. Other home tutors were also advocates of this strategy. All home tutors found that if their children had a structure to their school day that they were less likely to be troublesome. Some home tutors found that they did not have to *'manage the behaviour and motivation of their child'* as the timetable was not negotiable and children seemed to understand this. In contrast, some home tutors thought it was better to let children finish work regardless of schedules and timetables. Sometimes it was necessary not to be overly rigid about how much time was spent on schoolwork.

Home tutors liked being able to respond to the needs of their children and thought that this factor was singularly attractive when schooling their own child. They could adjust tasks and develop ways in which to meet the learning needs that arose. This impacted on the strategies they developed to manage learning, which made their 'job' less difficult. Many home tutors felt that they could avoid confrontations with their child in the schoolroom by attending to the issues that arose in a more personal way. They found that when they were rigid in their approach to schooling that they often had a 'hell of a time'.

An encompassing strategy for managing the role of home tutor was the development of relationships with teachers at SOTAs and other home tutors. Essential to being successful in the role was being able to seek support from these two groups within the schooling community. When schooling became difficult home tutors tended to contact other home tutors before teachers for advice and consolation. They preferred to discuss matters with someone who was experiencing the issues of schooling in similar ways to them. They often felt that they risked being judged as not being able to cope by teachers and were worried about the impression they might be making. However, having stated this, home tutors did contact teachers and many had developed excellent personal and professional relationships. More often than not home tutors required a morale boost that would help them to 'individually persevere' rather than specific advice about issues that had arisen.

***Proposition 2***

*When teaching, parents appeared to select particular curriculum learning areas above others based on their perceived value and importance amongst all curriculum areas. While parents acknowledged the importance of breadth and depth in curriculum experiences they*

*tended to focus on reading, handwriting and mathematics work. These areas were mostly scheduled during morning 'on air' lessons by SOTAs to support the work found in the print based materials. Parents selected amongst other curriculum areas learning experiences for their child. The Arts, Physical Education and Science were more likely to be left out or overlooked by parents who had little time or experience to support endeavours in his area. 'Individual perseverance' in relation to curriculum involved parents in managing the learning of their child and this included choosing what would and will not be learned.*

Home tutors placed more importance on some curriculum areas over others. Although they acknowledged that breadth of curriculum was important for their child they prioritised literacy subject areas. The printed materials that home tutors received from their teachers often defined schooling. The *Sets* written by curriculum writers place an emphasis on literacy. As well, SOTAs encouraged home tutors to timetable a significant amount of time for reading, writing and mathematics. One SOTA provided exact time allocations for particular subject areas as a guide for home tutors. Across all of the SOTAs home tutors devoted the majority of their school timetable to completing the work required in the *Sets*. The focus was on writing, reading and mathematics. Many home tutors felt that they had little choice in the matter and that if they did not help their child complete the *Sets* that their child/ren would fall behind in their schooling. Other curriculum areas were secondary to this aim.

The structure of on-air lessons supported the emphasis that home tutors placed on printed materials. The on-air lessons were mostly organized to support print-based work being undertaken by the child. Other curriculum areas were often relegated to afternoon slots and many home tutors decided not to take part in these. The scheduling of other curriculum areas inadvertently

indicated to home tutors that these areas were of less importance and could be done later or not at all. As well, most home tutors only schooled in the mornings due to the atmospheric conditions during which they could not receive on-air lessons in curriculum areas presented in the afternoon. Other home tutors were just '*too busy*'. One SOTA had established Art sessions in a morning slot as a solution to atmospheric disturbance but attendance was still not substantial. Both teachers and home tutors also indicated a lack of adequate skill in the Arts and Sciences areas and were not '*confident*' enough to take them on.

Other curriculum areas were highly valued as complementary to schooling and often perceived as a way to '*motivate children*' and provided '*variety for the literacy tasks*'. Where a SOTA had a trained Arts or Computer teacher there was a tendency for the Arts and Computers to be included as Key Learning Areas (KLA). Home tutors frustrated teachers as they often complained that there were not enough Arts or Physical Education opportunities but then did not engage in these curriculum areas when they were provided. The teachers felt there was an inconsistency in how these curriculum areas were valued. On the one hand home tutors expressed their valuing of the Arts and Physical Education and on the other hand were not prepared or able to partake in these areas when they were offered.

Beyond the *Sets* home tutors were predisposed to engage selectively in other aspects of their lives. They were less likely to focus on schooling that they felt was unnecessary. They were '*too busy*' to be spending time on schooling in areas that they did not perceive as critical for educational success. The tension that home tutors felt in managing a full range of curriculum areas

was acknowledged but *'at the end of the day it was more important to complete the essentials and if there was time we could do some art later'*. When home tutors had to juggle a range of other responsibilities the Arts were particularly perceived as additional work and *'frankly other things need to be done'*.

## PROPOSITIONS RELATING TO THE PROCESSES OF 'INDIVIDUAL PERSEVERANCE'

The previous section has described the propositions relating to the overall theory of 'individual perseverance', whereas in the following section the propositions relating to the processes of 'individual perseverance' are detailed. In short the theory of 'individual perseverance' is comprised of four categories. Each category is made up of a series of specific but interrelated processes. These categories and processes can be presented diagrammatically as in Figure 7.1. This section begins with a summary of the propositions and is followed by an explanation of each category and the interrelated processes.

1. The theory of 'Individual perseverance' is comprised of four categories. The four categories, acknowledging, interacting, survival and teaching are comprised of a series of processes. The first category of 'acknowledging' contains details of the processes through which the parent takes on the role of home tutor and establishes school routines. Through the processes contained within the category of 'interacting' the parent sought understanding and support for the role home tutor in contrast to other responsibilities, such as book-keeping, that ordinarily made up what they do. The parent tended to manage a variety of

overlapping roles that required subtle adjustments in order to be effective in the role of home tutor. The third and core category of ‘survival’ refers to processes through which the parent developed ways in which to manage stress associated with being the home tutor. In the fourth category ‘teaching’ refers to processes whereby the parent developed strategies for effective learning in the schoolroom.

