

**Exploring Teachers' Perspectives of the Accelerated Learning
Model**

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November 2004

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Abstract

Inclusive education is, nationally and internationally, a current political trend. Inclusion involves more than education itself but one major driving force for change is the schooling system we develop for our children.

One approach to including all children is to focus on and develop teaching and learning methods. This is based on the argument that if children have their learning needs met and see a purpose to their own education, they will develop into independent learners. This will reduce the likelihood of them becoming disaffected within their schooling environment.

Cognitive psychologists and educational researchers have aimed to develop theoretical models to explain learning and help teachers undertake their role most effectively. One such theoretical model is the Accelerated Learning model. It combines an awareness of the individual's well-being and their environment with the theory of multiple intelligences and structured teaching and learning styles in an attempt to provide optimum conditions.

This thesis considers teachers' perspectives of the Accelerated Learning model and explores the idea that to be successful these two issues are intrinsically inter-dependent. The data was collected and analysed using a narrative enquiry approach, based on Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) work. The resulting joint story demonstrates an impressive commitment and enthusiasm within the teachers' perspectives and I suggest a value for the Accelerated Learning model as a credible teaching model. The importance of adopting it in its entirety is stressed by the teachers and a true sense of 'the sum of its parts being greater than the whole' emerged. The idea that this work is continuing to evolve is discussed within the thesis.

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Introduction

Imagine. You sign up for a night school class in glass painting. You're excited, a little apprehensive but looking forward to a new experience. What should you expect? Certainly an approach appropriate to what you are trying to learn. An experienced teacher with knowledge of the techniques used in glass painting, with good skills, able to show you how to construct a glass painting; time to let you practice your skills and time to ask questions; structured guidance to complete tasks in small steps and progress at your own pace, to revisit the bits you find difficult to grasp. And at the end of the course, you will hope to be able to show what you have achieved, maybe expect some constructive feedback and praise and while some of the other students may achieve better results or find it easier than you, it does not matter because not everyone can achieve the same, can they?

You would probably feel disappointed if at the end of the course you did not feel confident enough to attempt your own glass painting without supervision. If you received a label of "Glass painting difficulty", because you had not achieved a particular level of attainment, you might well feel disillusioned. If this label was then recorded and when you signed up for a different course in the future, even one that did not rely on similar skills, it was to be mentioned to the teacher, this might undermine your confidence at attempting future courses.

It is in such ways that our current education system highlights difficulties experienced by a minority of pupils who are categorised as having special educational needs, early in their educational careers. They are often labelled for one specific difficulty but this can become a more general label affecting every part of the curriculum. Once a label has been assigned it is very difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to escape from it, no matter what they do or how they may improve their skills. We must be aware of the damage this may do to certain children and its impact on their belief in themselves as learners.

As adults we are expected to be in control. We have chosen to do the glass painting course, we do not know how good we will be until we are on it. We are perhaps happy to accept that we may be good, very good or else accept that this is not the course for us, and if this is the case we will not attend another glass painting course. We will not allow it to undermine our confidence and we will accept that our skills are in other areas and not let this experience affect these.

Children, however, do not have the experience or confidence to realise that failure in one area does not mean that they are not capable in others. It is our responsibility as the adults in their lives to ensure that we help them to realise that all individuals have strengths and areas for development and not let their self-image be constructed through negative experiences.

Labels for learning difficulties tend to be given if a child is experiencing difficulties in developing appropriate literacy and numeracy skills and can over shadow their abilities in other areas. It is vitally important that these areas are addressed because these labels and lack of basic skills can result in children being excluded from wider experiences.

Each year children leave our education system without adequate literacy and numeracy levels:

Far too many young people reach the end of their compulsory schooling with inadequate basic skills. For them FE provision represents their best chance of access to opportunities the rest of us take for granted. There are seven million adults in this country who have inadequate basic skills. They represent the greatest single failure of the education system.

(Bell 2003)

We have a growing system for raising basic skills standards and continual guidance for raising achievements and valuing individuals (Every Child Matters, DfES 2003). Education has always been part of a political agenda and the 21st century will be no different. However now, more than ever, there are links between theory and practice and there is invariably a drive to inform and improve our teaching and learning practices.

Inadequate basic skills prevent too many people fulfilling their potential, either at work or in life in general. The personal, social and

economic consequences are immense.

(Sherlock, 2003)

The content we need to teach is dictated now by the National Curriculum but the methods we use remain in our control. Traditional teaching methods with the teacher playing a central role may work for a large number of learners and those for whom it did not work were accepted as having individual difficulties. These methods were acceptable in a system which discarded children as failures. It was also possible to make a living when you left school without necessarily needing a high level of literacy and numeracy skills since employment of a manual nature was often available, eg. Ship building, coal mining. However if we need and want to keep **all** children in formal, structured education we need to learn how to help them to learn effectively.

As an Educational Psychologist I am passionate about the psychology of teaching and learning and also the inclusion agenda. I truly believe that **all** children deserve to receive an education that is matched to their own needs but that also prepares them for a life outside school. At present some children are excluded from our education system, due to difficulties with learning, behaviour or even access to buildings. It is a principle of this thesis that there is a need to address this exclusion and it is within the capabilities of those working in education to achieve inclusion. It is not easy and it may take ‘a leap of faith’ but as Stainback and Stainback (1990) state:

Now is the time to go forward to begin the process and meet the challenges, remembering that barriers are only problems waiting to be solved. (p248)

It is fair to say that many teachers and others within the education system are beginning to travel this journey and are challenging the barriers when they meet them. There is a growing knowledge of how children learn most effectively and this is beginning to impact on lessons, (Smith, 1997 and Ginnis 2002). There is also a growing awareness that if children can be successful learners they are less likely to become disruptive in the classroom, (Sotto, 1994). The process has not been without reward and events we experience reinforce why the journey is worthwhile. The next step is to share this practice with others, to show that within the current

educational system, with all its guidelines and policies, it is possible to make a difference not only for the current students but also the staff. As Stainback and Stainback (1990) highlight with the use of a well known Talmudic saying:

You are not required to complete the task, but neither are you free to refrain from it. (p248)

I work in education in the early 21st century and my role is to support children and teachers to ensure that they maximise their learning potential. I believe that even when children have difficulties with their behaviour and their learning, intervention strategies should primarily address their learning needs.

This thesis maps the journey I have taken over recent years in developing both inclusive practice and the Accelerated Learning model with a group of schools and it focuses on the Accelerated Learning model's impact upon teachers working in the current social and political context, by considering their perspectives of the model. It develops methodological ideas from Narrative approaches. It explores the rationale and methodology needed to allow the participants to discuss their beliefs and experiences on their own personal journeys. I suggest that the teachers and myself have taken on the role of 'co-researchers' and together we have shaped the journey. This approach respects the expertise and knowledge that these teachers have gained through the application of accelerated learning techniques. It challenges our professional boundaries by acknowledging that we can learn from each other and together our combined knowledge creates a new dimension to our thinking.

This research considers the current educational context with reference to developments in cognitive psychology, curriculum, pedagogy and the current inclusion agenda. If we are to be inclusive and to develop our pedagogical styles, it will be important to consider where this research leads us and how it may inform our future practice. It may provide some answers to how we include a wide range of abilities into our classrooms successfully.

This thesis does not follow a conventional format. It begins with the rationale and methodology before considering the relevant literature. This decision was taken as

the research developed from my involvement in an LEA project. The research itself became part of this intervention by allowing the individuals involved time to reflect on their practice. As the research is driven by their stories, the role of research questions was not as prominent. For this reason the 'how' to gather the data was initially more important than the 'what' and it was only by choosing an appropriate methodology that the strength of the 'what' became apparent.

Chapter 1 lays the foundation by considering methodological issues around the area of narrative research and the case for combining individual narratives to create a joint story by the researcher and her research participants. The concept of co-researchers is also explored.

Chapter 2 considers the wider issues within the literature on education, children's educational needs and recent developments in view of inclusive education and teaching and learning methods.

Chapter 3 clarifies some of the practical methodological issues and outlines the structure of the joint story.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 explore the co-researchers views relating them specifically to the components of the Accelerated Learning model.

- Chapter 4 discusses the significance of the learning environment to both the child and the teacher.
- Chapter 5 considers the foundations that are needed for successful learning to take place
- Chapter 6 develops ideas of teaching for effective learning with particular reference to visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles
- Chapter 7 is based on Gardner's work on multiple intelligences and their role in children becoming independent learners
- Chapter 8 explores the importance of reviewing learning to ensure it is retained over time and also addresses the co-researchers experiences following the implementation of the model.

The conclusion reflects on the aims of the thesis and considers the issue of change.

Chapter 1

Rationale and Methodology

In this chapter, the reasons for the current research are identified. Narrative enquiry as a research method is explored and the concept of a joint story within this thesis is discussed. The aims of the current research are identified throughout and summarised at the end of the chapter.

I became aware of the area of Accelerated Learning while studying for my A level in Psychology and when I became a teacher I worked with a variety of the techniques in my own classroom. Then as an Educational Psychologist, working within an LEA project entitled “Accelerating Achievement: Raising Standards by Improving Thinking and Learning Skills”, I became interested in why individual teachers adopted the Accelerated Learning model. The LEA course itself had aimed to connect current teaching practice with theoretical insight to ensure it was meaningful for the practitioners, develop these ideas within a framework and then support the staff in developing their ideas within their own setting. It could be argued that teachers already have an interest level before they attended the LEA course and therefore it was not just the content of it that determined the outcomes. Individuals may choose to come on a particular course or to explore a topic because it ‘fits into’ or challenges their current schema (Bruner, 1960). Or they may recognise that teachers should always be looking for ways to develop their practice and help solve their classroom problems. (Sotto, 1994) The question is what was it that, combined with an introductory course, encouraged or allowed these individual teachers to develop their work within the Accelerated Learning model? The teachers who took part in the data collection for this thesis were chosen as a cross section who felt that they were having success from applying the model in their teaching. The implications of this chosen sample are discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 10. The data was collected through a series of interviews with the teachers.

Choosing a Methodology

The aim of the current research was to collect Teacher's views, not just through answering a list of questions in a structured questionnaire but to allow them to elaborate their thoughts. An interview methodology was obviously the most appropriate for this purpose but careful consideration needed to be made about the structure of the interviews.

Kvale (1996) describes:

A qualitative research interview is semi-structured: it is neither an open conversation nor a highly structured questionnaire. It is conducted according to an interview guide that focuses on certain themes and that may include suggested questions. (p27)

Implementing such an approach would have resulted in gathering teachers' views but they would have been firmly fixed within my own agenda. As Kvale (1996) states:

The research interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation. (p6)

The difference between this and the narrative approach may appear to be quite subtle but my aim was not only to construct knowledge but to give the teachers a voice. It was not about sharing or validating my views but eliciting theirs. However, unstructured the interview is, the researcher plays an important role. It is necessary, therefore, to acknowledge and address this with the chosen methodology, as narrative research does.

Using an unstructured interview method would also have used extracts to support questions or edited views within a set agenda. For the current research the aim was wider; to maintain the richness provided by those taking part and using their stories in their entirety.

The method for analysing the data also needed to be considered. The chosen method for this, based on the work of Hollway and Jefferson (2000), is discussed towards

the end of this chapter. The reasons for not using a more structured method, such as grounded theory, are outlined here.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) propose that Grounded theory is a:

process of interpretation carried out for the purpose of discovering concepts and relationships in raw data and then organising these into a theoretical explanatory scheme. (p11)

The reasons for using grounded theory in research are explained by Strauss and Corbin (1998):

A researcher does not begin a project with a preconceived theory in mind (unless his or her purpose is to elaborate and extend existing theory). Rather, the researcher begins with an area of study and allows the theory to emerge from the data. (p12)

The current research is extending an existing theory and for it to be recognisable to teachers who apply the Accelerated Learning model, it was important not to develop a whole new set of themes, which may over complicate the picture. The aim was not to find new themes from the data but to connect the views shared to an already existing and established model.

One strand of recent qualitative research places an emphasis on the need to encourage interviewees to express their own beliefs in their own words, (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). This approach was adopted in the current research and to avoid fixing on the interviewer's agenda, participants were encouraged to speak at length rather than being expected to answer a list of questions. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) state that

The kind of relationship that the question-and-answer approach has established...is the interviewer defines the agenda. (p28)

Polkinghorne (1988) proposes that when the researcher starts with a series of questions they are searching for information which contributes to their own constructed story. Stake (1988) supports this by suggesting that the researcher has "some conception of the unity of totality of a system with some kind of outlines or boundaries" (p15) and therefore chooses which information fits and which should be dismissed. To avoid this in the current research the data gathered needed to be

the teacher's story, their journey, their views. Each story was defined on its own terms, with the teachers able to express what their views were at that time. The stories were taped and transcribed. These transcripts were included in their entirety and related to the elements of the Accelerated Learning model as appropriate. For this reason a narrative approach was developed where, as Hollway and Jefferson (2002) suggest:

In the narrative approach, the agenda is open to development and change, depending on the narrator's experiences (p31)

It was important not to dilute the participant's experience to a key idea, because the variety and quality would be lost and the strength of the information gathered remains in its richness and complexity. It was therefore vital that the chosen methodology would retain this richness and complexity.

Narrative Enquiry

Throughout the recent literature there is a suggestion that qualitative methods are receiving a huge amount of interest, particularly within psychology, (Symon & Cassell, 1998).

Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that narrative enquiry "refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human action." (p5) and most narrative enquiry centres around the stories and events of people's personal lives and experiences, gathered through an interviewing process. Chase (1995) suggests that:

Attending to another's story in the interview context...requires an altered conception of what interviews are and how we should conduct them (p31)

The current research is focused around events in people's professional lives and upon the roles they play within them. However, it is difficult to separate where the influences in their personal lives stop and their professional lives start. Although this research is about teachers perspectives of the Accelerated Learning model and

its success, the implementation of the model is intrinsically linked to the people involved. They bring with them their personal beliefs and experiences.

Polkinghorne (1988) describes the process of Narrative as:

the type of discourse composition that draws together diverse events, happenings, and actions of human lives into thematically unified goal-directed purposes.(p5)

This description encapsulates the aims of my study. Each teacher has adapted the model to suit their needs. They have each chosen a different path to travel along, but ultimately a selection of aims become apparent in improving children's experiences of school and education.

There is agreement in the literature that the term narrative has a variety of meanings and that this in turn has contributed to a lack of clarity, (Polkinghorne, 1988, Barone, 1992, Nespore & Barylske, 1991). One particular style that can be adopted within narrative research enquiry is stories, where ideas are linked together "using a plot" (Bruner, 1990). Mishler (1986) suggests stories have a:

Setting, problem, plan of action and outcome (p53)

Labov (1972) however, proposes a more complex model that includes an:

Abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result or resolution and coda (p53)

Bruner (1990) proposes that we do not deal with our world as individual events that follow in a systematic order, instead people use plots to "understand and describe the relationship among the events and choices of their lives." (p7) Polkinghorne (1988) suggests that stories "combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode"(p7) and that they are concerned with "attempts to progress to a solution, clarification or unravelling of an incomplete situation."(p7) However, as du Preez (1991) argues:

it is not simply to produce a reproduction of observations; rather, it is to provide a dynamic framework in which the range of disconnected data elements are made to cohere in an interesting and explanatory way. (p20)

Polkinghorne (1988) proposes that the events and actions included in a story relate directly to the plot eg. Winning a game, and other less pertinent events, in the view of the storyteller, remain in the background. Spence (1996) refers to this process as “narrative smoothing”. This needs to be considered with the stories included in this research.