2. The four categories of ‘individual perseverance’, (acknowledging, interacting, surviving and teaching) each consist of a number of processes. The first and third categories contain three processes, the second category two processes, while the final category comprises four processes. The first category ‘acknowledging’ contains the processes of ‘resolving’, ‘choosing’ and ‘engaging’ while the second category, ‘interacting’, consists of the processes of ‘defining’, and ‘understanding’. The processes of ‘forgiving’, rationalising’ and ‘supporting’ make up the core category of ‘surviving’ and the final category ‘teaching’, consists of the processes of ‘consistency’, ‘motivating’, ‘selecting’ and ‘strategising’.

**Figure 7.1**  
**The Categories and Processes of ‘Individual perseverance’**

Categories	Processes	Description of processes
Acknowledging	Resolving	Accepting that being the home tutor is one role amongst many others
	Choosing	Making decisions about the role of home tutor by parents
	Engaging	Parents actively engage in the role of home tutor –establishing a school setting ready for teaching.
Interacting	Defining	Parents develop positive working relationships as the home tutor in contrast to other roles
	Understanding	Parents seek understanding from family members and others of the role
Surviving	Forgiving	Acknowledging impossibility of being ‘everything’ to ‘everyone’
	Rationalising	Justifying actions
	Supporting	Seeking support from others in the same situation and providing that same support to others
Teaching	Consistency	Developing routines for the family and children
	Motivating (Rewarding and negotiating)	Managing behaviour and expectations regarding quality of work with child
	Selecting	Choosing and adjusting work for the child/ren
	Strategising	Fostering independence through various learning strategies

#### THE FIRST CATEGORY: ACKNOWLEDGING

Once a parent has undertaken the role of home tutor they have accepted that their new role needs to be situated in relation to the other roles of life in general. Home tutors were engaged in other roles such as being a parent, a husband or wife, the business account keeper and manager of other staff and

resources, as examples. Most of the families saw the role as a 'job', which they undertook with considerable commitment. At times there was some anxiety over their adequacy but they saw no alternative given their geographical locations. The home tutor was in most cases untrained in teaching and relied on their own initiative, support from other families in similar circumstances or their teacher at the School of the Air. The processes that parents engaged in to understand their role are categorized within the theory of 'individual perseverance' as 'acknowledging'. Parents engaged in the processes of 'acknowledging' mostly at the start of their home tutor career as many had several children that they supervised. Within 'acknowledging' there are three distinct but inter-related processes: 'resolving', 'choosing' and 'engaging'. Each of these processes will now be outlined.

### ***1. Resolving***

'Resolving' is the term that has been given to the process by which parents either accepted the role of home tutor from amongst others or delegated the role to a governess. Parents had few choices as they live in isolated circumstances and distance education was the only option for their children. How distance education was to be undertaken was the issue, which the parent had first to decide and at times revisit. Parents in this study tended to define their role of home tutor alongside others and have understandings of what each role entails. One parent recalled:

*We all have a lot of roles to fill as mothers, wives, and a lot of us have our business or station roles to fill. We either go out mustering or fencing*

*or cook or do the bookwork so we have a lot of other roles apart from the prime home tutor role we have taken on. When we start I am sure there are a lot of mixed feelings. We can be a bit tentative. I do not think we ever realised just what it entails - this new role is going to have on our lives as mothers and women. I do not think until you get into this teaching role and when more of your kids start coming into school just how much of your time and what an impact it is going to have on the life of not just you, but your whole family and perhaps whoever might be involved in your household.*

While parents may have felt anxious about taking on the role they understood the seriousness of what they were about to undertake. They wanted their child to have a ‘good education’ and needed to ‘ensure that they get that’. Parents accepted that they were ‘it’ and had to ‘get on with it’. If necessary, parents changed their lives to fit schooling into ordinary life routines.

The parents in this study spent a considerable amount of time ensuring that they had established ‘ground rules’ for how they were going to manage the role alongside other roles. They enlisted the support of others in acknowledging the impact that this role would have on their family and professional life. One parent had an ‘unwritten pact when the kids started school’ and she required ‘at least a week’s notice if her husband wanted her to work on the station’ and another did not ‘answer the telephone or make smoko’<sup>1</sup> when she was in the schoolroom. There were many examples to be found in the data, but overall home tutors indicated that they experienced high

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<sup>1</sup> Colloquial term referring to ‘a break’ for morning or afternoon tea. A chance to have refreshment and a cigarette.

levels of stress if they had to maintain all of the roles equally. In many cases home tutors attempted to do so.

For many parents agreeing to be the home tutor was overwhelming and some sought to engage governesses. There were varied reasons for this decision. Some parents felt inadequate while others felt they could not teach their own children without '*strangling them*'. In stating this, parents were fully cognisant of the role and had resolved the issue of who would teach by engaging a home tutor.

## **2. Choosing**

'Choosing' is the second major process within the 'acknowledging' category. It is the process through which parents made decisions about the role of home tutor. One home tutor felt that the many roles that she '*juggled interlinked, but thought if she was going to teach, everything else had to revolve around being a home tutor*'. In this regard, 'choosing' can be likened to prioritising from amongst a range of wants and needs. Parents saw the necessity of prioritising schooling in order for their children to receive the best education possible. The following extract demonstrates the prioritising of schooling from one parent:

*How do we fit this schoolwork into our already busy days? Our days are already full so where is it going to fit in? What are our priorities? I think that on a daily and a general overall basis our children's schooling that we are taking upon ourselves should come right up at the top of the list. Apart from our role as a parent and as part of a family, if we take on the job of home tutoring that job should take priority in the house in our weekly schedule. We have got to get these kids' schoolwork done.*

Ensuring that schooling was understood to be a serious pursuit was for some families taken to interesting extremes. For instance when mustering occurred some families schooled through the holidays to catch up on missed work whereas others made their children complete work in the 'car' and attended SOTA lessons as scheduled during the muster. Many of the children were required to work as part of the family unit during times such as mustering or shearing. One home tutor noted that *'there is no such thing as a weekend or school holidays'* and it seemed that at times schooling and other aspects of station life gave way to each other. Other home tutors reported *'cramming in extra work in order to finish the Sets early'* so that major station events would not impact on the required work being completed.

The experience had by parents is individual; however, all made decisions and choose how schooling would occur. They made adjustments to routines and expectations to ensure that the children completed work. As a direct result of engaging in 'choosing' parents' overall understanding about their role, in which they have responsibility for ensuring that schooling occurs, is well developed.

### ***3. Engaging***

'Engaging' is the third major process within the 'acknowledging' category. It is the process by which parents found out about what their role was as home tutor and prepared for it. Parents sought out information about what they needed to organise in readiness for what they would actually be doing. They often discussed the process with other families and actively got on with the role. They sought out ideas and a variety of perspectives on the tasks ahead of them.

Many of the parents in this study had attended professional development sessions provided by the School of Isolated and Distance Education and had at various times received materials from the respective Schools of the Air about what to do. They established a 'school room' which in some cases was a separate room and for others, the verandah or the kitchen table. Parents also considered routines and management of the multiple-tasks that needed to be achieved during the day when schooling was occurring. The family was often allocated things to do as a way of helping the home tutor as is revealed by a more experienced mother who informed the researcher during an interview that:

*Since my kids have started school I have given them jobs to do in order to try and get a few of those things done that I cannot otherwise do. Try and get the members of the household to start doing a few other jobs that perhaps you have done for too long like putting the kettle on for morning tea and topping the cake up. I do not think we should feel like we have to cater for everyone. We just cannot.*

To summarise this exposition on the first major category of 'individual perseverance', namely, 'acknowledging', it is the category which consists of 'resolving', 'choosing' and 'engaging'; three major but inter-related processes undertaken by parents when developing an understanding of the role of home tutor. Parents engage in these processes when they first undertake to school their children through distance education modes although more experienced parents revisited this category intermittently.

Parents inform and define their role as home tutors through the understandings that are developed from the three inter-related processes of ‘acknowledging’.

## THE SECOND CATEGORY: INTERACTING

Once parents had resolved that the role of home tutor would take priority amongst other roles and had engaged with the schooling of children, they began to consider the implications of the phenomenon for themselves and others. The processes that parents engaged in to understand the impact that the role of home tutor had on family relationships are categorized within the theory of ‘individual perseverance’ as ‘interacting’. Parents engaged in the processes of ‘interacting’ in an ongoing basis. The category ‘interacting’ involved three distinct but interrelated process: ‘defining’, ‘valuing’ and ‘understanding’. Each of these processes will now be outlined.

### ***1. Defining***

‘Defining’ is the first major process within the ‘interacting’ category. It is the process in which parents shape their working relationship with children in the role of home tutor. Parents noted that children did not see their home tutor as separate to their mother or father. Children found it difficult to tell the two roles apart and often ‘*blurred*’ them. Parents as home tutor were called ‘mum or dad’ and children did not perceive their parents as being anything but that. One parent said:

*I think you are always a mum. I can hear people who will start school say OK I am going to be the teacher when I get in there. But you are*

*not. You are just mum. Those kids will never see you as anyone but mum, whoever you are. Muuuuuuuuuum! You cannot change it. You cannot be this professional teacher person that they are going to look at differently when you get into the schoolroom. You stay mum. There is no two ways about it.*

The relationships that were previously those of parent-to-child and child-to-parent were made more complex once schooling started with the introduction of a new relationship that of teacher-to-student. Some parents felt it was important that children saw their time in the schoolroom with the home tutor as being different from usual home life. One parent established particular rules in her schoolroom that required the children to not talk as they completed work. However, a younger sibling would often interrupt schooling and *'did not speak until she was three because every time she opened her mouth she was told to shut up you are in the school room'*. Other parents report of wanting to *'strangle'* their children or just *'losing'* it completely and *'running'* out of the school room with *'tears of frustration running down your cheeks'*. The following extract illustrates both the difficulty and importance of parents establishing healthy relationships with their children:

*I think most, if not all, at some stage would really like to strangle their kids and you lose control and you yell at them and you say a lot of things that you would never say to someone else's child. I have done it and I am sure that everyone either has or will at some time. Teaching your own child can be the most frustrating thing you could ever try and do and you really do feel like knocking their heads together sometimes.*

*After my six months of doing all that sort of thing last year that is what really made me think. This maintaining a happy relationship with your child while you are teaching them is really important and I was even finding that my child was becoming unaffectionate out of school. His relationship with me outside of the schoolroom was deteriorating because of all the wars we were having in the schoolroom. He did not really want to talk to me or have anything to do with me out of the schoolroom. I was becoming a big monster.*

A significant feature of ‘defining’ is that as a process parents tended to feel a need for their children to understand that they are only the ‘teacher’ in the school room. It seemed that where children understood the role of home tutor relationships were considered to be happy and positive and as a result the learning and teaching was more effective. In considering this, parents used the process of ‘defining’ to make decisions about how best to manage relationships with children while in the role of home tutor.