Accelerated Learning was the focus and therefore the stories are embedded in whatever construct this is for the individual. It may be that other key events were instrumental in their choices but are not necessarily linked by them or viewed as important, however by not defining direct questions I hoped to enable them to include whatever they wanted in their story. Freeman (1984) proposes that “causal linkage of events is often known only retrospectively.”(p8) Hatch (1993) warns that all stories are based in a historical, cultural, political and social setting and we must not focus on the story itself without being mindful of the others. Smulyan (1994) suggests that:

[at issue is] balancing the story of the individual in all of its uniqueness with the larger social, political, economic contexts which frame it and are, in turn, reinforced or challenged by the individual’s actions and responses. (p120)

My discussions with teachers may have been the first time that they constructed their stories for an outside audience and it may have been the first time that they saw links in their practice. The chosen methodology allows the research to become an intervention. It provides opportunities for reflection and it is this that I feel provides the strength for the current research which builds on the work undertaken in the LEA project. Barone (1992) raises the question of whether such stories can be trusted? He quotes Grumet (1988) who states that stories are “masks through which we can be seen” and that “every telling is a potential prevarication.” (p63) Hollway and Jefferson (2000) propose that stories can be trusted as long as we recognise

that the story told is constructed (within the research and interview context) rather than being a neutral account of a pre-existing reality (p31)

The role and function of language and thought was explored extensively by Vygotsky (1962) and the impact of telling such a story on the individual's thoughts is immense. He suggests that:

Thought undergoes many changes as it turns into speech. It does not merely find expression in speech; it finds its reality and form.
(p126)

Emihovich (1994) argues that if, as Vygotsky proposes, language and thought are developed through social interaction then "it can never be the case that science can stand apart from the discourse structure it uses to communicate results."(p38) This is a key concept of the current research and rather than try to separate process and result the data gathered is used to construct a joint story between the researcher and the participants.

Post-Modernist approaches

There is a conflict here between what has been seen as scientific research where the researcher is 'standing' in an elevated position and draws conclusions from the research without allowing themselves to be part of the process. As Emihovich (1994) states "the social science world is about distancing passion, of pursuing knowledge without being involved, of holding imagination at bay." (p40) The contrasting belief is that the research not only affects the researcher but is also affected by the researcher in the conclusions drawn. In my research there is a need to focus upon and develop ways of considering the impact of emotions. It is the personal drive and passion within these teachers that I feel plays a substantial part in making Accelerated Learning successful.

It is also important to consider the relationship between myself and my co-researchers. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) state, first impressions and the unconscious dynamics during the co-production of the data must be considered when working in this way. My role was different with each interviewee. In the case of some of my 'co-researchers' I was the Educational Psychologist for their school as well as the supporting Educational Psychologist for the project. For some I was just their supporting Educational Psychologist, for others I was an Educational

Psychologist from their LEA interested in their role in our project and for others I was simply a researcher, interested in what they had themselves done following initial training. Mishler (1986) considered focused interviews and warned that it takes:

Discipline and practice to transform ourselves from the highly visible asker of our questions to the almost invisible, facilitating catalyst to their stories. (p36)

But that by aiming for invisibility it does:

Not imply a belief in an objective interviewer who has no effects on the production of accounts.....it means not imposing a structure on the narrative (p36)

It was important to allow the teachers to construct their own story whatever the nature of our working relationship.

Wardhaugh (1985) suggests that through a conversation subtle changes are likely to occur between the participants and that both parties will have 'wants' that need to be addressed if they are to feel "happy with it"(p3). This is an interesting point. What did my co-researchers need to get from our conversations to feel they had been valuable for them? Several wanted to help me out: "you're welcome, I just hope that's of some use really" (Elizabeth), "does that make sense?.....is that all you need – oh right" (Alison) or believed that I must have a 'hidden agenda': "is there anything else that we should talk about?" (Marie). At times they needed confirmation, agreement, support, acceptance that what they were doing was somehow right – verification, but also there was an uncertainty about whether what they were saying was valid or useful. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) reinforce this view:

It's a 'well, this is the story of my relationship to your chosen topic, you decide whether it's what you're after' sort of reply. The particular story told, the manner and detail of its telling, the points emphasised, the morals drawn, all represent choices made by the storyteller.(p34)

I often tried to encourage and affirm through gesture, smiling and language and I wanted to remain accepting when I disagreed with something they said and remain focused on what they were saying when they set me off on a thought process.

Wardhaugh (1985) proposes that “we are likely to be hesitant about questioning too much so as to seek clarification” (p35) but warns that “the result is that we may well put quite a different interpretation on events than the speaker intended” (p35). I intend to guard against this by including the extracts in their original form and thus enabling new readers to make their own interpretations.

Wardhaugh (1985) states:

“A conversation is not simply *about* something, nor is it merely a series of somethings, such as topics. A conversation *is* something. It is a performance, a kind of show in which the participants act out as well as speak whatever it is that they are doing”

Barone (1992) supports this by suggesting that “teachers tell stories about themselves, they are not revealing or expressing, but crafting and constructing, those ‘selves’” (p65) This reflects Vygotsky’s argument ‘as I speak I am constructing my thoughts’. Wardhaugh (1985) continues by suggesting that each player constantly evaluates what they are saying and doing although he suggests that “it is very rarely that any of [these] becomes a conscious activity” (p39). However, one question that I have considered is whether in fact they do become conscious within the research setting?

Wardhaugh (1985) uses the analogy of a conversation being “like a scene in a play in that it is a discrete event in a larger ongoing process”. This is a very important point when considering the relationship I had with the participants. Comments from the transcripts highlight that the research was not a discrete event as they referred to training or reiterated my own previously shared views. “as Accelerated Learning goes I think a lot of, **as you say**, a lot of the thoughts behind it is already embedded in the ethos of the school.” (Alison) “after **you** did the staff training” (Alison). Some teachers felt it was necessary to share their own philosophy, individual school setting or other background information before beginning to talk about Accelerated Learning directly.

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) propose that:

We cannot be detached but must examine our subjective involvement because it will help to shape the way in which we interpret the interview data (p33)

Emihovich (1994) raises a note of caution:

If social scientists choose not to distance passion, what implications does this choice have for their being recognised as scientists?(p41)

He proposes that if researchers want to use people's experiences as 'text' and develop them to produce accounts of reality and to inform future practice, then how the text is organised and the issue of voice and power need to be considered very carefully.

The issue of voice

Benjamin (1968) proposes that:

The storyteller takes what she tells from experience – her own and that reported by others. And she in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to her tale (p87)

This idea is developed throughout the current research and therefore its structure reflects it. Benjamin (1968) argues that stories are more powerful and stand the test of time better than information. Emihovich (1994) states that:

To be an intellectual in a modern university culture is to trade in the value of information (p39)

Whereas Benjamin (1968) argues that:

The value of information does not survive the moment in which it was new. It lives only at that moment; it has to surrender to it completely and explain itself without losing any time. A story is different. It does not expand itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time. (p90)

One methodological aim of the current research is to create a joint story. As Bateson (1991) suggests:

There's no need to drain intelligence out of situations where emotions are important. (p40)

In this research there is a need to focus on emotions: the personal drive and passion within these teachers is intrinsic to the success of Accelerated Learning.

Emihovich (1994) discusses the reasons for authors of scientific articles using phrases such as 'one says' or 'the author says' instead of 'I'. He proposes that:

the lack of directness allowed the writer to evade responsibility for his or her statements or opinions. If you did not say it, then you could not have been held accountable for the beliefs being expressed. (p42)

If I am stating that this research is a collection, an amalgamation, of shared views from staff and myself and that I play an important role as co-researcher, then I/we must be directly accountable for the ideas and views expressed. Each voice should be recognisable to its owner and true to its meaning. For this reason I will represent my views in the first person and my co-researchers, who also use first person, will be identified throughout.

Their words are obviously represented by me, not rephrased, but edited to build a shared story. I feel they were co-researchers because through sharing their beliefs, journeys and discoveries with me, they have significantly influenced my thinking. Benjamin (1968) encapsulates this belief:

The storyteller takes what she tells from experience – her own or that reported by others. And she in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to her tale. (p39)

Emihovich (1994) warns that just because the 'subjects' in a research situation are re-named as "informants or participants"(p42) it does not necessarily provide them with a stronger voice. Fine (1990) suggested that we simply use other voices to speak our own message. Gabriel (1991) states:

The most evident danger of story-based research is the selective use of organizational narratives to amplify or reinforce the researcher's preconceived ideas or assumptions. Organizational narratives then become ingredients in the researcher's own agendas.....as every journalist knows, through selective presentation, editing, headlining and framing, a narrative may be put to work within virtually any overall story. (p156)

To avoid this the joint story in this thesis was constructed using the framework of the Accelerated Learning model and the transcripts in their entirety. Another aim of the current research was to explore how the Accelerated Learning model was being implemented in classrooms. It was important not to use the narratives to construct my own story, it was to relate the narratives to the structure provided by the Accelerated Learning model. By doing this it should be possible to discover which parts were influential in people's thinking but also to allow the stories to develop around the teacher's chosen focus. It was necessary to also include items that may contradict or challenge the model. Wicomb (1991) supports this view:

As a writer [unlike an author] I do not have an agenda [in the sense of a list of things to accomplish]. But like everyone else I write from a political position. (p65)

I have had to recognise my own areas of interest and acknowledge these in the current research. My interest in the area of learning and teaching and my belief in the techniques that are discussed is evident and this leads to another aim of this study: to evaluate and suggest practical guidance around the Accelerated Learning model.

Emihovich (1994) challenges the construction of narrative research and the power it invests in the author. He or she has ultimate control over which stories are chosen, the quotes used, how the overall story reads and the conclusions that are drawn. Emihovich (1994) suggests that this can be reduced by using multiple authors but argues that this then leads to the question of who owns the knowledge:

if the informants help shape the text in substantive ways, then how are the boundaries preserved as to who created the knowledge?(p43)

In this research the co-researchers were used to help create the overall story and they shape it in substantial ways. The purpose of any research is to collect information and analyse it or combine it to make a point. My research is no different. Although I did not set out to find answers to predetermined questions it would be unrealistic to suggest that I did not have particular interests within this area. The themes that emerge from the stories help to strengthen and broaden my

own views and my aim is to combine them, within the structure of Accelerated Learning, to provide informed conclusions, to raise questions and to both challenge and support the work that I do and the teachers continue to do. Barone (1992) proposes that:

The aim of storytellers therefore is not to prompt a single, closed, convergent reading but to persuade readers to contribute answers to the dilemmas they pose. (p66)

Barone (1992) suggests that:

narrative accounts unaccompanied by scholarly analysis are viewed as incapable of advancing knowledge about educational matters. (p63)

I feel this should be challenged. It may not be the accounts that need the analysis. My research is aiming to draw conclusions from a process rather than individual facts. The process of listening to, and being part of, conversations about Accelerated Learning techniques has influenced my thinking which in turn will provide useful outcomes for the participants of the research. Hatch (1993) warns that:

Despite the espoused goal of encouraging other voices to be heard, the loudest voice is that of the author (p131)

I make no apology for my voice being the loudest when reading this current research.

Barone (1992) continues his argument and states that:

If educational stories are to reach maturity as a form of educational research, some of the most insightful among them must be left, at least momentarily, unaccompanied by critique or theory. (p64)

It remains important not just to include the parts of the teachers' stories that contribute to overall themes but also to include the contradictions. Clifford (1986) warns that "all constructed truths are made possible by powerful lies of exclusion and rhetoric" (p44) and it is important that the whole process of choosing quotes and framing information in certain ways is linked to a tight process of self-review.

Analysing the Data

The area of Accelerated Learning is continuously developing but also its roots are strongly embedded in a well established body of knowledge around development, learning and education. As Postman (1992) states:

Unlike Science, social research never discovers anything. It only rediscovers what people once were told and need to be told again.”
(p151)

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) suggest four questions that need to be considered when manipulating the data that has been collected.

- What do we notice?
- Why do we notice what we notice?
- How can we interpret what we notice?
- How can we know that our interpretation is the ‘right’ one? (p55)

I intend to create a joint story, based on the structure of the Accelerated Learning model, while incorporating the voices of both my co-researchers and myself. It will not simply be to provide a voice to my co-researchers as Hollway and Jefferson (2000) warn that at this level any interpretation is “insufficiently attentive both to detail and to contradiction” (p56). Instead I intend to adopt their approach of moving between both the parts and the whole of the stories to inform the analysis, linking my co-researchers’ stories to the model and other relevant literature, but also ensuring that in doing so I do not mis-interpret their intentions.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) provide useful guidance in developing the data, collected using qualitative methods, to ensure rigour and authenticity:

1. resonance - the extent to which the research process reflects the underlying paradigm
2. rhetoric – the strength of the presenting argument
3. empowerment – the extent to which the findings enable readers to take action

4. applicability – the extent to which readers can apply the findings to their own contexts (p7)

Sotto (1994) states that:

What is required is a keen but passive alertness. (p48)

Brown (1969) argues that

To arrive at the simplest truth, as Newton knew and practised, requires *years of contemplation*. Not activity. Not reasoning. Not calculating. Not busy behaviour of any kind. Not reading. Not talking. Not making an effort. Not thinking. Simply *bearing in mind* what it is one needs to know. And yet those with the courage to tread this path to real discovery are not only offered practically no guidance on how to do so, they are actively discouraged. (p48-49)

If ever a quote perfectly encapsulated my journey through this EdD, this is it. There is a need to ‘live’ it: to immerse myself in the literature, both of Cognitive Psychology and methodologies, and the stories of my co-researchers; not rushing in with a fixed agenda but allowing the structure to be a ‘tapestry’ of literature and personal beliefs, mine and others. It should not be underestimated, however, how important this is in our schools. If we are going to encourage generations of learners we need them to experience this process and ‘grow’ from it.

Sotto (1994) continues:

Westerners tend to believe that they have to *make* things happen. But when a researcher ‘makes a discovery’, he or she isn’t making anything happen; it is nature that is ‘happening’! When a discovery is made, a human mind and nature get in touch. Nature unfolds its secrets to a mind which has immersed itself in it, and is keenly receptive to it. p49

Similarly the project I’ve been involved in has not *made* the teachers change their practices. Perhaps it has given a common language, a shared arena to express views. This research has allowed me to explore thoughts, values and beliefs that already exist but that perhaps had not been shared. Perhaps this process has also provided them with opportunities to define their thoughts and ideas.

To be able to understand the information that was available in the transcripts I needed to immerse myself in them and the related literature. Sotto (1994) summarises this process. He suggests that learners / researchers need to develop a rough outline of the topic first and that this helps them:

to see how the various bits, of which the topic consists, hang together. It is interesting that learners who really want to understand a topic always feel that they don't really understand anything when they first begin to study. Unlike the kind of learner who is content to memorise facts, real learners tend to feel inadequate. They sense intuitively that knowing only facts is nothing and that it is only when one sees the pattern that one begins to understand facts....And these are the learners who find, to their surprise and deep pleasure, that, when they persist in this way, there very slowly comes a time when the material which they are trying to understand begins to take on a shape, a pattern – that is, a meaning. (p43)

It was important for me to go beyond the factual references to the Accelerated Learning Model itself and draw out the underlying commitment that was evident in the transcripts. I also wanted the themes to be very much created by my co-researchers and not my own agenda. Sotto (1994) explains that:

When we can allow a new situation to unfold itself to us, when we can allow it to come to us freshly, not through the screen of our past experiences, expectations or desires; and when we have immersed ourselves by degrees in it, so that all its facets are clear to us, we might then be able to understand it. (p48)

My aim was to come to a new understanding created jointly by my experiences of gathering the data, reading and understanding the data and linking this with relevant literature. Hollway and Jefferson (2000) warn that “people cannot totally be known” (p69) and I am conscious that each teacher was at a different point of a journey. If we spoke again the experiences and views may be different but what I am trying to achieve in this research is the drawing out of commonalities between the individuals wherever they are along that journey.

Editing the Transcripts

Hollway and Jefferson (2000) propose that when:

Faced with a mass of unstructured data, the urge of any researcher is understandably to break these down using some kind of system (p68)

The current research is focused around the structure provided by the Accelerated Learning model and once the transcripts were collected and analysed it became apparent that although my co-researchers had created their own stories there were

several themes that ran through them and these were linked to the Accelerated Learning model. I felt that it would be appropriate to combine the stories in these themes and link them to current literature to allow a shared story to develop.

This decision to link the stories to the structure of the Accelerated Learning model has implications for how the stories will be viewed. As this thesis aims to consider how the model is applied and explore teacher's views of it, it was a conscious decision to collate the data so that those reading the thesis would be helped to relate the data directly to the Accelerated Learning model. This method also allowed the themes that emerged from the stories to be linked to the Accelerated Learning model. One interesting element of the research was that the themes from the co-researchers stories were already present in the Accelerated Learning model.

It was very important to me that the essence of their stories was not lost and that they remained true to their meaning even when segmented. The editing process was, therefore, carefully undertaken to ensure that the final result had neither misinterpreted nor misrepresented the voices of my co-researchers. To ensure this, large extracts were used and if themes crossed over each other but developed into one particular area they were not divided. It was also possible to divide the stories at natural breaks that were created by the authors. This approach is based on Gestalt psychology. Its founder, Wertheimer believed:

That it was impossible to achieve an understanding of structured totals by starting with the ingredient parts which enter into them. On the contrary we shall need to understand the structure; we shall need to have insight into it. There is then some possibility that the components themselves will be understood.....parts are defined by their relation to the system as a whole in which they are functioning (p68)

The transcripts were edited to create stories that would allow the reader to understand the essence of the speech without having to read the complexities and irregularities that are present in spoken English. Words that were repeated, which were not used to provide additional emphasis, were removed. Any pauses in speech using words such as 'erm', 'you know', 'as I say' etc. were also removed to allow the stories to flow. Sentences, which were started, but did not end and were rephrased immediately afterwards by the speaker, were removed from the text.

However, non-ending sentences which were not clarified were left in to demonstrate a change in direction by the speaker. This was done because I felt it was evident that these sentences prompted other thoughts and therefore maintained their significance. I also changed the order of words in some sentences, not to change the meaning but, to comply more closely with written rather than spoken English, eg. ‘As a teacher for me’ was changed to ‘for me as a teacher.’

I decided that as I wanted the voices of my co-researchers to be equal to my own in our shared story, it would be inappropriate to indent their contributions in this thesis. However, I also needed to recognise their voices as distinct from, but complementary to my own and therefore I decided to use an italic font for their words. I also felt that it would be inappropriate to identify each co-researcher’s true identity but wanted to recognise the different contributions each made so pseudonyms were included. Quotations from the literature remain identified and indented throughout the thesis.

Aims of the current research

Learning is an active process, (Smith, 1997). There is a commitment needed from the individual if it is to be successful. One key issue throughout this thesis has been to decide whether the focus is the Accelerated Learning model itself or teachers’ perspectives of it. I set out to discover teachers’ views but in the write up there are times when the model is the main focus. It has become evident from my research that these two, if successful, are inseparable. It has also been found from my research that the model is consistent for everyone to apply but it is the teachers’ commitment and application which ensures both its usefulness and success. This concept is considered by Billington (2004) who develops Descartes’ (1637) idea of “I think, therefore I am” and proposes that if instead we think of it as “I feel, therefore I think” (p18.) then we may come to a very different outcome. He quotes Bion’s (1962) model, that learning occurs “whenever we are able to tolerate the sensations which accompany the incoming stimuli” and “we must be able to tolerate the frustration that results from working with living material.” (p20)

The aims for this research are:

1. To explore teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching
2. To see how the Accelerated Learning model is being implemented in classrooms
3. To encourage evaluation and exploration of the practical applications of the Accelerated Learning model.
4. To create a joint story by allowing teachers time to reflect and share thoughts and experiences which may be known but have not been articulated before.

The overall purpose of collecting this data is to produce a learning tool for teachers that can be used within our LEA project, to support other teachers embarking on it and to help inform practice. To this end the research is, essentially, a journey, a dynamic process which continues to develop. There may not be a clear achievable end point but a continued sense of exploration. I have constructed my own views from the literature and my professional practice. I have shared those views and learnt from others. In combining these experiences and views, I hope to draw some conclusions that challenge and enhance the learning of the reader. At this point it becomes a vehicle, a stimulus, to continue the discussion needed to inform and affect practice.

Chapter 2

Development of theory and practice underpinning the Accelerated Learning model: A Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to locate the current thesis within the social, political and educational agendas of the early 21st century. It charts educational changes through history and considers how schooling should be structured. It discusses the argument for a child centred education and links this with current social legislation. These arguments develop into current views of inclusion and appropriate teaching methods are suggested. It states the case for linking pedagogical style to learning theory and introduces the Accelerated Learning model.

Locating Current Educational Practice

All research is based in time and in specific situations. It is therefore important to locate this present research within current educational practice and the historical factors which have influenced it. It is necessary to consider how the educational practices of the early 21st Century have evolved from political and social circumstances. The current agenda is very much about meeting the needs of the individual child within one establishment. This is not without its difficulties and these are explored in the literature. There is also a growing awareness, amongst teachers, of learning theory and how this is applied to the classroom situation.

Humans have, over many centuries, devised ways of passing knowledge and skills to the next generation. Variations in education systems can be traced back through history. In recent centuries western society has chosen to give formal schooling a central role in this process and to develop mass education. Simon (1994) explains that:

Organised schooling, which until recently only affected a small proportion of the population, now plays a central role. Together with the family it is the chief means by which new generations are inducted into the future. (p3)

If we choose to use methods of formal schooling to achieve our aims, how should they be structured? Should the main focus be on meeting the needs of the individual

child or should it derive from society and its needs? These themes are evident in the historical literature. Whichever we choose, curriculum and pedagogy are central components. In the 1990's new research within the fields of cognitive psychology and neurology has provided us with new information to influence our approach to teaching and learning. "Accelerated Learning" is one such model which uses the insights of psychological research from the 1960's to underpin approaches to teaching.

Defining Education

The Oxford English Dictionary states that education is "the process of educating or being educated, the theory and practice of teaching:" to teach is to "impart knowledge to or instruct in how to do something, especially in a school:" learning is "knowledge or skills acquired through study or by being taught," and a school is "an institution for educating children".

Nunn (1944) stated that:

The primary aim of all educational effort should be to help boys and girls to achieve the highest degree of individual development of which they are capable (p312)

Simon (1994) develops these definitions and proposes that:

Education is about the empowerment of individuals. It is about discovering, and providing the conditions which encourage the fuller development of abilities and skills in every sphere of human activity – artistic, scientific, social and spiritual. (p3)

In recent years education in the UK has been on the political agenda, its professionals ever being expected to strive for new methods and approaches to raise standards or improve experiences. To help us to develop contemporary education it is useful to consider historical perspectives.

Butts (1955) states that the history of education can provide us with two things:

It can show what historical ingredients have gone into our present beliefs and practices and what problems face us when inherited traditions confront new conditions and new demands; and it can show how other peoples in other times have solved similar (though not identical) problems (pvii)

Brooks (1991) supports this view stating that “present day concerns are historical in the sense that it is their history that gives them their meaning.” (p4)

He points out that as early as the 19th Century, Priestley was arguing that:

The teacher’s action must have a necessary effect; and that to achieve positive outcomes the child’s surroundings and all the influences to which he or she was subject must be carefully designed and structured to achieve the desired objectives in terms of human development. (p7)

In the late 19th Century there was a move towards education for the masses, at least at the primary level. Dewey (1900) argued strongly that instead of the child being the central focus, it is the social influences which are of key importance:

Society, through the medium of school, puts its past achievements at the service of its future citizens; but at the same time its whole future is bound up with the school. The school is, in fact, the growing-point of the community.

(in Barnard 1969 p314)

With society’s needs as the main focus McCallum (1990) stated that it became necessary to remove those individuals who were not deemed suitable for education. He proposed that this was a period of “the great ‘psychological capture’ of the school.”(p8) He argued that the focus was one of categorisation and segregation based on scores from psychometric assessments. These views were supported and developed by psychologists such as Cattell, Thorndike, Binet and Burt. Their work helped to form the belief that certain children were not capable of achieving the same standards as others due to personal characteristics or individual factors within them. This view continued throughout the period of the first and second world wars. And so the stage was set for an educational system which focused primarily on ‘within child’ factors to establish not only who should receive education but where that should take place.

Billington (2000) argues against the use of individual child psychopathology and warns about the impact this can have on the lives of individuals:

- “a psychopathology can result in a child being excluded from their existing social relations (eg. a child might be required to change schools);

- a psychopathology can thus separate a child from future social possibilities and opportunities (eg. a child's future economic and employment changes might be restricted);
- the allocation of a psychopathology to a child serves to represent them as separate from the processes of their social relations (eg. it separates the individual child from the environmental circumstances and contexts in which they operate);
- a psychopathology represents as separate, individual characteristics which cannot possibly exist outside a child's own complex system of unities (eg. the allocation of terms such as Asperger's Syndrome as a primary means of social identification can separate certain qualities from the other, unique aspects of their personality);
- a psychopathology can act to separate a child from their abilities and intelligences (eg. by failing to identify possibilities, either inside or outside reductionist definitions such as 'behavioural difficulties' or 'autism')

(p32)

If a teacher believes that the child has a particular difficulty within them then the teacher may believe that they only have limited competence and need an expert to help them meet the child's needs. From my experience, this view also encourages Educational Psychologists to be viewed as experts who have different information and are necessary if teachers are going to be able to devise methods to teach these children. This idea is counter-productive and de-skills teachers. I suggest that it is better to adopt a more collaborative approach which acknowledges the psychologist's and the teacher's expertise and skills but does not view them as hierarchical: rather it sees them as one contribution in a collaborative approach which uses a range of professionals' expertise to devise teaching programmes. This is one of our greatest challenges. Not only do we need to redress our concept of 'expert' but also to ask questions of a system which, rather than questioning itself and adapting its processes, labels individuals who do not fit.

From the 1960's views changed about what children with disabilities could do. (Hegarty, 1993) Until now, children experiencing difficulties had been considered different from the rest of the population and ordinary schools were not an option for them. However there was a growing realisation that some of these children may have been able to manage in a mainstream school. As Floud (1963) states "What only the few could do yesterday the many can do today."(p8) He also proposes that

there is no “iron law of national intellect imposing an upper limit on the educational potential of the population” (p8). Methods for categorising children, like the views behind them, may change over time but the idea that an effective education system requires some form of ranking by ability or need remains. Vlachou (1997) argues that individuals who do not fit into categories “become a threat by revealing the system’s inadequacies” (p25). He proposes that to cover up these inadequacies, different mechanisms were devised which focused instead on the individual’s inadequacies. As a result:

“the children who ‘did not fit’ were perceived not as the ‘social products’ of an insufficient system but as children with ‘special needs’; in other words unmet needs were characterised as ‘special needs’” (p25)

Barton and Oliver (1992) support this view that the fundamental failure of the system to meet individual needs is masked by emphasising individual differences.

Solity (1992) argues that one of the main incorrect assumptions is that the “same teaching environment automatically ensures the same learning experiences”(p42) and that if a child does not make progress then they must have a learning difficulty. We need to challenge this view and look critically at our teaching methods to ensure that we include all children within the education system. It will require us to challenge our own practices and to be willing to explore new ways of approaching situations.

During the 1960’s the work of Vygotsky and Bruner demanded that the focus be returned to educating every child and a process of integration; moving children with special educational needs from specialist provision into mainstream settings began. However, it is not just a process of relocating children but considering all children who have been failed by the system. The focus returned to the child being the centre of the system. Florian (2000) proposes that although it may be immoral to marginalise groups it appears to “serve some kind of protective function in society” (p90) and therefore “operates on many levels and is very difficult to overcome.” (p90)

The Plowden Report was published in 1967 and Simon (1994) summarises it stating that:

The main message was that each child must be seen, and treated, as a unique individual...[and] the teacher should ideally monitor each child's development across three parameters, intellectual, emotional and physical. (p149)

Brooks (1991) argues that the next key date in English educational history was probably 1967 when Callaghan, Labour Prime Minister, made what Brook terms as an "educational state-of-the-nation" speech. This focused education around the following areas:

- Central Government and the Curriculum
- Schools and the basic skills of literacy and numeracy
- Progressive Education
- Industry and Education
- Public Examinations
- The Education Systems
- Teacher Accountability and parental rights
- Monitoring the use of resources
- Teacher Education and Training
- Higher Education
- Adult Education

(adapted from p46-47)

In 1978 the Warnock Report was published and stated that:

The purpose of education for all children is the same: the goals are the same. But the help individual children need in progressing towards them will be different. Whereas for some the road they have to travel towards the goal is smooth and easy, for others it is fraught with obstacles. (p5)

These ideas were supported by the Education Acts which followed. A key Act was the 1988 Act which brought about the introduction of the National Curriculum.

Simon (1994) suggests that:

Acceptance of a national curriculum, whatever its current weaknesses and contradictions, creates a new situation in that it attempts to define common objectives for *all* pupils across the main subjects (p153)

And he continues by arguing that this is

The *first necessary condition* for identifying effective pedagogic means. This represents a profound shift from the Plowden objectives and procedures which in essence denied the viability of the promotion of such common objectives (p153)

When the National Curriculum was revised in 1998, differentiation and inclusive practices were highlighted but were only introduced as an addition to the original document. These focused on setting appropriate learning challenges, responding to diverse needs and overcoming potential barriers.

Several of the main themes running through the historical literature, particularly around the child being the central focus of education, as contrasted with the main focus being the needs of society, are still evident in current educational issues. It is important to acknowledge that this thesis is set against the current political and social background which is founded not only on the rights of the child, but with a strong emphasis on meeting individual needs and inclusion of all.

Current Social Legislation

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1989) aimed to address the issue of children not being educated and ensure that all children experienced education and the ‘fullest possible social integration’. The Salamanca statement (1994) called for the inclusion of disabled children. British legislation supported these views. The Children Act (1989) aimed to give children a greater opportunity to have control over what happened to them and to ensure that they had a voice. The Code of Practice (1994) proposed that where possible the needs of children would be met in mainstream settings and children with special educational needs and those with statements could be educated alongside their peers. This method of integration considered how children are streamed, which category of disability they fitted into, what additional resources would be needed and what specialist settings were needed to deal with their difficulties. Its main aim was in “preparing pupils for placements in ordinary schools....the pupil must adapt to the school.” (Mittler, 2001 p10)

There are issues that need addressing at a national level if inclusion is to stand a chance of succeeding. The view shared by a number of authors that inclusion is not a fixed point, not just a process, but a journey is supported by the policy document “Meeting Special Educational Needs: A Programme of Action” (1998). Jelly et al (2000) ask if inclusion is a process what action needs to be taken, who would carry

it out and how would it be made possible? The “Programme of Action” (1998) states that the government “will encourage all schools to develop an inclusive ethos, for example by involving all staff in training activities to promote a greater understanding of inclusion.”(p25). However this will not be without challenges. As Barnard stated in 1969 “Schools are not just institutions....a school is a community with its own life and tradition and personality” (p329) and therefore it is vitally important that any change is managed carefully. Inclusion is seen as “providing as far as possible for children’s special educational needs within mainstream schools”(p8) but Special Schools will continue to “play a vital role as part of an inclusive local education system”(p23) This viewpoint has not developed far from the Warnock Report (1978) which suggested that Special Schools were beneficial to children through their increased resourcing arrangements.