## ***2. Understanding***

‘Understanding’ is the second major process within the ‘interacting’ category. It is the process through which parents sought support and consideration for their role of home tutor. It was clear from the data that although there was ‘camaraderie’ amongst home tutors that there was often a lack of consideration from significant others such as partners and teachers. Following are extracts from various home tutors on this process:

*You have also got meals to cook usually for three, you have got housekeeping which does not get done, office work which either gets done in the school room or does not get done at all and then finally ...*

*... and husband comes in 'We have come in for lunch early. Where did you put that medicine?' 'In the 'fridge'. 'I can't find it'. 'It is not on the top shelf' and then the dog walks through over the project, across your mail ...*

*Everybody feels tired most of the time. It is okay. You are not alone feeling schizophrenic. It is quite natural to want to kill your children three or four times a day. And another thing is get your husband to teach for at least half an hour - half an hour in an entire semester.*

*My husband does the dishes now after how many years.*

*They would run. The best one I had was I had a bad tooth and I had a rush trip to town. My mother in law was there and my husband was on his week off. So I said I am going to town to have my tooth out and I took off. They did the air lesson, they looked at the book, between the pair of them they shut the book and they both walked away. They did not want to know about it. They did not want the hassle, they did not want the drama.*

*My husband did half an hour and he came out looking like he had been through a wringer. He said 'I'll never do that again'.*

The outcome of the process of ‘understanding’ influences significantly the extent to which parents ‘individually persevere’ in their role as home tutor. In the present study it was found that parents who had ‘others’ who understood what the role entailed felt more able to continue in the role. As one parent advised:

*I think which is really important is that everyone else in our household, especially our husbands and if we have other family members living with us or staff, they must understand - and I think this is something that does not happen for a few years often - they must understand how important and difficult this job is and how much of our own time and energy that is going to take. I think they just think particularly when they come in and have a look and see me colouring in Year 1, this school is really easy, just having a good time. A few years down the track he suggested that I could do the bookwork while I was in the schoolroom teaching. Until they have been there they do not understand how much of your energy it takes. You have to concentrate and do a lot in that schoolroom. You do not just sit there and colour even though that is part of the job. I think it is really important that our partners or husbands and other people around realise how much of our time is going to take or does take. This in turn makes it a lot easier for us if they have that understanding.*

## THE THIRD CATEGORY: SURVIVING

'Surviving' is the 'core category' (Strauss, 1987, p.69) of the theory of 'individual perseverance'. As such it represents the central phenomenon around which all other categories are integrated. It consists of three major processes, namely, 'forgiving', 'rationalising' and 'supporting'. Through the processes, which comprise the category of 'surviving' parents acknowledged that they could not be '*everything*' to '*everyone*' and sought the support of others in similar situations. Each of these processes will now be outlined.

### **1. Forgiven**

'Forgiven' is the first major process within the category of 'survival'. It involved parents acknowledging that they could not manage to function in all roles effectively or with the same commitment. Parents were often concerned that they had lost '*control*' over other aspects of their lives and were worried about things they should '*really be doing*'. It was important to home tutors that they learn to manage the role and to try not to '*go like super mum*'. One mother indicated that '*it was not worth the stress and you have to learn if you are getting upset and stressed that it is not going to help the child. You just do what you can achieve*'. Some mothers felt that their '*capabilities*' and '*ambitions*' got mixed up and that in the end '*learning to compromise between what you want and what you have got time for*' was important for their own sanity. home tutors felt that finding time to do some '*yoga or allocating a day in a week where I can do anything that I like. If I just want to read a book or whatever,*

*sometimes it works*'. This was not always possible and other home tutors reported that they found little time for self-relaxation.

Another aspect of the process of 'forgiving' was the ability of parents to learn from their mistakes in the schoolroom and adjust expectations. If they somehow '*got it wrong*' and the task was '*misunderstood*' or that they did not '*understand*' what was required then this would impact on learning.

## **2. Rationalising**

'Rationalising' is the second major process within the category of 'survival'. It involved parents explaining the level of responsibility in schooling and justifying why particular actions or decisions had been made. Parents frequently relied on each other and in many cases would rather ring another home tutor for advice than the class teacher. One parent felt that many of the other parents had skills and expertise that could be drawn upon. Home tutors all felt that they were particularly good at knowing what worked and what didn't work. As one parent put it:

*Often a parent with a flair for the work that we are all working with may be more useful than a visiting specialist or something because they are transforming what we have got rather than - like some of the people we get from 'X', they really have no idea what works and does not work and the things we leave out of the set work, whereas if there is a parent who has got a particular area of knowledge.*

The networking that occurred between parents enabled each to justify and feel comfortable about the decisions they were making when completing the

correspondence materials. For some it was just '*easier*' to ring up a friend. One parent told the following story:

*I had Michelle (pseudonym) ringing me up and saying 'how much did you expect Suzie (pseudonym) to write. I am making Andy (pseudonym) do a whole page'. I thought no wonder he has turned off. So I looked back at all the samples and found Suzie (pseudonym) was not even doing a page by the end of Year Two. She still went 'so you are telling me to back off are you?' So I said 'yeah, back off'. We are good for each other because she thinks I am harder on my kids than she is on hers.*

Parents tended to find it easier to take advice from a friend especially when they were putting their '*first one*' through the materials. Some parents had realised that it was '*no wonder their children were not motivated, as they had been made to do more work than was necessary*'. Parents saw this as the result of not having enough experience and not wanting to ask questions for fear of looking '*silly*' and '*incapable*'. More experienced mothers felt that you expected more of your own children and it '*was easier the second time around*'.

Parents often adjusted the correspondence materials but felt quite guilty about doing this. They were aware that they probably should not leave work out and had been told to discuss the *Sets* with their teachers. Many thought that as there were 18 *Sets* of work per year, everything had to be done within them. If you missed something out how would you '*know if that was OK?*' More experienced mothers changed things and often left aspects of the *Set* out. Some

didn't do those things that '*wasted time*' such as '*cutting out*' or making '*scales*'. This same mother indicated that she '*didn't realise until Year 7 (after 6 years of schooling) that the scales were really important and that they had needed them all the way through so she should have just got on with it*'. Others found that they had to change the *Sets*, as they '*just did not suit their child*'.