Armstrong et al (2000) suggest that more recent documentation shows some development in government thinking. The circular “Social Inclusion: Pupil Support” (1999) considers truancy, school exclusion, disciplinary exclusion and a reluctance to attend school all as forms of exclusion. It also highlights particular barriers to learning including ‘families under stress’, looked after children, learners from ethnic minorities, travellers, young carers and those students who move between institutions frequently.

The aim of the documentation is to provide clear guidance for professionals to improve their practice through multi-agency working and early intervention.

Tony Blair spoke in 1999 stating “People don’t want to go back to a system which divides 11 year olds into successes and failures..... I personally meet people for whom rejection at 11 was the most devastating thing that happened to them as children and stayed with them for the rest of their lives.” (Daily Mail, 3 June 1999, p1) This viewpoint appears to be contradicted by the present system in which children as young as 5 are sitting assessments and becoming aware that they are not as ‘good’ as their peers.

Armstrong et al. (2000) propose that all of this documentation only provides a fragmented view of the complete picture and although the documents can be

discussed, the underlying assumptions on which they are based are not always clear and are not presented for discussion. It is also evident that more recent legislation is often based on previous reports as few changes were implemented. Ideals presented in the Children Act 1989 are re-packaged in the Code of Practice. Mittler (2001) refers to "Social Inclusion: Pupil Support" stating that it is clearly based on the 1989 Elton Report which was "warmly welcomed as constructive and sensible and then quietly forgotten".

The Philosophy of Inclusion

Armstrong et al (2000) argue that inclusion is not about focusing on children with particular special educational needs but **all** children and improving their experiences. It is this underlying aim that is more important than a change of language. Booth (2000) argues "the history of inclusion does not take you back to special education." (p64) Armstrong et al. (2000) suggest that "At the heart of the idea of inclusive education lie serious issues concerning 'human rights', 'equal opportunities' and 'social justice'."(p3) Teachers I have worked with dislike the concept of inclusion when it results in them being asked to 'hold on' to children who may otherwise have been excluded for behavioural issues. I feel this misses the true point of inclusion. It should not be about including children in the current system to the detriment of others. Its underlying philosophy should be one of catering for and celebrating diversity but this requires a cultural change and a fundamental change in the way provision is viewed and structured. Armstrong et al (2000) warn that it should not be reduced to an issue of resource management. Inclusion requires a radical look at schools in terms of curriculum, assessment, pedagogy and grouping of pupils. They argue that fundamentally different ways of thinking about the origins of learning and behaviour difficulties is needed and a shift from a 'defect' to a 'social model' needs to be made. As professionals working within education it is important for us to acknowledge that this will not be a simple task as interactions within the system are constant and complex.

From the literature, I believe that Inclusion is not about changing individuals to create a more homogenous group. It is about adapting the system to one which can

recognise differences and celebrate them; a system which can provide different solutions to enable everyone to get the most out of their educational experience.

“All children are enriched by having the opportunity to learn from one another, grow to care for one another, and gain the attitudes, skills and values necessary for our communities to support the inclusion of all citizens.” (Stainback and Stainback, 1990 p19)

Mittler (2001) suggests that inclusion involves:

a process of reform and restructuring of the school as a whole, with the aim of ensuring that all pupils can have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by the school. This includes the curriculum on offer, the assessment, recording and reporting of pupil's achievements, the decisions that are taken on the grouping of pupils within schools or classrooms, pedagogy and classroom practice. (p2)

Pedagogy and Individualised Teaching

Mittler (2001) suggests the starting point for inclusion is the curriculum. I would argue that it also needs to consider learning and how we can best meet individual styles. However inclusive the curriculum is trying to be it can be undermined if the teacher is not committed to the philosophy. Furthermore Christie (1999)

warns against the generation of further 'context blind' government initiatives relating to curriculum and pedagogy. Inclusive education begins from the context of policy and the recognition of the complexity of identity and difference.(p137)

Young (1994) argues that the pursuit of an inclusive society is

based on a view of social justice which requires 'not the melting away of differences, but institutions that promote reproduction of, and respect for, group differences. (p4)

Barnard (1969) argues that the focus of education should:

Imply the full development of the individual, and that this full development can be achieved only through the life of the community of which the individual forms part. That being so, modern English educational theory seems to have progressed along two lines which, if distinct, are very closely correlated. There has been firstly a close study of the individual to be educated – a process which has been assisted by methods which have been worked out by experimental psychologists; and secondly, a philosophical investigation of the social implications of education. (p309)

He continues by stating that by combining these two themes it will help us to devise aims for education and practice.

In 1990 Bruner wrote:

The great psychological questions are being raised once again – questions about the nature of mind and its processes, questions about how we construct our meanings and our realities, questions about the shaping of mind by history and culture. (pxi)

Nothing is new, the themes of challenge which run through our education system today can be traced back through the centuries. However if we are to progress we need to address these challenges with new knowledge and experience.

Bruner (1990) states that:

The cognitive revolution simply absorbed the concept of learning into the broader concept of “the acquisition of knowledge” (p105)

And in doing so Bruner states that it abandoned “meaning making” and instead focused on “information processing”.

Simon (1994) defines the term pedagogy as “the science of teaching” (p148) and quotes from Ward stating that “such a science must be based on psychology and the cognitive sciences.” (p148)

One of the key arguments has been between focusing on an individualized curriculum to meet individual needs and focusing on more general methods that attempt to meet all needs. As recently as 1992 suggestions were being made that individualised curriculum was not possible. Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) state:

Teachers need to reject the essentially unrealistic belief that pupils’ individual differences provide the central clue as to how the simultaneous teaching of many individuals can be organised. The goals of primary education are common to all pupils. It is from this reality that planning for teaching should start.(p154)

Simon (1994) argues that the views of the Plowden Report (1967) were “a recipe for disaster” because:

It obviated any possibility of developing effective pedagogic means (or procedures) within the primary classroom. If each child was to be treated individually as unique, how could general pedagogical procedures appropriate for *all* be developed?(p20)

He suggests that if a child's needs cannot be met in this way alterations should be made to the system. However this view has surely colluded with the concept that there are some children who cannot fit our education system. We have then categorised these difficulties as: learning, sensory, emotional and behavioural and physical. We have set up our support mechanisms around these categories. This is still true at the end of the 20th Century and beginning of the 21st. It does not appear that we question the system itself: rather than blaming / labelling children should we not consider whether treating all children in the same way is actually defensible? One of the overriding difficulties is that pedagogical procedures for all may not actually be possible.

We need to guard against criticising our present systems in the belief that the only solution is to start all over again. It is unrealistic to change a complete system. Smith (1997) argues that “changes in behaviour – whether it involves individuals, organisations or communities – emerge from changes in beliefs.” This is where society impacts on education. In itself education can set its parameters but the people working within it are influenced by their experiences in the wider society. People are one of the most important and influential factors in the education system. Change is possible if people believe it is worthwhile. Commitment to inclusion is already recognised as vital. Over time the education system has moved from believing certain groups were uneducable, to segregated schools, to a recognisable drive for inclusion for all. But we also need to ask whether society is yet sufficiently prepared or ready to accept a ‘socialist view’ or are we trying to introduce inclusion into schools before society in general has recognised that we are all individuals whose needs should be met?

Perhaps it is, though, that someone needs to take the first steps and maybe schools, with their impact on the next generations, should be the leaders.

Changes in language are an important element. Although there is often criticism of politically correct language when it is perceived as becoming too radical there is undoubtedly an effect. By changing labels eg. learning difficulties rather than mental disabilities we can begin to separate the individual from the difficulties. Subtle language changes can have significant impact on beliefs: for example, changing “mental deficiency” to “learning difficulty” shifts the focus from the belief that there is a fixed, “within child” limitation to the belief that the difficulty only relates to one part of a child’s life and is open to being changed. However, this may not prevent exclusion within the educational system.

Vygotsky (1962) argues that language impacts on thinking as children develop and it continues to impact on our adult thinking. Language is the key to our concepts. Different labels predispose us to look for different characteristics and minimise those who do not fit. “Re-framing” difficulties is significant.

Time is also an important element to be considered when suggesting the development of more inclusive practice. There is a need for careful planning, communication and sometimes lateral thinking by teachers to ensure students receive an appropriate curriculum both academic and social. Time for development needs to be protected. Inclusion cannot be achieved without commitment from all those within education, but we also need time to develop our own skills and approaches. Time is needed to plan, reflect on practice and monitor progress. In the current system with baseline assessments, SATs and league tables, progress is clearly monitored but only that which the tests monitor. There is also need for individual school based monitoring of their own inclusive practice. Edmonds 1979 argues that:

We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us. We already know more than we need in order to do this. Whether we do it must finally depend on how we feel about the fact that we have not done it so far.
(p29)

How is inclusion measured if in fact it can be measured. If it cannot, how is success gauged and how are those who monitor the system convinced that inclusive practices are worth continuing with? Gottleib and Leyser, (1981) suggest that:

Research has shown that one major problem some students face in regular education classes is rejection and isolation, that is, they have little peer support and few, if any, friends. (p51)

By developing an environment where we understand and celebrate differences, talents and strengths, without fear of the unknown, will we not all benefit? It is important that we do not fall into the trap of putting in systems to help the 'different' child 'fit' into an existing class, eg. changing the class to accommodate the 'different' child. Recently there has been a focus on emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996) for all children, highlighting that many would benefit from focusing on developing social awareness and developing friendship skills and this in turn would aid the inclusion process. Stainback and Stainback (1990) discuss encouraging support and friendship development by providing a positive interactive style within classes which would help to develop understanding and respect of peers.

Linking theory to practice

Behaviourist Psychologists argued that learning is based on two fundamental factors:

1. the need for the learner to be *actively* engaged; and
2. the need for the learner's appropriate activity to be *reinforced* by being *rewarded* immediately

(Sotto, 1994 p 31)

Questioning within classrooms goes some way to allowing for immediate reward but often rather than being a catalyst for learning it becomes a guessing game between the pupil and the teacher. It is vital that techniques used within the teaching environment are therefore considered and developed to aid the learning process.

Bruner (1972) stated:

The pedagogical problem is how to represent knowledge, how to sequence it, how to embody it in a form appropriate to young

learners. How one manages to time the steps in pedagogy to match unfolding capacities, how one manages to instruct without making the learner dependent, and how one manages to do both these while keeping 'alive zest for further learning'. (p46)

These are very complicated issues that do not yield easy answers and may explain why the same themes continue to run through educational literature over the centuries.

Claxton (1990) supports this view:

Learning is a personal and an active process. It is personal because we can understand or retain new things only in terms of the pre-existing knowledge that we bring to the learning situation. And learning is active because it is only through the purposeful mobilization of this store of knowledge that new knowledge or skill can come about. We have no other place to stand, in order to comprehend the world, than on the platform of our own current knowledge. (p14)

To influence change there needs to be a connection with our own understanding. This is based on the cognitive approach to learning. Bruner, Piaget, Vygotsky and Gardner are probably the most influential names that are associated with the foundations of the Accelerated Learning model, for example, Bruner (1972) argues that:

Developmental psychology without a theory of pedagogy was as empty an enterprise as a theory of pedagogy that ignored the nature of growth.(p157)

This view is supported by Lovell (1973) who went as far as stating that "to be a successful teacher one has to be a successful psychologist" (p10)

As Conway (1997) suggests:

Educators have realized that for students to be successful in the twenty first century they need to be lifelong learners. Helping them to develop the skills necessary to become lifelong learners requires a different approach to teaching and learning. The direct instruction method that was used almost exclusively in the earlier parts of this century, though still effective for some skills, is giving way to a more cooperative approach. (p6)

The Accelerated Learning model is just one attempt to link research and practice and attempt to provide some answers to the questions raised by the issues that have been identified. The stages of the model are discussed at the end of this chapter but

Accelerated Learning considers several key issues raised in the literature. It acknowledges that learning is optimal within a supportive environment, that it needs to be an active process for the individual and linked to both their past experiences and their current needs. The structure encourages the effective use of time and enables consolidation of learning. It draws on theories that promote personal characteristics as strengths rather than weaknesses and supports the inclusion agenda by acknowledging that the same teaching methods cannot be used for all. It also supports the view that different routes may need to be taken to achieve the same goals. Although for some this may just seem like another ‘trendy’ initiative to be tried, it is based on a significant foundation of research from a wide range of disciplines. Even though the curriculum or focus in schools may change, their overall aim should remain to **teach** effectively and therefore any attempt at applying theoretical models that are aimed at encouraging effective teaching and learning should remain valid over time.

Simon (1994) proposes that

One of the outstanding characteristics of periods of advance in education appears to be a close link... between educational theory and practice (p6)

Vygotsky (1962) challenged cognitive psychologists to consider the role of language and thought in children’s cognitive development. He proposed that children needed to experience and acquire new knowledge in a social setting before they were able to internalise this learning. This process was also dependent on language and he emphasised the need for children to vocalise their thoughts. This idea has been developed within the Accelerated Learning model under the term “pole-bridging” where children are encouraged to speak to themselves and verbalise their actions. Vygotsky supported his view of learning with the concept of the “Zone of Proximal Development”. He argued that children were able to demonstrate greater understanding when their learning experience is ‘scaffolded’ by adults or peers, rather than when they are working alone. This is another element which has been adopted within Accelerated Learning techniques. Stones (1979) argues, using Vygotsky’s theory, that if we teach children to their apparent, current developmental level we are actually teaching below what they understand and he suggests that “the only good teaching is that which outpaces development.” (p20)

This theory also suggests that simple instruction from teachers is not sufficient for children to learn. Instead it must be an active process where the children construct their own understanding by basing it on their current knowledge. My view is that this part of the Accelerated Learning model draws on both Bruner's 'schemas' and Piaget's 'adaptation, assimilation and accommodation', where children take new information and process it, in ways unique to themselves, to be able to re-model their view of the world. Again, this needs to be an active process on the part of the child or the learner.

Theories of Intelligence

Intelligence is concerned with the mind: what we *know* and how we come to know it; it is about how we *think*; how we *reason* and *solve problems*; it is about the *rational* and *logical* side of human nature.

(Anderson, 1992 p5)

Gardner (1993) reinforced those who believed that intelligence, rather than being one fixed quality for individuals, could be multi-faceted and developed. This challenged a prevailing view relating not only to intelligence but also to education and teaching:

To begin with, these differences challenge an educational system that assumes that everyone can learn the same materials in the same way and that a uniform, universal measure suffices to test student learning. (p237)

He proposed that, in fact, intelligence is based around eight key areas; linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal and naturalistic. To be a successful teacher, individuals need to believe that they can help others change and develop their thought processes. As Gardner (1993) states:

For the educator, the challenge consists in planning the steps – the hurdles that the child must overcome so that he can progress satisfactorily through the domain (p389)

Perhaps the true value of the multiple intelligence theory is that it challenges the idea that IQ is fixed and therefore the focus is placed on the ability to develop a person beyond a perceived point, which is fixed. Anderson (1992) states:

There are many different kinds of views of intelligence, ranging from the biological to the cultural; but what they all have in common is the belief that, whatever it is that constitutes intelligence, it develops (p1)

Multiple intelligence theory supports the view that one teaching method is not sufficient to teach a range of topics and therefore teachers need to think creatively and match learning experiences to learners. Gardner warns against considering humans as a collection of intellectual powers. He argues that perhaps other characteristics are more important than intelligence in learning. These he suggests are motivation, personality, emotions and will. These themes are evident in Bruner (1960):

The approach taken should be a practical one. 'The teaching and learning of structure, rather than simply the mastery of facts and techniques, is at the centre of the classic problem of transfer...if earlier learning is to render later learning easier, it must do so by providing a general picture in terms of which the relations between things encountered earlier and later are made as clear as possible.'(p64)

And:

Ideally interest in the material to be learned is the best stimulus to learning, rather than such external goals as grades or later competitive advantage...motives for learning must be kept from going passive...they must be based as much as possible upon the arousal of interest in what there is to be learned, and they must be kept broad and diverse in expression.' (p65)

Bruner also promotes the idea that learning is a very active process and cannot be 'done to' someone but that there is a relationship that needs to develop between a teacher and a pupil:

To instruct someone...is not a matter of getting him to commit results to mind. Rather, it is to teach him to participate in the process that makes possible the establishment of knowledge. We teach a subject not to produce little living libraries on that subject, but rather to get a student to think mathematically for himself, to consider matters as an historian does, to take part in the process of knowledge-getting. Knowing is a process not a product. (p72)

Gardner (1993) proposes that an apprenticeship model, although old-fashioned, may be one of the most effective ways of learning and this is developed in and through the Accelerated Learning model:

Such forms of instruction are heavily punctuated with sensori-motor experiences and with the contextualised use of first order forms of

symbolization, such as natural language and simple drawings and gestures. To the extent that they feature more formal notations or concepts, these are introduced to the learner directly in the context in which they are wanted, and the learner sees for himself the ways in which they may be applied. (p124)

Taking these ideas, that learning is personal and that a variety of methods should be used to help individuals make sense of the new knowledge presented to them, I feel we are beginning to challenge views of the 'types' of children who exist within our own education system. If we stay with one method and find that it works for a large proportion of the population, we believe that we are doing the right thing. So if there are a few who do not learn with this method it must be something to do with them as individuals. As history has shown, in the past, we then categorised these children as 'ineducable' and perhaps we still do view them as children with 'special educational needs'. Could it not be true that these children's differences cannot be categorised so neatly and that, in fact, it is simply that their styles of learning do not suit the chosen method? The advantages of acknowledging that **all** learners are different suggests to me that special educational needs is an unnecessary label and that the need is to provide different input and different output opportunities to allow individuals to demonstrate their abilities. As Gardner suggests:

The young child is already developing incipient theories of himself as an agent in the realms of learning and thinking.....often included in his theory is a perception of how learning occurs: you go to school, a clever person tells you something and you are expected to learn it and remember it and if you don't you are stupid. Rarely is there any conception of learning as a long process of experimentation. (p94)

The Accelerated Learning model has adopted Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences and encourages teachers to see children's intelligence as multifaceted and able to be developed over time. This is an important stance if all children's learning needs are to be met in one classroom. Gardner's theory within the Accelerated Learning model enables teachers to view all children as having different intellectual strengths and proposes that with guidance they can use these strengths to develop their intellectual abilities in other areas.

As Rose suggested in 1985:

A quiet revolution is gathering momentum in the way we learn. In the last decade or so psychologists have begun to discover more of how the brain really works and how facts can be rapidly and deeply fixed in the memory. It's on these discoveries that Accelerated Learning is based.(p14)

Smith (1997) proposes that:

Good classroom teachers reflect on their practice and adapt it. They take theory and translate it into practice. Without this process what ought to be a profession becomes a trade (p6)

Sotto (1994) supports this view. He suggests that one view of teaching is that it is a skill and therefore can be likened to, for example, skiing. He proposes that "if you want to learn how to ski, the best thing to do is to get on to some snow and go. That is, you learn best by practice, with perhaps an expert alongside to give you some tips." (p12) He suggests that in this idea the focus is on 'how to' rather than 'what is'. He continues:

How can anyone carry out a complex task unless he or she first studies the nature of the task? In the case of skiing, one does not have to understand much about the physics of acceleration or the chemistry of snow. But in the case of car mechanics, for example, it isn't enough to know how to wield a spanner. One must also spend a few years studying how cars function. (p13)

Sotto (1994) argues that 'skill' in teaching is:

Being able to conduct a discussion, stand at a blackboard, show a video or draw up a lesson plan. Not surprisingly, all these competencies are easy to demonstrate. (p13)

But Sotto (1994) asks "how can we be *sure* that these are important factors in teaching, if we have not first studied how people learn?" (p13) It is important to ensure that teaching is more than 'skill'. Hughes (2000) argues that there is a:

Difference between what we know about effective learning and what is currently happening in the classroom...teachers, rather than schools, should be the focus of attention in the drive to raise standards. (p9)

As Sotto (1994) argues:

We consider a person a 'professional' because a professional has learnt both the 'practice' *and* the 'theory' of a subject. As a result, such people are usually able to tackle a practical task with a greater

likelihood of success than a person who has had only experience.
(p15)

To ensure this is possible there is a need to develop what we understand and to apply it directly in the classroom. Several models or suggestions that should be included in teaching have been proposed. Three such models are outlined below. Sotto (1994) states that:

If people's natural capacity to learn has not been impaired, it looks as if they learn when

1. they find that there is something they wish to learn;
 2. they are able to tackle this task reasonably directly;
 3. the task affords intrinsic rewards;
 4. the task is sensible and manageable;
 5. they can formulate hunches, test them, and see the results of their actions;
 6. they are able to see patterns (or gain them tacitly);
 7. they find themselves in a challenging but friendly and supportive environment
- (p119)

Rosenshine and Furst (1971) suggest that the teacher's behaviour should be the main focus and that, for learners to learn, teachers help by:

1. being clear,
 2. being enthusiastic;
 3. using a variety of approaches;
 4. good questioning;
 5. being task-orientated (not wasting time)
 6. being indirect (not giving straight information)
 7. giving learners an opportunity to learn;
 8. making structuring comments (periodically summing up what has been done and signposting the way ahead)
- (p123)

Polanyi (1958) proposes that in order for us to learn we need:

1. to discover that there is something we do not know which we need to know
2. immersion in the problem;
3. puzzlement;
4. active engagement, especially
 - a. obtaining information and
 - b. testing hunches
5. repeated exposure to the learning situation;
6. the presence of an expert who
 - a. sets up the situation
 - b. acts as a model of competence and
 - c. can answer questions;
7. the inherent capacity of the human mind to understand;
8. periodic insights;
9. pleasure in gaining insights;

10. doubt that one will ever really understand;
11. faith that one will eventually understand. (p54)

There are common ideas between these three models but they do not necessarily explain to the teacher how they should go about ensuring that these elements are present in their lessons. During the 1990's the Accelerated Learning model (Smith, 1997) was developed to provide a structured approach that was directly applicable to the classroom and gave teachers that guidance. It is this model that is the focus of this thesis.

What is the Accelerated Learning model?

Accelerated Learning methods are one way of providing an effective education for all children (Smith, 1997). From my work with teachers, it is apparent that every new class is a new group of challenges. Every group of children bring new challenges. Group dynamics are just as applicable to the classroom as to any other group environment and may not always be recognised. The 'difficult child', whatever his / her particular problems are, has to be included within the group effectively otherwise problems will occur. This idea is addressed in the pre-stage of the Accelerated Learning model. Successful teachers have shared with me that they continue to teach because they get a sense of fulfilment from their career. They want to learn and continue their own professional development to understand and implement changes into their classroom management to make life more beneficial for themselves and the children. By applying Accelerated Learning this can be achieved. Smith (1997) defines the term as:

Accelerated Learning is an umbrella term for a series of practical approaches to learning which benefit from new knowledge about how the brain functions; motivation and self-belief; accessing different sorts of intelligence and retaining and recalling information. Accelerated Learning carries with it the expectation that, when properly motivated and appropriately taught, all learners can reach a level of achievement which currently may seem beyond them. The Accelerated Learning approach will help students understand their own learning preferences better. It will impart lifelong skills in the processes of learning. Students will learn to learn. (p9)

But Smith and Call (2000) also warn that it is important to define what Accelerated Learning is not:

The term 'Accelerated Learning' can be misleading. The method is not for a specific group of learners, or for a given age range, or for a category of perceived ability. The method is not about doing the same things faster. It is not about fast tracking or about hot housing. It is a considered, generic approach to learning based on research drawn from disparate disciplines and tested with different age-groups and different ability levels in very different circumstances. As such, it can be adapted and applied to very different challenges. (p7)

All of the teachers who became my co-researchers believe in the model and were willing to share the impact it had had on their teaching. They acknowledge that they play a key role in children's learning but also acknowledge that to reach their full potential, learners need a facilitator more often than a teacher. Smith and Call (2000) suggest that Accelerated Learning provides:

a structured system in which this new knowledge about the learner, learning and the learning environment comes together..... The best classroom practice does not assume that teaching and learning necessarily co-exist; it starts from the needs of the learner; it is differentiated and motivational and is fun, lively and engaging. As such it is accelerative because it allows the learner to fulfil his or her potential. (p9)

The Accelerated Learning model

There are seven stages within the model. It is described by Smith and Call (2000)as:

The cycle starts by attending to the physical environment and social factors in learning. It proposes the worth of a positive and supportive learning environment. It then deliberately attempts to connect to, and build upon, prior knowledge and understanding whilst presenting an overview of the learning challenge to come. Participants set positive outcomes and define targets towards reaching those outcomes. Information is then presented in visual, auditory and kinaesthetic modes and is reinforced through different forms of intelligent response. Frequent, structured opportunities to demonstrate understanding and to rehearse for recall are the concluding feature of the cycle. (p7)

In summary it is based around seven stages:

Pre-stage - *Create the supportive learning environment*

Stage One - *Connect the learning*

Stage Two - *Big Picture*

Stage Three - *Describes the outcomes*

Stage Four - *Input*

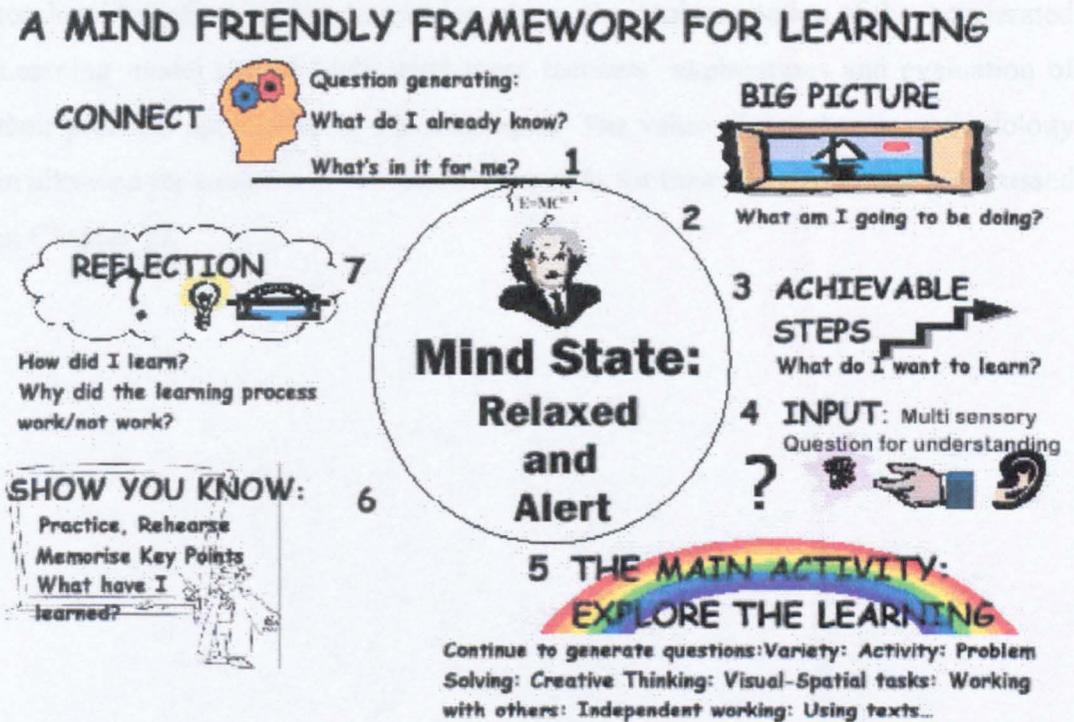
Stage Five -Activity

Stage Six -Demonstrate

Stage Seven -Review for recall and retention

(adapted from Smith, 1997)

and pictorially:



(taken from Cheshire County Website, 2004)

It is this framework that the teachers I work with are using in their classrooms. Accelerated Learning is not without its critics but it provides one way of capturing psychological theory and applying it successfully in the classroom. The current research is not a critique, it is aiming to look at Accelerated Learning as a working model. However it is important that these criticisms are recognised. Through this recognition we can ensure that the techniques that are implemented within the classroom are those most beneficial to the learners and that the Accelerated Learning model remains a valid 'tool' for teachers. These ideas are developed in Chapter 10.

Accelerated Learning provides teachers with a common language to discuss their teaching and learning techniques. As Sotto (1994) stated without 'analytical tools' with which to examine teaching, we are unable to make 'powerful suggestions' to improve our skills.

The current research makes use of a narrative approach to fulfil its aims; exploring teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching, the implementation of the Accelerated Learning model and to understand these teachers' explorations and evaluation of their practical application of the techniques. The value of the chosen methodology in allowing the teachers to set their own agenda for their story is critically discussed in Chapter 10.

Chapter 3

Presenting the Data

The data gathered during the current research is presented across the next five chapters. It is a joint story including the views of the co-researchers, my own views and links with an established literature base. It sets out to show how teachers have implemented the Accelerated Learning model. They have developed it in their own individual ways for their own particular circumstances and adapted it to meet the needs of the children they are teaching.

Structure of the data analysis

This method of presenting the data is derived from Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) work. By presenting verbatim extracts it allows for the reliability to be assessed:

Reliability can be checked (though never guaranteed) if, when our interpretations and analyses are studied by others, they are 'recognised'; that is, the sense that we made out of them can be shared through the subjectivity of others (including you, the reader). This does not rule out the possibility of alternative explanations, but these too can be tested against available data. If you, the reader, wish to offer a different interpretation of our data, you are welcome to do so. (p80)

The main discussion of the transcripts will be undertaken in the final chapter of this thesis.

By choosing this approach it allows the current research to be accessible to different readers at different levels, and enables them to take from it what they want. As Hollway and Jefferson (2000) state, this method:

is not a substitute for all qualitative methods and is not appropriate for all types of research question. It is most powerful when the research question involves understanding people's experiences through their own meaning-frame and when the area that needs to be tapped to address the research question implicates a person's sense of self. (p155)

The following joint story aims to provide an insight into my co-researchers professional, and sometimes personal, beliefs and how these relate directly to the Accelerated Learning model.

The Co-researchers

Eight participants were chosen for this research to provide sufficient variety of experiences but, equally to, allow their contributions to be analysed in depth using a narrative methodology. Each participant had been successfully using the Accelerated Learning model for at least twelve months in their daily work. This sample was chosen to support the purpose of this research which was to share positive experiences and good practice within the LEA project. The implications of this sample in relation to, the thesis aim of, evaluation of the Accelerated Learning model is discussed in Chapter 10. The co-researchers had been identified as practitioners who were implementing the model successfully. This is not to say that they were experts in their field, or that they would provide better information than another selection of teachers, but rather, it was to enable the development of a joint story that would encourage evaluation and exploration of the Accelerated Learning model. Smith (2004) (through personal correspondence) explains that from his research, once teachers take on the Accelerated Learning model they continue to use the techniques throughout their careers.