Many parents said they did not have enough time to do everything so just did those things that were important like '*language and maths*' and if children wanted to do '*art or sports*' they could do that '*any old time such as in the afternoons after school work was done*'. Many parents did not consider other curriculum areas as important as literacy areas but this did not mean that they did not value them.

So while some parents undertook to alter work for children, others stuck to the requirements more out of fear that they might have left something out which could be critical for their child's learning. However, there was a network of parents who discussed work amongst themselves which justified for some the decision making process about what was '*kept in*' or '*left out*' of the *Sets*.

### ***3. Supporting***

As well as '*rationalising*' their actions as home tutors, parents also seek '*support*' from a variety of sources. The process of '*supporting*' involved parents in seeking out and providing support in a range of different relationships. These included support in the role of home tutor from children, family and teachers as an individual and as a family member. Home tutors also found themselves providing support to other home tutors both as friends and colleagues.

Engaging other members of the family was a strategy that many parents utilized well. Mothers were particularly grateful when the ‘kids’ fathers would visit the schoolroom. Not only did the children seem to find the interaction more interesting it was like a ‘*breath of fresh air*’. One mother stated:

*I think it is important for us to get any help that we can whether it is the kids doing a bit of reading to dad or working with another student or getting dad to help with the brainstorm if he is handy... We all need a break even if it is for only five minutes. But that is five minutes we do not have to be dealing with that child. That is important. I found that if dad does help with something, the kids all of a sudden have about ten times more enthusiasm as when I was doing it. They have bright ideas and it is fun all of a sudden because dad is teaching school and it is all exciting and they start doing what they should be doing. I think any little break and someone else to do even one activity a week or something with your child makes a lot of difference to revitalise their interest a little bit.*

Other parents who had several children in the schoolroom would sometimes let the older children be the ‘*teacher*’ with the younger children and that seemed to provide a ‘*moment of space*’ and a ‘*sharing*’ of the learning between everyone in the school room.

Parents were encouraged to telephone each other and in some cases they did. Newer parents often waited until they knew other parents better and felt

uncomfortable about telephoning a stranger. Another mother stated that she felt as follows:

*when I first started, until I came to these first home tutors seminars, I was sitting at home reading ...I was making Gabrielle type out her page of work on the computer which was taking three hours. Then I hear from the grapevine 'Sue types it out..leaves a few errors and edits'. I thought why did I not think of that.*

In most cases parents attended the professional development offered through the annual 'Seminar'. At this camp parents were able to discuss the most up-to-date educational movements and seek out strategies for their teaching. The Seminar was also a place where the process of supporting was most significant to the group as a whole. They could laugh and at times cry together, discuss overarching concerns and work at sustaining each other through the exchange of stories.

'Supporting' can be a simple process in which parents seek out and provide support. However, this is rarely the case. Knowing what support is required and from whom makes this process incredibly dynamic, as it is difficult to predict what support a parent requires in advance. Supporting as a process so often seems to be connected to a random set of consequences and as such is challenging for all concerned. The present study also indicated that the teachers at SOTA found it difficult to know just what support parents required as it could rarely be articulated in an appropriate way as for example the issue of infrastructure no answer could be provided.

## THE FOURTH CATEGORY: TEACHING

The fourth and final category of the theory of ‘individual perseverance’ is ‘teaching’. It consists of four major processes, ‘consistency’, ‘motivating’, ‘selecting’ and ‘strategising’. Each of these processes will now be outlined.

### ***1. Consistency***

‘Consistency’ is the process used by parents to manage the routines of schooling in order to have effective learning outcomes. Parents all have routines for how they ‘run’ the schoolroom. They mostly started schooling early in the morning and had completed schoolwork by lunchtime. Others however, had longer days but this seemed to depend on the work being undertaken by the child. Parents tended to use routines to enable school to be controlled and that without a plan the day spiralled into ‘*chaos*’. It seemed that the consistency of routines enabled the children to plan their leisure time and that they had no excuses for not being in the school room at the scheduled ‘8.30 am’. Further, if the routine included ‘*a timetable the children would know how much time was to be spent on what and what came next and so forth*’. It was just ‘*easier on everyone*’.

The present study also indicated that materials sent to parents by SOTAs recommended that parents establish routines and to stick to them as children responded well to consistency.

### ***2. Motivating***

‘Motivating’ is the second major process within the ‘teaching’ category. It is the process through which parents manage to keep children ‘*on track*’ and

engaged with the Sets. The parents found at times the Sets could be very 'boring' for their children or a bit 'dated'. Some were 'sick of making a glider' as an example and the children seemed to feel the same about certain activities. It was clear from the interviews that home tutors became equally bored with materials as their children did. Parents tended to think that there was far too much writing which some would say was inevitable with print based correspondence materials. Some families experienced tantrums as the children got bored. So then 'I am thinking up ways to manage his behaviour'. Parents tended to link appropriate work standards with good behaviour and had developed a range of strategies to manage those moments called 'tantrums'. As an indication of how this was managed the following extract is from one of the mothers who began the school year with an agreement from the children on what was appropriate behaviour in the schoolroom:

*At the beginning of the year we listed rules for the classroom to make it clear right from the start. I have a red dot chart for when I see the children doing something good or especially as Wilf (pseudonym) had a problem with becoming frustrated and wanting to scream or refuse to work. If I saw him almost go to do it and then pull himself up I would say 'good - you pulled yourself up' and I would give him a red dot. When they get ten red dots we join them into a caterpillar and they have a lucky dip. They also have a time out area so that if the children are really awful they go there. They do not have to be in a hard chair and chains but just the fact that they are alienated for a little while until they are ready to come in. So we have the time out area and if I have*

*had to repeat something several times and I am up to the third time, it is time out area. The children know now and they look at me and say 'I knew you were going to say that or 'I know what you are going to say next' and they will take themselves to the time out area. At this stage it is up to them to sit down and think about what they should be doing and they tell me when they are ready to come out. 'Mum I know I should not have done that' or 'Mum I am sorry I was rude' or whatever it is and they are ready to join the class. I will give them a hug and say 'That is all right and I still love you but that is not the way to behave in the classroom'. There is classroom behaviour and outside behaviour.*

Other issues that caused parents concern were the print materials. One parent indicated that her child was so use to the style of the *Set* that when they were up to the third description of a character *'she asked if she had to do it as she had already written two descriptions and what was the point? Couldn't she just talk about it instead?'*

Parents also tended to *'flag'* these issues with written notes to the teacher who would be marking work and would write on the *Set* *'we got up to here but Angela (pseudonym) didn't want to write another description'*. Parents used this strategy to communicate with the teacher about how their child had responded to the tasks. Parents felt that this helped the teacher understand what was taking place in the schoolroom.