Data Collection

Each co-researcher was asked to talk about their experiences with the Accelerated Learning model. There were no formalised questions: instead they were encouraged to talk. Although they were unsure that they would provide useful information, within minutes, each co-researcher had relaxed and spoke freely. One co-researcher even commented how quickly an half an hour session had gone, when the tape had to be turned over. As the researcher, I found that it was not difficult to remain focused on the narratives due to the enthusiasm shown by the co-researchers and non-verbal feedback was sufficient to maintain the flow. The reason for including the full transcripts is discussed in the methodology and was to ensure that this enthusiasm and sense of commitment were not lost. Each interview was taped and

transcribed and the resulting transcripts are used in their entirety in the following chapters.

The Structure

As discussed in the methodology the co-researchers' stories are linked to the seven stages of the Accelerated Learning model. This decision was taken to emphasise the themes from within the stories and their relevance to the model. Each stage is considered in turn and linked to current literature. The chapters progress through the stages considering the learning environment and the necessary foundations for effective learning. Chapters 6 and 7 address the teaching elements of the model and chapter 8 links the importance of reviewing learning and memory research.

The names of each co-researcher and individuals working in specific LEAs have been changed. The names of authors / presenters relating to the field of Accelerated Learning have not been changed.

Chapter 4

The Significance of the Learning Environment

Included in this chapter is the discussion based on Stage 1 of the Accelerated Learning model, creating a supportive environment. It considers the importance of the learning environment and its effect on the individual.

Stage 1 – Creating a Supportive Environment

Positive-self esteem and self-belief lie at the core of Accelerated Learning. The learner must believe there is value in the learning and that he or she is capable of learning and applying it in some meaningful way.

Smith 1997 (p25)

This is the foundation on which to place the cycle and all of its components. Without this it could be argued that it is not worth doing anything else. This area of the model draws on research relating to self esteem and motivation.

In 1954 Maslow proposed a hierarchy of need, the first four levels of which include; physiological needs eg. hunger, thirst, bodily comforts, etc; safety/security needs; the need to belong and feel loved eg. affiliate with others, be accepted; and finally the need to develop esteem eg. to achieve, be competent, gain approval and recognition. He argued that these needs had to be met before an individual could reach what he referred to as 'self-actualization'. The Accelerated Learning model reiterates these views stating that we need to meet children's physical and emotional needs before expecting them to learn. It draws on work by MacLean (1990) around the concept of a tri-brain. It proposes that if children are upset about recent events, they may not be able to focus on a learning task. This is a simplified view of neuroscience and does not consider the effects of significant trauma but rather raises teachers' awareness of the need for a settled and calm learning environment, eg. a child involved in a fight at playtime may not be able, immediately to re-focus onto their next lesson. Ginnis (2002) argues that emotion is stronger than thinking and "the happier we are, the faster and more accurately we sort and connect incoming data." (p27) Therefore it is essential that we create a supportive environment:

Learning occurs most efficiently when the learner is *not at all* fearful of being bullied, mocked, ridiculed, ignored, left out, name-called, belittled or shown-up. (p28)

My co-researchers all spoke at length about creating a supportive environment and what that meant for them within their own school settings. For some it was the starting point, for others it developed over time through their own practices. However it came about, it was valued as one of the key elements of the model.

Rosemary highlights how important this first stage is for her, in her own school. *“What was blatantly obvious, when I moved to this school, was there’s poverty, hardship, deprivation and all sorts of emotionally disturbed children, but who are not lacking in intelligence – so, my whole philosophy of life, if you like, is that we can change. It doesn’t matter how young or old we are, we can change and I also believe that those who ‘have not’, should have.”*

Rosemary has a very positive approach to what she believes all children deserve. She wants to ‘put things right’ for the children who have been deprived in one way or another.

She continues, *“I believe in compensatory education, I also believe that if you’re not in a very good mood or you’re tired or you’re hungry or you’re thirsty or generally miserable, how on earth are you supposed to access quite a lot of high level teaching or to access the decent teaching in order to learn? I don’t understand how you can do that. So my first attempt was to ensure that the collective worship we provided was of an extremely high quality, that our spirituality was developed, we were allowed just to sit and think, nobody had to participate but we were quiet, we let other people listen. There was a massive range of ideas coming through, but we made it very, very structured, so in their education the children knew that in the morning we did English and Maths and in the afternoon we’d read and then we’d do the rest of the curriculum and that is very, very structured. Mid morning snacks were there so that when we are fading away, at sort of half past ten, we know that we’re going to have milk and stuff like that. We’ve got water to drink when we want it, not when teacher says. If they don’t want to play outside in the morning and*

afternoon dinners, they don't have to, as long as they speak to me and I find something else for them to do. The computer suite which has got old computers in, can be used. I've also got workers from learning support at playtimes so they can work with kids. I've got an environmental area, which year 6's particularly enjoy doing, so it's things like that. I've got an extra classroom and I've got a keyboard in there if they like to do that. They can go in the library and tidy up and things like that. It's not 'you must go outside' and with the healthy snack, of course, they can sit there for 15 minutes, no pressure. So we got all that in place together with a very strong behaviour code like 'it's not you we don't like, but if you do this, x, y and z will happen'. We also put in place an awful lot of people coming into school to help and to talk to them and also a lot of things going on out of school so that their experience was broadened because what I found is the intelligence is certainly there, but to get it out you've got to put in those sort of concrete activities which they don't get. I had to also be aware that things always deteriorate at the end of terms because these children are not looking forward to Christmas or the summer holidays because they will be out there wandering around so to be aware of that, from our own point of view as staff and from the children's point of view, so it's not 'oh I can't wait till the end of term'. So all of that is underpinning everything."

It is evident that Rosemary strongly believes that children's emotional needs are paramount and it is essential that we address them as a foundation before attempting to build educational and academic knowledge on them. Safety is also important to Rosemary. She provides this through structure and consistency. There is a flexibility in her approach. She will tailor the schooling system to meet individual needs but she also expects a high degree of responsibility from her children in that they must work with her. Further, in building this foundation, she considers wider issues such as involving the local community and giving children insight into planning their futures. There is a sense of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968) when speaking with her, 'if we can believe, we can achieve.'

Diane supports the argument that creating a supportive environment is truly the foundation that is needed to develop confident and successful students. It is evident from her description that the strength of this model is not in its separate parts but comes from combining the elements.

"I find it very difficult with the whole of this area, because we've had Advisers and people in, who have said what is it that makes the difference? Is it the water? Is it the brain gym? Is it this? Is it that? I don't know, if I'm honest, what it is – I think because it's such a cocktail of different things – one couldn't say well have water in your classroom because it will make a difference'. We have never tested anything apart from brain gym and that research was a spectacular failure! We have never said 'is it this?' and had control groups, what we have had is the evidence of progress in the school in terms of standards over time, but you couldn't say it's specifically for that reason or for another. I tend to think it's a culmination of a culture, that means that teachers are reflecting teachers, actually have a buzz, have an excitement – trying out new things and working out whether this helps or doesn't help and feeling confident, that it's ok to experiment. I think it transfers to the children in that it's a 'can do' culture and they are prepared to-- they love the long words; 'my intelligences are....' but it does mean that I think people feel really energised as teachers and I think that's the big thing. I suppose the mind friendly cycle and the mind friendly approach is very much one-- it has a very high feel good factor and since it seems to produce good results, that feeds on and it builds like that. The thing that I found for me as a teacher was that because I was doing it, it seemed to me all children had felt a sense of ownership to the learning experience and all children were confident and competent in their own learning and felt that they were in charge of it and that was the same of the SEN kids as it was for the gifted and talented, in whatever field. Gifted and talented children who could at times find life in the classroom quite difficult, because so much of it is open ended, were not accelerating upwards but were accelerating across and therefore upwards, because they were making those intuitive links, those leaps, and transferring learning in different ways and they were also, I think, able to fail which was something which had worried me in my reading. There were so many gifted and talented kids who went through, reached adolescence and suddenly came crashing or later at university and came crashing because everything had been easy. Whereas with the mind friendly bit, because it's open ended and you are pushing against your own boundaries, they did fail and they learned how to pick themselves up and have another go or look at it a different way. I think the other thing was because so much of the curriculum is traditionally based on IQ, 'g', when

we moved into this area and they found that other children were far quicker at picking things up in different intelligence areas, again it helped them to realise that they may be very good at this but they weren't --- there were other people, some of them the least of those they would expect, who could challenge them and so that's really --- and the longer I do it the more convinced I am that it actually gives you the tools to look at how children learn and a way in which you can --- and the numeracy strategy fits into it beautifully, literacy can do, you do have to stretch it a little bit but you can, and with all the core subjects it promotes creativity now and making the links. A lot of that's actually happening much more. I think it's going to be the answer to--- I think it's going to allow a far higher level of inclusion and I think that's one of the things that I would --- we're being tested at the moment with children with some quite extreme special needs and I think it's the way forward. That's where I'd really like to test it much more. I'd like to see what impact it has, as we go into amalgamation in the junior school, where they have done comparatively little with this. Some teachers are using it but it is early days for them. Having a behaviour unit and trying to integrate the children which is a considerable tension at the moment, I would like to see whether if we skill up teachers in mind friendly learning techniques, what impact that has on their ability to accommodate the different learning styles of the children."

Diane suggests that the Accelerated Learning model is empowering for both teachers and children. There is no doubt that the approach requires commitment and energy but equally it is not without its rewards. Diane's own research raises an interesting point that similar teaching methods and teachers beliefs do not have to change whether they are teaching children deemed as SEN or gifted. There is a sense in Diane's story of the need to develop a positive attitude towards children as learners. A large proportion of children with whom I work, as an Educational Psychologist, have little or no belief in themselves as learners. Surely one step on our journey to true inclusion is to ensure children succeed in learning and therefore see a purpose in education.

Linking Theory to practice

Sotto (1994) proposes that:

Teachers need to study *two* subjects. One is the subject that they teach; the other is how to teach it. (p15)

Marie develops this view by explaining why she uses the Accelerated Learning Model. *"We use it because I think it meets the needs of children better. I think with traditional teaching, teachers have done a lot of things instinctively, they haven't maybe understood why it works, the theory hasn't been around, the research hasn't been around only, I think, over the last 10 years so much more has been done and we're still learning all the time, but what it is actually doing, is the teachers who've been teaching for 30 years can say 'yes I've always done that' and now they can say 'now this is the theory that supports it'. So I've always kind of understood that not everyone learns in the same way. For me personally, I'm not sure that when I came out of college and started teaching that I really understood that, we hadn't had anything about this at college, so for me the reason that I am really interested in this and the reason I've adopted this and the reason we have as a whole school is because you are meeting individual needs and from experience I can say that 'well if I work to one style, say maybe the style that's my learning style, I tend to be - I like visual prompts' so I tend to use visual cues as much as I can and that helps me but I'm also auditory and the music side kind of comes out through that. I've found I'm very good at that. I can talk, I can show them pictures of things because that links with my style, my learning style but the thing that I haven't taken on board before getting into mind friendly learning, which is how I'm going to refer to it rather than accelerated learning because that's what we've called it-, is that it's helped me to understand that children learn in different ways and also to identify which children are learning in which ways, so I feel now and my experience shows me that I am meeting the needs of the children better. I always got frustrated with myself because I've always reflected on what are my practices as a teacher and felt 'why did this not work?' Why for some children was this--- I could see say 50% of my class are really into this--- you can't say well 'it's the child's fault' so I would reflect, 'what am I doing?' And it wasn't 'what am I doing wrong?' It's 'what can I do better to meet the needs of those children?' 'How can I adjust what I'm doing?' and quite often it's a little tweek but to meet the needs of all the children rather than only a percentage."*

Lewin (1967) proposes that:

There is nothing as practical as a good theory (p15)

Marie recognises this and continues:

“One of the books I have read, that I found quite useful, is “In their own way” by Thomas Armstrong and I’ve read -- I’ve bought a couple of his books through the internet and I find he’s really easy to read. I’ve done a lot of research myself and I’m not a ‘go away and read educational books’ person I never was and---. When I first got into this, through Denise, Denise was the one who knew about this she’d read I think it’s “Frames of Mind” by Howard Gardner which is an incredibly complex book and certainly not a kind of book which would appeal to me. But because she felt ‘never mind if this isn’t the way things are going’, because at that time they weren’t, but she did feel this was really the way things should be going, whether they are or not politically, she felt there was an awful lot in this and she put the first inset in and then got me involved in a group with her and a couple of other heads and the Adviser of the three schools who set up this little group. She recommended the first couple of books so, I was kind of a diligent person at that point, and I thought, right ok, I’ll order these books and one of them was Carl Hanoford’s. It’s something like “learning is not all in the mind” but that’s not the proper title that’s like the subtitle.”

An interesting theme with the transcripts is a personal engagement from the teachers beyond initial training in the Accelerated Learning model. There is a true sense of on-going development not only in their teaching but also in their personal learning. There is no sense of completion or ‘we’ve arrived!’ but instead a continued enthusiasm to develop knowledge and practice.

Raising Self Esteem

When the Elton Report was published in 1989 it highlighted the need for schools to make academic work ‘winnable’ for those whose low self-esteem was threatened by failure:

Our evidence suggests that many children who behave badly in school are those whose self-esteem is threatened by failure. They see academic work as “unwinnable”. They soon realise that the

best way to avoid losing in such a competition is not to enter it.
(p26)

Self-esteem is one area that we are able to influence as Smith (1997) reminds us:

Self-esteem and self-belief are not inherited, they are learned. (p26)

It is our role as the adults within the education system to help children to see the purpose of education and not to 'switch them off'. Sotto (1994) proposes that motivation is intrinsic and rather than creating it, all we need to do is ensure we do not eliminate it. He states:

When a teacher sets out to motivate, the focus is on the teacher.
But when a teacher sets out to create carefully structured and inherently interesting learning situations, the focus is on the learners (p28)

Mills (1987) argues that:

Learners pick up on the particular emotional states of the teacher, which impacts on their cognition. Teachers who use humour, give warm smiles, have a joyful demeanour and take genuine pleasure in their work will have learners who outperform those students whose teachers do not demonstrate these qualities. (p28)

Learning is an active process and it is, therefore, also a personal one that needs commitment. This needs to be encouraged by the approaches adopted in school. Catherine argues that by developing confidence and allowing personal expression a positive effect is observed in children's learning:

"We're doing Accelerated Learning because we're working on children's self esteem and in school we feel children will benefit by an improved self esteem and raised confidence and improved thinking skills. We are encouraging them to talk about their work and what they're doing and I also feel if you start to articulate what you're thinking and you're learning it stays there somehow, its like a glue that keeps it there. A lot of our kids aren't very good at expressing how they feel or expressing what they think or how something works so we're also, alongside doing Accelerated Learning, next year we're going to work on our oracy, so hopefully they'll all start to link together. So by linking the self esteem work, the Accelerated Learning and then the oracy work I think children will start to--- their sort of

academic work will benefit from all of those three. I think content has to come afterwards. I think the National Curriculum operates on, if you tell somebody something they know it and will then understand it and I don't think that's how children learn and it's trying to sort of move away from a content based curriculum to a more concept based curriculum where they think about and learn things. Also in 10 years time the stuff we're learning in the National Curriculum today will probably be out of date and if we haven't prepared children to be flexible and to think about things we leave them high and dry later on. It's to give them skills, thinking skills and also adaptability and flexibility to be able to know that --- and also to give them confidence that if they face something they don't understand, it doesn't mean they won't always, that they won't understand it ever. There are ways of breaking things down and moving towards learning. We're seeing an improvement in the children's confidence in the fact that they will try things, they are willing to try more practical things as well. We do have a very practical curriculum base, a practical and creative based curriculum here. When we gave them things to do they got over excited, whereas now we're doing it more, they're much calmer. They think about the things they're doing and it also gives them more 'stickability', it's perseverance really but children like the word 'stickability'. They keep going back to things and improving things whereas the National Curriculum with its overload and content based--- with the content base, you've got to be on page 6 by a week Friday which seemed a nonsense to me, doing something without quite knowing what you did two weeks last Friday. We are seeing benefits but I think it'll be a long term thing rather than a quick fix. We're trying to move away from the gimmick side of Accelerated Learning which is what the teachers seem to hold onto at first, like the water and everything else. I appreciate that children need to have a drink of water and we accept that, but that became something in it's own right, rather than it was to help the children learn. So we're going to re-introduce the water again in September, but our children did get very excited about having drinks of water, but hopefully they'll be calmer as they're coming up from the infants and get more used to it and I think school will be calmer again as well in September."

Catherine explains that her school has come a long way:

“When I think where we were 12 months ago, I felt we were like a very small secondary school so I think it will be a long journey to get to everybody working creatively and talking, so the mindmapping and things like that I --- looking at those as sort of long term. We’re actually doing Brain Gym. We’re doing that in a few classes and that is working. They’re stopping children sitting still, so children are working for a short period of time and then they’re allowing them to stop and do a little exercise and sit back down, and that is working tremendously because we’ve got lots of fidgety bottoms and so that’s working especially with the lower juniors.”

She emphasises the difficulties there can be in trying to launch new initiatives:

“I think the reason something’s not so successful, it’s the cascading. I don’t think cascading works to be quite honest. I think as a head you always feel it will, if you go on a course and you get this great idea you come back and tell everybody, they will all suddenly believe it as well and I don’t think cascading works and I think we sent two, three people on the “Classmoves” they came back absolutely full of it, they fed back to the staff, the staff sat very politely and put their boards on the wall but I think that’s as far as most of the “Classmoves” got. So with time hopefully that will happen but I do think it needs whole staff training if you’re going to do these sort of things. We discuss whether it would work in their class and how they would want to use it in their class. As I said earlier, I don’t want to say you’ll all do this at half past nine. The only thing I stipulate --- we do handwriting when we all come in because it’s a nice calming activity and at the moment they’re not that calm when they first come in.”

Catherine continues and explains why everyone needs to be involved in training events:

“With whole school training I do include the NNEBs and the ASWs it’s all the staff a lot of the individual work or very small group work is led by the support workers and if they don’t understand the philosophy or the reasons behind things I don’t think they can then help children to move on. I do think there’s a bit of snobbery in teaching whereby teachers think that they should know things and then tell other people how to do it, but as staff now we’re trying to get away --- now we all try to

get the training unfortunately we can't pay the NNEBs and ASWs anymore money but I think they have fed back that they certainly feel much more valued and enjoy their job more because they feel what they're doing is valuable for children which is why we're here really. I see little point in giving teachers techniques if they don't understand why they're doing things. I think it's because I have to see the big picture and I won't jump on bandwagons so if I was told as a teacher to give my class water because it will help them, if I gave them water and they started to mess about, I would probably stop giving them water whereas if I understood that by having water it would help them learn and only need small sips I would probably persevere longer. Water wasn't initially successful but it wasn't the teacher, because that actual teacher had been for the training. I think it's just we tried perhaps to do too much too soon with other initiatives and then when there became unease in the staff because of an external factor of redeployment, people revert back and I think that knocked everybody's the staff's confidence. People will only try new things if they're confident because there's always a danger it will fail and so once you start taking people's confidence away they revert back --- As a manager, if I believe that works for children I also have to believe it works for grown ups and I have to treat them with the same respect that I'm expecting them to treat children. So we have had the training from yourself and Samantha, which is why I wanted the philosophy and I know it was quite a heavy session for them and they did know that and whilst they sat quietly, they did talk about it afterwards. It has come back and linked with other training that I've asked them to go on, like interactive learning and other things. They're starting to see the links but I think it will pull together again in September when their confidence hopefully is lifted and they're refreshed after the holidays and the redeployment is all out of the way and we then have some training on multiple intelligences and why we're trying to link things. I think some staff are appreciating why and others aren't but I don't think it does any harm to revisit things and really think about things. "

The Role of Language

Providing a supportive environment also allows children to develop their own independence and own methods of learning. Vygotsky (1962) argued that:

A child's speech is as important as the role of action in attaining a goal. Children not only speak about what they are doing; their speech and action are part of *one and the same complex psychological function*, directed toward the solution of the problem.
(p21)

Catherine highlights the need for spoken language to be encouraged:

"We're helping children to talk, be more creative, more sharing of work, more celebration of achievements, more positive sort of aspects of children's learning and of behaviour. I think it [Accelerated learning] links in with behaviour as well, picking up the role of the positive, but there is always a danger when things go wrong, people revert back to what they know and how they used to work, so keeping people's confidence up is key. We're sharing good practice by constantly allowing people to go for training and allowing people to talk in an open environment where they feel they can say 'well that didn't work' and 'things don't work for everybody in the same way' and I think it's allowing for individuals to do things, individual teachers to do things slightly differently. It's not 'my way or the highway', it's the philosophy of it how can your practice be adapted to take on board the philosophy."

It is the second stage of the Accelerated Learning model which is concerned with "connecting knowledge", but Catherine has found that by making links and encouraging spoken language while focusing on the individual child, the supportive environment can be developed:

"The major things that I think have been a success, that we need to build on are--- in some classes children are allowed to discuss their work and explain their strategies and there is linkage going on, whereas in other classes we are getting the--- they're beginning to start to talk about work but the linkages aren't going on with the curriculum. My plans for the future are really more about linking areas of the curriculum so children can make links. There's more cross curricular work happening, more creative, I think the oracy that we're hoping to be part of in September will help that so we're having story tellers, poets, story puppets in school. We're also having staff training on oracy alongside that and then we'll have feedback meetings. We are going to have more training on Accelerated Learning

which I think will complement that--- on the multi-intelligences which I think is crucial. I don't think staff did quite pick up that children learn in different ways so we'll perhaps revisit that. I'm getting all this jargon of revisiting, what else have we got planned? - Well the behaviour intervention plan, again that's another initiative that's come from the authority but it's about positive management of children and I think all of them link to a philosophy and starting where the child is. Building up the child and it might not be current thinking to say we have child-centred education, but to me if you don't start with the child, you build on sinking sand."

Fitting the Model to the School

Alison suggests that in adopting the Accelerated Learning Model it has given legitimacy to their current practices and merges with their own school's ethos. *"I've been in this school now for longer than I care to remember, I've been head since September. I think this school is a very successful school and it's a very successful school for two reasons. One, and most important of all, the children in our school are our absolute priority and bringing them to their full potential is what we aim for, for every single child. We have a saying here, we don't pour children into moulds and they don't all come out the same and we push everyone as far as they can be pushed and the second reason this school's successful is because everyone is a part of the whole team and whatever we take on board, we do because we are all fully committed to it so, any new issue that has come up, we've talked about it, we've investigated it, we've trialled it, we've come together, we've evaluated it and we've said this is ok and everybody goes in whole heartedly and it's adopted and it becomes part of the school. The teamwork is one of the reasons why we're so successful, our children from the minute they walk through the door are very, very valued and every single thing they do is valued as well. Every scribble they put on a piece of paper in nursery we encourage them, we say 'that's beautiful sweetheart what does it say?' 'Tell us all about it', nothing is ever discarded as unimportant or anything like that. Everything they do is valued, so right from the moment they walk through the door we try and instil in every child the feeling that yes they can achieve, yes they are successful and we celebrate everything they do and so every child, I think, feels empowered by that and feels that they can and they are - they are capable of, and nothing is too great for them to tackle and that is very, very*

important for us. The other thing I think that does help us as well, is that we have an assertive discipline policy. We never focus on anything negative, we're always focusing on positives all the time, so if we get behaviour that is not acceptable, we will rather than highlight that behaviour, we will highlight something at the side of it that is very positive and explain why the other thing, the negative behaviour, isn't acceptable and the children understand and therefore we're instilling in them a self-discipline ethos and encouraging them to think for themselves and take responsibility and that's very successful for us. Our children are very, very confident children. They will talk to anybody, they are full of enthusiasm, they're bright eyed, they're eager, I think, they feel they feel safe, secure because they know what's expected of them, they also have this confidence as well and they know how to deal with situations and they know they can sort things out for themselves. So I think we're very lucky in that sense, tremendous support from our parents as well which is important, but again that's a two-way thing in that I would hope parents feel very welcome in the school as well. We do everything we can to support parents, we put on coffee mornings, they're welcome every Thursday, it's an open door policy to talk to staff about the children— anything that happens with the children we'll call the parents in to celebrate. It's a two-way thing. I think parents feel they're part of the school as well which seems --- so --- the whole ethos of the school is very positive, it's very warm, it's very friendly and I think because the children have that feeling of security, a feeling that nothing is too big, they can tackle anything and they're capable of having a go at anything and there's never a sense of failure because they never fail because whatever they do is valued. There's a very positive approach towards teaching and learning, the fact that the staff plan everything very carefully, plan together as a team, everything is highly structured so that teaching and learning is the whole crux of everything. The learning outcomes are identified so we know what we're aiming for before we start. Something children know, especially higher up the school year 1's and year 2's, they know the point of the lesson. There's a plenary afterwards, they can discuss 'what have we found out?' and 'what have we learned?' so I think there's a very positive approach to teaching and learning in this school. So as far as accelerated learning goes I think a lot of, as you say, a lot of the thoughts behind it is already embedded in the ethos of the school but there are things that we want to take on board that I feel can move us further. I mean the very simple first thing we did was

put water on the tables in KSI, early years have water all the time anyway. At KSI we've noticed that's made a big difference in that the children are more alert and receptive in the afternoons and we're quite amazed at the amount of fluid that some children will drink, two bottles a day is not unusual for some children. So that's something very positive and something we gladly took on board. The other thing we want to try, after talking with you and after you did the staff training, was bringing in music into the classroom. Again I know that's a peripheral thing from the whole of Accelerated Learning, its perhaps one of the frills which go around it, but again that's something we want, we feel we want to try and the PTA are fundraising this year to buy us CD players for every classroom which will be in place by September or soon after the beginning of term, so we'll be trying that and having a go with that because I think there's tremendous potential there."

Discovering a New Approach to Learning

When "creating the Supportive Learning Environment" some of the periphery elements of the model are included, for example, water, fruit and music. These are related to the brain research that has been completed in recent decades, which suggests that for effective functioning the brain needs healthy food and works best when it is hydrated. Different types of music are suggested to influence the frequency of brain waves which in turn affect the brain's functioning. These elements are very easy to grasp by teachers and should provide a good foundation but they need to be built upon because they are not enough on their own to influence children's learning experiences. An article about Accelerated Learning techniques in the Independent stated:

Another problem is that it can be easy to pick up only the sexy bits of the story, then be disheartened when a banana, a bottle of water and a Mozart Symphony fail to revolutionise a class' performance (Wilce, November 2002)

For Elizabeth, the creation of the overall setting for the Accelerated Learning Model, was a step by step journey. She shows that by incorporating lots of the elements it became a complete focus for the school and she demonstrates how useful it can be when the elements combine. *"Debra and I went on the course initially with Sandra – I don't know how long ago that was it seems --- it was the*

very first one so it must have been the January one and we both went on it and we thought it sounded good. We didn't really know much about it and since then it's just gone on and on and on. We've been involved with Sandra throughout, she's been really good with coming in and working with the children, working with the staff, so we've been really glad of her support and enthusiasm. We started off looking at thinking skills and Debra and I applied for the professional development bursary and we both were awarded £3500 to research more into the thinking skills and that type of thing. That money mostly was used for supply to enable us to come out of the classroom and actually work on the research. We were looking at two different aspects, one side of the research we were looking at was how we could use our target setting and improving the target setting in the school and looking at baseline statistics and things like that and then the other side of it was how we could boost those targets by bringing in Accelerated Learning techniques, so that's where that came in. In fact its--- because we didn't start out with really looking at this side, it just kind of lent itself to it, so that was great and we were working with Paul so he was --- because he was on that initial day training day with Sandra as well and consequently it's become the culture of our school. I think it's not just something Debra and I have been interested in, we've managed to incorporate the whole staff within it so it's not been an ad hoc approach, it's been quite structured, timetabled and everyone's been on board with it from day one so everyone's got ownership of what's going on. They value it and it's very much part and parcel, I hope, of what our school is. We incorporated things as we went along - looking at the big picture particularly. What we try and do is build it up, so 'Reception' are looking at the picture of perhaps the morning, what's going on in the morning and extending it to the day. Year one, hopefully, are building up on that so that by the time they get to year two, Debra's looking at what's going on over the whole week with her class, so anything sort of out of the ordinary or we've visitors coming in, the children are aware of what's going on. We've introduced water, the children bring in their own little water containers and they're responsible. We talked about all sorts of things how we could introduce that, should we have cups on the draining board with their names on, we went through all of that trying to think about different things. In the end we decided that they could bring in their own and that's worked really well so the children have responsibility for that. I think at first, the first couple of weeks it's a novelty because they've got these --- They take them

home at the end of the day and bring them back filled up and so the majority of the children bring in water. They have it on their tables in years one and two, it's in the middle of the table for whenever they want it. In 'Reception' it's slightly different because they tend to move around a lot so they're not based just at one table, so Mrs Huw had the brilliant idea of a shoe rack, nailed onto the wall and she put their names on. Children put their water into there and they go and get their water from there when they want. We also introduced healthy snack time so they bring in a piece of fruit. The majority of children bring in fruit. We play music as people enter the foyer, we've also tried to incorporate music much more throughout the school at various times of the day depending on what's going on and so we've found that that has a calming influence on them and they really like it. They really enjoy it. That may go on as they're entering the class or during the day or at the end of the day. It's in the background just as a calming influence."

Elizabeth develops her argument for using the Model by stating that:

"I think because it's [Accelerated Learning] very positive. I think it just --- it lends itself to --- obviously we want to get the best out of the children and I think by doing this --- I think you're showing and hopefully you're helping these children to learn in different ways to absorb things. We've got the class moves as well, which is timetabled and part of our --- everybody's using it in the class, we've got the calendars displayed. I think it [Accelerated Learning] just kind of lends itself to --- we say about the climate don't we and the culture and somehow it just --- everything you do and you say to the children or --- it's embedded in everything we're teaching it's in service, in the whole playground, in everything we talk about all that you say, all that you do. It's much more positive. Everything is approached in a completely positive way, not that we weren't positive before but I think it's reinforced in every single thing that we do now. Any negativity has been totally eradicated. The children are all 'can do' and the staff as well, everybody 'can do' and the language that they use is different, explaining things a lot more. They've got a lot more thought in everything. When we were introducing all these things we wrote to the parents and we told them exactly the kinds of things we have going on, just so they'd be on board with it. It was positive, very positive. They'd obviously read about water and things in the press and things like that but quite a few parents

commented 'it's really good what you doing'. The children were going home doing brain gym exercises and things off the class moves and we haven't had any parents who haven't supported us at all. We've just interviewed recently for two new members of staff and that was one of our questions because that's how strongly we value it. Even if they weren't aware of it they can go away and read up on it or--- because that's how strongly we place it."