Parents also used other rewards such as stickers and special treats to encourage their children to excel in their schoolwork. One mother had a goal system and would set goals with her children at the start of school day. Later in

the day they would be reviewed. The parent in this case found that her children responded really well to this system, as it was *'incredibly motivating'*. For every goal achieved her *'children got a sticker or something'*. It was important that the goals were always achievable and negotiated with the children.

Parents in the study tended to swap tactics with others in this area and were always on the lookout for new ideas. They could negotiate quite effectively with their children and all said they had stages and times where there was a *'lack of motivation'*. Most found it was useful to have activities that were *'fun'* amongst the print based materials. Some parents *'had a box of fun things to do which included painting, dressing-up and listening to music'*. These activities were used as *'treats'* and to encourage the children to *'keep going'*. The Arts and Physical education were useful as they could provide relief for many parents from the intensity of other learning areas.

### **3. Selecting**

'Selecting' is the third major process within the category 'teaching'. It is the process through which parents choose what learning will take place. In other words, parents asked themselves the questions: What is important here? What must be done? What can be left out? Significantly, the outcome of the process of 'selecting' also influences the extent to which parents 'individually persevere' with tasks. In cases where parents felt that art was less important children often did not complete art activities, whereas parents who valued art activities ensured that art tasks were completed.

Parents often decided the value of a task without consulting with teachers and ‘skipped’ activities that looked like ‘a waste of time’. One parent bemoaned that:

*cutting out, they ask for that to be done from Year 1-Year 7. I have never bothered to get the kids to cut out. They did go to pre-primary. They learned how to use a pair of scissors. They did pass the time and do all of the cutting themselves.*

Another area where the home tutor had to adjust work was when the *Set* was too difficult or perhaps just had too much writing for the children to do. Parents are asked in the first instance to contact their class teachers and discuss how to alter the materials. SIDE was particularly hopeful that parents would make informed decisions about the materials and have a flexible attitude when working with the teacher. Parents in this study tended to contact the teacher if they felt there would be ‘some point to it’. Otherwise it was just ‘easier’ to telephone other SOTA families and ask them.

Some curriculum areas were often ‘left out’ as they were not considered to be as important as other curriculum areas. Home tutors tended to get the ‘essentials’ done and if there was ‘time later’ other schooling could be undertaken. The Arts were most often not pursued. One of the reasons for this was the lack of time in the school day. Home tutors tended to get schooling ‘done’ in the morning and what could ‘not be done during that time just didn’t get done’. They did not have time to be ‘mucking about with art things, as there were other jobs to do’. There was also an indication from home tutors

that Art work was particularly '*messy*' and difficult to '*supervise*'. One home tutor *didn't have eyes in the back of head to be able to protect work from other siblings*'.

Home tutors valued what the Arts had to offer but they were not as important as other schooling. Some home tutors skipped Arts activities amongst the *Set* work as it '*wasted time*'. Others indicated that they just didn't think the activities were relevant or contained any '*real*' learning as they were just making a '*painting*'. Whereas others resorted to the Arts when their child wouldn't complete other work '*I can tell you. When you cannot get your child to write and you are absolutely at your wits end and you have tried absolutely everything, you say well we will do the art then*'.

Home tutors prioritised their child's time and would not let children undertake art or sports activities until everything else was finished. Effectively this decreased motivation in the child to undertake art activities as they '*would rather go out and play and became stroppy if made to stay in*'. One home tutor indicated that she was really '*put in her place one day*' as '*he said they have scheduled in for me to do this art now and you keep putting it aside and I want to do it right now. So he has actually won this. He has a point*'.

Many home tutors did not feel that they had enough skills to undertake Arts, Physical Education, Computing, LOTE or Science activities and relied on the teacher. If the teacher did not promote or support these areas '*well then they didn't bother either*'. It was just '*too hard*' and besides '*often they didn't have enough materials*'.

Where home tutors and teachers had an interest in other curriculum areas and had achieved some success with their child there was tendency to include

them. Home tutors were often amazed at their child's ability and fully supported the inclusion of a curriculum that was more encompassing. They often sought out extra materials or became quite creative in how they developed these areas. One home tutor took the children walking with sketchbooks and they would draw for considerable time. The pictures were often framed and pinned up in places where the whole family could appreciate them. In another case a SOTA encouraged a home tutor with ceramics expertise to engage all of the home tutors in a project that resulted in a tiled wall for the new SOTA building. All of the families were proud of their efforts.

However, as in the case of 'rationalising' in the third category, the outcome of the process 'selecting' is influenced significantly by either the parent's previous experience as a home tutor or on other home tutors' advice and opinions.

#### ***4. Strategising***

'Strategising' is the final major process within the category 'teaching'. It is the process through which parents developed ways in which to engage children in learning. Through the process of 'strategising', parents adopted a particular stance in relation to themselves as the home tutor, which, in turn, influenced the nature, and extent of the teaching strategies they employed when involved in the schoolroom.

One area that parents focussed on in particular is in developing independence in their children. Developing independence as a '*skill*' is something that the children need later in life. Parents also liked the idea that learning could take place without being '*directed*' by them all of the time

which means the parents could focus on other children or other tasks. Parents have indicated that *'right from the very first day at school I like to encourage them to be independent learners'*. Parents tended to think that it was important that you *'let them get on with things'* as it made it easier as they got older. The strategies that the parents employed varied from parent to parent. However, all parents were concerned with finding ways in which to make the learning easier for their child and developing independence contributed to this.

When parents found effective strategies they would use these until they were no longer useful. Some parents in the study commented that they were able to use the strategies on one child but then it wouldn't work on their other child. Parents tended to alter and change strategies frequently as children often got use to *'what they were up to'*.

#### PROPOSITIONS RELATING TO UNDERSTANDING THE CATEGORIES AND PROCESSES OF 'INDIVIDUAL PERSEVERANCE' WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE DAY-TO-DAY MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLING

The third set of propositions relates to how the categories and processes of 'individual perseverance' can be understood within the context of the day-to-day management of schooling by parents as home tutors. The propositions in this set are examined and the reader is advised to refer to Figure 7.1 for an overview of the categories and processes of 'individual perseverance' when reading this final section.

##### ***Proposition 1***

*The four categories of 'individual perseverance' tended to overlap and parents moved back and forth between them. Although the processes found in the first and second category seemed to occur prior to the core category*

*of 'surviving'. The final category 'teaching' impacted on family life so parents tended to engage in the second category 'interacting' in developing positive family relationships and seeking support from outside of the family.*

Home tutors tended to move between the four categories although new home tutors initially engaged with processes found in the first category of 'acknowledging'. All home tutors passed through the first two categories before experiencing the processes of the core category 'surviving'. Once a home tutor had enrolled in a SOTA, received printed correspondence materials and had undertaken to accept the responsibility of schooling they prioritised schooling amongst other 'jobs'. The home tutor established a schoolroom with equipment for schooling.

Families usually discussed schooling and began to organize other aspects of their general lives. As schooling was being undertaken the home tutor felt the impact of the role on their lives and sought support from the teacher and other home tutors. They establish a '*life line*' to other home tutors. It becomes increasingly important that support for the role is had from the family and particularly from husbands and partners. Routines are soon established to manage busy '*station life*'. Many home tutors attempted being '*super mums*' and this caused stress for both newer and more experienced home tutors.

All home tutors moved into the fourth category quickly and engaged in teaching. They had the immediacy of having to manage printed materials and on-air lessons. They made decisions about what and how their child would complete work. As home tutors became more experienced they were able to

make decisions with confidence about schooling. One home tutor reflected as follows:

*I think it is a confidence thing too because as a parent you feel that it is your responsibility to make sure that your child is educated and the buck stops with you. When you do first start off, particularly if you are not a qualified teacher, you might be a very intelligent person and you might be highly literate and all the rest but because teaching is not your thing it takes a little while to gain the confidence to be able to say to yourself, well this is not necessary so we will scratch that and do this or whatever. You do get over that lack of confidence and after a year or two you can actually work out for yourself what is necessary, what is not, what is best for your child, and what is not.*

There is a considerable amount of pressure on home tutors to complete the materials and certainly if they did not undertake to supervise all of the tasks they might be missing out some critical learning opportunities for their child. Having said this, home tutors tended to be very busy and did make decisions to leave things out of the Sets, but these decisions increased the tensions for home tutors.

Home tutors as a group suffered from intense feelings of inadequacy and during these times sought the support of other home tutors as a first point of call. They sought support from other home tutors as they felt they understood '*the best what they are going through*'.

Home tutors were resilient and accepting of their roles and had a good sense of humour. They enjoyed the times when they could all meet up and share similar understandings. As one group of home tutors put it “*most of us are full time cooks. Most of us at various times are a part-time station hands (laughter). You are doing all the schooling and most of the housework. Mothers may be wise women but probably mad women! (laughter)*”. The camaraderie is very important for being successful in the role of home tutor. There was much evidence to suggest that the networks developed amongst home tutors were also critical in supporting learning. While teachers were often excluded from this level of interaction this was not always the case.

### ***Proposition 2***

*Parents focused on maintaining their lives and viewed the role of home tutor as a job amongst many that required ‘individual perseverance’ in order to survive the impact on the family.*

Home tutors are busy people who live and work in rural and remote locations. They manage a range of roles that have distinct duties. By necessity they need to divide their time carefully in order to manage all that they do. They are predominantly mothers and undertake many of the perceived traditional roles in life in general. They manage the house, but are not limited to this and some ‘*keep the books*’ or participate in shearing and mustering. They undertake the role of home tutor as another ‘*job*’ amongst what they do. They cannot disregard the responsibility of this ‘*job*’ (although some choose to manage the role by hiring a governess).

Those that do undertake the role 'individually persevere' amongst the many roles and feel that they must be successful as the home tutor as the education of their child depended on it. Home tutors are single minded about achieving a good result for their child. At the same time they care about the relationships they have with all family members.

Many home tutors found the role impacted negatively on how they were perceived by other people such as their partners, children and other home tutors. They often felt inadequate and disparaging about the role. There were expectations from the teacher to meet and often husbands and partners place demands on them that made life stressful. Generally home tutors would like to:

*not have to worry about what someone is doing outside, somebody is ringing, I have got other things I really should be doing, my husband is giving me a hard time because I did not go out and I am supposed to do that sort of thing.*

The potential for role conflict always exists for home tutors. The extent to which the role of home tutor is understood by other household members is often the key to reducing role conflict. If home tutors can establish good relationships within the family and with teachers schooling seems to be more successful.

### ***Proposition 3***

*Parents engaged in the processes of 'individual perseverance' through moving back and forth between the categories as issues arise when in the role of home tutor. In other words, regardless of the general category of*

*'individual perseverance' in which the parent is operating at a particular point in time, the full gamut of processes may be utilized to deal with new and challenging aspects of the role of home tutor, which may arise at any time.*

There is no distinction between the categories once parents have engaged with the role of home tutor home tutors are continually defining and understanding what they do:

*the thing is we are teaching as parents not as teachers. The general perception is that well community perception is that when your kids have reached age five or six parents are no longer recognised as teachers. You send them to a qualified person and we are - we are it and a lot of us, particularly when you are confronted with a program in the materials that it assumes a fairly high level of literacy in the home tutor and you look at it and unless you are fairly highly literate it is scary. You think well if I will follow it exactly I cannot go wrong, can I, unless, of course, your child does not pick up a concept or might be a little bit slow picking up a concept and you immediately think what sort of parent am I. Either my child cannot learn or I cannot teach it. There is a big guilt factor involved in everything. To avoid the guilt factor you tend to follow it exactly like a prescription.*

Home tutors moved between the categories of acknowledging, interacting, surviving and teaching in order to ensure that schooling is the best they can offer and often question what they are doing. They needed to understand their role in order to be able to act within the role.

They sought support from other home tutors, their families and teachers for a range of reasons. Home tutors wanted to know about teaching, the materials, and how to manage behaviour, as three examples. When teaching they established routines in order to prioritise aspects of learning and often selected what and how learning would be undertaken. They developed teaching and learning strategies in the schoolroom, which were juggled alongside the reality of general life that may have included looking after other siblings and contributing to station life.

***Proposition 4***

*The extent of 'individual perseverance' varied amongst parents. Parents managed the role of home tutor in relation to their unique situations. Each parent responded to the role in relation to the other roles they managed as part of busy 'station' life. A response for some was to engage a governess.*

Parents made choices about how schooling would be undertaken. For all parents at the SOTAs schooling was a priority. However, each family was unique with its own particular circumstances that needed to be addressed. For some home tutors engaging a governess was the only choice. For other home tutors this option was not possible as the cost of an extra employee was burdensome and by default someone must undertake the role. How committed home tutors were varied across the SOTAs. Some home tutors went beyond what may be viewed by other home tutors as required schooling and provided extensive experiences for their children. They also engaged more with the teacher and sought frequent feedback and support. In all, home tutors have responsibility for schooling and how they choose to exercise this responsibility is unique to each.

**Proposition 5**

*What parents do as the home tutor is informed by previous experiences, interactions with other home tutors and teachers. The correspondence materials sent from their teachers also guide them. However, they at times tended to rationalize their decision making in relation to what they 'individually' perceived as being of value.*

Many home tutors made decisions about schooling based on their own experiences, values and beliefs. They focused on what they believed to be the 'essentials' for schooling. While they valued a school experience that had a breadth of curriculum areas they tended to focus on literacy areas rather than the Arts or Physical Education. As a group home tutors indicated that:

*A lot of people who teach their own children do value the Arts and think it's a really great thing to expose your children but it falls back on you to be the one that has to deliver whatever it is that you want to do. I don't really have the skills or the time as I have to get through the Sets first.*

Generally all home tutors felt duty bound to complete the printed materials and they counted these as being more important than other curriculum areas such as the Arts or Physical Education. They completed the materials supplied by SIDE and adjusted them as required. They often left out work that they felt took too much time and effort. The Arts, unfortunately, are often left out. home tutors justify and rationalize their decisions based on not having enough time. One home tutor indicated that she had been meaning for years to teach her kids how to play guitar:

*But I just haven't done it. And last year they started learning recorder over the air and it was fantastic, but they could do so much more, but then it's up to me to have the time to do it, or to make the time to do it.*

This example is not uncommon and home tutors were often regretful for not getting ‘around to’ the Arts especially when they could often observe the benefits. They indicated that it was not ‘until you actually do it you don't really realize how much of a difference it makes. And you know when you've got to confess that yes it does improve your children's schooling, it really hurts’.

There were some practical difficulties as well. It was hard for teachers and home tutors to undertake the Arts and Physical Education through the distance materials and the on-air lessons. It just ‘wasn't’ always practical. Poor reception could be frustrating for many home tutors who needed the support of an on-air lesson. One home tutor said:

*When we had music last year, it was very ambitious, and I can appreciate what was trying to be taught over the air, but it just didn't work, because the reception's not good. Harris (pseudonym) didn't have a clue what we were teaching. And like, like I appreciate it was difficult over the air, but..*

Home tutors at times had to balance the schooling of several children and some were happy to include a breadth of curriculum but did not feel that it was fair of the teachers to expect them to have to engage with extra work in order to

do so. The on-air lessons could be used as times to work with other children. Home tutors tended to become frustrated when the teacher was not realistic about schooling. They tended to organize themselves to meet the demands of schooling and some used the on-air lessons to focus on other schooling needs. In these situations home tutors were making their own decisions about what was important and how they managed 'getting it all in for all the kids'. Others felt that the Arts seemed to take far too much preparation time for the amount of curriculum time devoted to them. For instance one mother said:

*I don't think in a music curriculum which comes presented to us as a half hour air session once a week, that there should be a page to two pages of reading for the home tutor, to keep up with what the child has to hand in at the end of the term. Because if you have three students in a home situation and you tend to use air sessions as a time where you can go and work with another student.*

## CONCLUSION

In this chapter the theory of 'individual perseverance' was presented as three sets of coherently interconnected propositions. Consideration of each of the sets of propositions has been provided in regards to how parents as 'home tutors who have no specific training as teachers manage the schooling of their children in rural and remote locations. These were: (1) propositions relating to the overall theory of 'individual perseverance', (2) propositions relating to the processes of 'individual perseverance' and (3) propositions relating how the

categories and processes of 'individual perseverance' can be understood within the context of parents as home tutors.

In the following and final chapter of this thesis consideration is now given to the implications of the theory of 'individual perseverance' in relation to policy, practice, other bodies of theoretical literature.