The Value of the "Can-do" Culture

Sternberg (1997) argues that:

Many of the students we are consigning to the dust heaps of our classrooms have the abilities to succeed. It is we, not they, who are failing. We are failing to recognise the variety of thinking and learning styles they bring to the classroom, and teaching them in ways that don't fit them well (p17)

The aim of creating a supportive environment within the Accelerated Learning model is to prevent children feeling that they do not belong. It is to instil in them that we each have talents and skills and different approaches to learning but that all these can be catered for within our classrooms. It could be described as the first step along the road to full inclusion.

Nicola explains the benefits she has seen from developing a 'can-do' culture within her school: *"We've always done a lot of drama because one or two of our teachers are really keen on that. We've always celebrated these children with presentations, concerts and so on, because for some children they really come alive and animated when you see them on stage playing the part. And that's behaviourally, I know it sounds really odd but, in the past it's the child who hasn't been able to focus, who's been quite disruptive, who has actually been given a prominent part in the concerts at Christmas and it's given the kudos, that their sense of self esteem, all these buzz words! It really gives them a good lift and I remember there was one child who was really quite grumpy and he really didn't want to do anything, grumpy, quite morose and he played Churchill. Well the children thought it was wonderful and he was wonderful and yeah he was Churchill from then on, so again it's the 'can do' culture. That's where I'm coming from now creating the 'can do' culture that we're all really good at something and we do try to find opportunities on the yard or*

whatever, for example, on Tuesday I was out and it was a beautiful day and a little boy called Ben was doing just the most perfect cartwheels obviously self taught, just in him, because he doesn't go to any gym club or anything and they were just perfect and all the children were going--- and I was saying to the children look at this, 'isn't it wonderful what he can do?' and he said 'I can do it one handed you know'. I've never seen a child that age do it, so again we were celebrating the fact of how wonderful physically he was, so co-ordinated and then of course all the other children tried and imitated to varying degrees of success and landing on their heads and so on but it's that sort of 'can do' culture and that has come from the accelerated learning. - I think it's something that we always felt something we've thought morally, spiritually was right for children they should all be celebrated in some way, but I think it definitely focuses it into the can-do culture and celebrate emotional intelligence. Again we thought 'yeah we were right' sometimes we didn't know why we were doing things - going right back certain things had become really taboo in education, you weren't supposed to do any rote learning, you weren't- children weren't supposed - people had their ideologies and sometimes it stopped, it prevented you from doing things you thought were really quite effective in your classroom and now I think we're coming round to the fact, if it worked for this group carry on, if it doesn't work for that, do something else. It's a far more flexible--- it's not quite so, yes things are fashionable still, but I think because teachers are becoming a little bit more educated I suppose in the ways of children's learning, how they teach because I think it's discussed more isn't it? In classrooms, staffrooms, in newspapers in reference materials you see a lot more discussion going on about this and so I think we're almost having more ownership of it now of our own teaching and celebrating what works. I think I learnt to teach by just mirroring someone else, it might not have been very effective because perhaps it worked for them but not always for me or with a group of children but I think now we are more confident. I think in actual fact, going back again, some of the very diagnostic teaching assessments that were happening in the early years of SATs made people more aware of how to understand children's responses so that was again a pre-cursor to people being more receptive to accelerated learning philosophies - so that's I think that's where we are at. We did have a lecture about emotional intelligence and I have to say it didn't really inspire us. I think it was perhaps--- it was the fault of the--- perhaps it was a large group, perhaps our

expectations— we thought it was going to be very practical session, it seemed to be very much paper and talk exercise. There were two schools involved and it really put a dampener on that, we'll have to try and re-visit it –so we're just going to work through the puppetry and poetry and that type of thing for children expressing their feelings and desires and emotions and things. We are still enthusiastic about Accelerated Learning because we don't want children to be passive learners. We knew fundamentally it was wrong for children to be passive, I hesitate to put "learners" because sometimes they were just passive, they weren't actually learning at all! and I worried again about this speaking and listening being lumped together because the listening bit it seemed to me, was given more prominence than the speaking and I used to think well half the time if they are really very quiet are they really here? so that worried us, so we knew that we had to get them more physical, oh I didn't mention about the class moves did I ? we've taken that on again dipped into it because it came in half way through the year so again the bits that people had used they'd liked and then I think somebody else was just talking about physical bits children who find it so difficult to focus, we thought well yes because when we sit in a lecture we get squirmy don't we? We get uncomfortable, we get fed up with just listening to the voice and we thought fundamentally we ought to not be doing this to children. That sounds so awful that I had them all in rows they're all sitting there and all listening they did but we just- we felt there should be more of--- that's why we're so impressed with the foundation phase hopefully coming into Wales because it's more, just more of the same isn't it? Good ideas that people – so I suppose accelerating learning just seemed to encapsulate everything we were doing, the things our gut reaction was telling us were good and it was putting it into a framework. We haven't done Class Moves justice and we still tend to have children perhaps sitting for longer periods than they should be – it's just hard when there's only one of you in the classroom, I think it's just the limitations with the capacity of one person to do it all rather than not having the desire to do it all. I think we're all very comfortable with it as well that the staff – hate going on band wagons they hate been carried along by just a new fashion and I think this is because, it's worked for everybody to a greater or lesser extent depending on how far along the road they've got, that's why they're still with it and want to continue it. It's funny as I say it started off at the very, very beginning with all this information on thinking skills not really knowing how or what we were

going to do with it! We've come along way now really you can't think what it was like before because, for example, with assertive discipline it's another strand of the 'can do' culture if you look at it that way it's celebrating good behaviour and making children feel that again they are in ownership of how they respond and looking at somebody else and saying 'you do this don't you?' 'yes you do' so – there's been a lot of things I've always been suspicious when people come along with new, different ideas I have to be very much convinced but the I think it's almost like a religious zeal once you – once I've decided that yes it's working practically then I will be a disciple to it. I was quite suspicious of assertive discipline to start with because I thought it was just another way of not funding support for children and yes I admit there's a lot of children that no matter what sort of assertive discipline you do and creating the 'can do' culture there'll still be problems and they still need to be supported in a different way, but for our school 99.9% of children have responded very well to it and feel good about themselves. We've got our rules and things that they have ownership of. I think we have come a long way in a very short time and we just want to refine that now. I know I go off on tangents but I think that's what accelerated learning is all about it's not just being in a little box, a tight little box, it is letting other things influence."

Emerging Themes

Getting the learning environment right and making it conducive to active learning is definitely the foundation stone for the Accelerated Learning model. There is a shared belief that it is vital to get this right before teaching and learning should or can take place. The co-researchers have shown the value in choosing a child-centred approach. (this idea is developed further in Chapter 6): it helps to develop skills for learning, provides self belief and develops children's confidence. To achieve this, though, it is evident that there needs to be a deep commitment to what is being done. A dimension of this commitment is that teachers reflect on their practice and establish a positive attitude within themselves and the schools they work in: they continue to develop their own knowledge and accept that they can influence the learning experiences of children in a positive way and that the control remains with them. Failure is 'not the child's fault'. They have also seen a positive effect on behaviour, strengthening the argument that some behaviours can be reduced if the

learning is matched to the learners needs. It is also evident that the teachers share an excitement when applying these techniques and that the structure is beneficial both for them and for the children they teach.

Encouraging spoken language and sharing ideas is also highlighted as an important part of developing a learning culture. This view is obviously supported by Vygotsky's (1962) research but the concept of 'stickability' gives a real child centred focus.

One intriguing part of the experiences is the differing views around success and failure. Alison's view is that children should not experience it and that all contributions should be valued to prevent failure, this is contrasted with Diane's view that children need to experience some form of failure, albeit against their own boundaries, so that they learn to pick themselves up and move on. Surely this is what a supportive environment is about: the feeling of safety that we can explore and get things wrong without fear. Failure is not a problem in itself: it only becomes one if it is associated with negative feelings and responses. So perhaps if the context is "safe", failure should not be avoided.

Chapter 5

Establishing the foundations for learning

Stages 2 and 3 of the Accelerated Learning model are concerned with making the learning experience meaningful to the individual. Stage 2 aims to link new information with what is already known in order to ensure that the learner feels confident about undertaking the new task. Stage 3 is based on the idea that some learners need a clear outline of their goals before they start and to know where the new information will fit into the 'bigger picture'. The co-researchers identify how their own learning experiences and those of their pupils relate directly to the model.

Stage 2 – Connecting the Learning

To make new knowledge meaningful it needs to be related to what is already known. Bruner (1960) and Piaget (1979) both proposed models of how this occurs. Accelerated Learning has encapsulated these ideas into its second stage. As Sotto (1994) suggests:

If I have a working model of that which is being talked about already inside my head, I am able to follow what is being said. But if I do not have such a working model, I find I may understand the individual *words* said to me, but I do not really understand their full meaning.
(p32)

For some of the teachers involved in this project they had to travel their own journey of discovery before they felt confident enough to develop Accelerated Learning with the children. They needed to make a 'connection' with their own knowledge and the teaching techniques they were currently using.

Diane found that there was need for a 'critical mass' of teachers who were committed to the model before it was possible to develop it as a school wide initiative. This commitment came about from the teachers making connections between what they already knew and the new insights from Accelerated Learning:

“After attending the training the staff were very, very enthused. I think partly because those who were not quite so far along the journey had realised how enthused some of the staff--- some of their colleagues were and also realised how impressed Peter, the adviser, was at what was actually happening and that again meant that it moved into this critical mass point where there were a lot of people really interested. I think ever since then we’ve really all been on different stages of the journey, what I did as head was to say that I didn’t want people to feel that they needed every lesson to be in the cycle because I thought that would be a little bit of a straight jacket, but what I did want was them to look - everybody did the exercise, who wished to, of reviewing their past ½ term planning and using highlighter pens looked at which intelligences and which senses were most in--- most used in the teaching and that again had the same effect that it had had on Sally, of making people think ‘oh, you know I’ve got to broaden my style’, and it grew and grew from there I think - with the times that it was, it was regarded by quite a lot of people as being possibly a little wacky--- everybody was running around searching for Brussel sprouts for the SATs at the time. We were being driven by a new curriculum, a National Curriculum which was huge and there were so many changes and there were so many--- teaching and learning were high on the agenda for Ofsted. We’d just had Ofsted at that point and it had been really successful so there was a terrific feel good factor in the school and the feeling that we could afford to experiment with what we were already doing. This was when it became a whole staff thing rather than just groups who were working on it. People they knew that people who had been using the cycle, the precursor to the cycle, had had very good results with Ofsted so it had been given the badge of respectability that this wasn’t just a crazy thing that Diane was into, it was something that actually could work and so it grew. I think I was lucky, to be in the right place at the right time and we were able to do it gradually so that people have felt comfortable with it, rather than have it imposed on them when they haven’t actually bought into the package. I think since we’ve been inducting new teachers, as somebody comes they get the Trevor Hawes book which is a very basic introduction to it, with their contract! and then we’ve each got copies of ALPS and the resource book and anything that we can to support it. County has run courses for--- they were called ‘Putting the fun back into the classroom’ which was based on mind friendly learning, so that’s been running for 5 years now and each year we’ve sent two teachers onto it, what I’ve

tried to do is send a teacher who is a long way down the road and a teacher who is part of the way down the road so if we've got any new people--- I find if I send two people to any--- I would rather send them to fewer courses because I find that the payback to school is much, much greater if two people go. So again, there have been things like that course which we've been able to access and that has kept it on the front burner rather than --- The governors bought into it in a big way, which again I was lucky about, they knew that teaching and learning was a crucial plank to escaping the position we were in. The composition of the governing body had people who were--- one was a head teacher of another school, which was really promoting the arts, it's an Independent school but she was interested in everything, she became completely hooked on it as did a core set of governors, they all went on training as well so - though I say they all, most went on training, we had a number of days which --- where the governors were encouraged to go to and we paid - the county ran two days and we got all the governors bar two to go on that, which had Alistair Smith as one of the inspirational leaders and again that meant that they were very happy for it to remain school development plan priority one and could see that it would have an impact on everything we did. The reason it's been so successful for us in some respects is that its taken a period of time to sort of percolate and it almost was a question of people fighting to have access to it and seeing it as being something that--- was it McDonald who said something like you know in order to teach reading you should make it a subversive activity and if you made it subversive then everybody would want to do it and we wouldn't have the reading problems. Well in a sense it was a bit like that, that people came to it and still are coming to it at different points and I would say we're not --- again one of the things that we did was I wanted to see in the planning a code, so that from being a retrospective thing where they looked back as they had done I wanted it to start being proactive so as they planned they were going to put VAK for visual, auditory and kinaesthetic in a circle by the lessons they were doing and they were also going to put the different intelligences that they were trying to hit and again another thing they were going to do to indicate which lessons where in the full cycle, so that I could drop in on and see what was going on. Initially it's the connecting to, big picture, small steps, multiple intelligence and multi-sensory and the cycle goes that you start by connecting, you then talk to the children and show them the big picture and then you move into the small steps, you then do your teaching which is based

on multi-sensory and it may not be--- but you will try, not all lessons will be equal but you will try to make sure there is a balance in each lesson and over a period of time, so that there are lessons which will lend themselves obviously much more than others to the cycle, but you can use the cycle for PE and you can use the cycle for literacy or an RE lesson, which will be superb, or History or anything but obviously the PE lesson is going to have a far higher kinaesthetic than--- so it's recognising that you can use the cycle across the curriculum and then you come on round to show you know it and demonstrate and then moving on to 'where do we go next?' 'what do we need to do next?' which will then lead into the next lesson and that's how -- I think that's how it's worked."

There is a sense that the adults need not only to 'connect' with the model itself but also to feel that they are supported enough to take risks. This idea that the model applies to adults as much as children, is a theme identified by Catherine in the previous chapter. Further research / development / reading continues to be an important element of this work. It develops the concept of a journey, on which teachers / learners are travelling together and continually striving to find better routes or pathways to develop understanding. Diane stresses the importance and benefit of working together. She recognises that to implement new things there is a need for more than one person to be 'driving it' and that courses should be attended in pairs to allow discussion of new ideas. Training should be regular and built upon. 'Small steps', another concept of the model should be adopted in its implementation.

By considering a new teaching approach and having to adapt their own teaching styles to fit into it, some of the teachers have found that they are questioning what they may have previously accepted. Marie considers how she has developed her understanding and teaching style:

"From what I was reading and from my experiences when trying things out, bit by bit I changed my whole teaching style. Because I got a very positive response I felt 'yeah there's something in this', this is making a difference. I'm looking at children, they're really switched on, they're really into their learning, they're enjoying this. I'm not seeing the same behaviour problems because they are really involved and I

was looking at me, this is fun, I'm enjoying doing this. I like teaching, I've always liked teaching but this had made it better. This had made it for me more creative and I think when the literacy strategy came in and the numeracy strategy there was the danger that we could become 'this is how you do it - 15, 15, 20, 10' and I think we've been - we do work within the literacy strategy but we're very creative with our use of time within it and I think that's helped us. This is a tool, mind friendly learning and the mind friendly framework, the cycle has really helped me to look at how I teach, why I'm teaching, what I'm teaching because there's the 'what's in it for me?' part and you think well 'why am I teaching this?' and you think well yes, ok, just because its on the national curriculum really isn't a good enough reason. What is the relevance of this to 6 and 7 year olds? to 4 and 5 year olds? and just the questioning process that I've had to think 'what is the reason?' and then explain that to them, articulate it to them and sometimes we'll ask the children 'I know I have to teach this but can you think why we might have to learn about this?' And sometimes they can come up with good reasons and it does engage them. If children know 'what's in it for me?' and I think the older they are the more important this is, they're more likely to engage as learners because they can see the relevancy. 4 and 5 year olds well 'you're my teacher and I will do it for you' and you have some children sit there and it doesn't matter, they will do it and its really, I think for me, not abusing that because they want to learn because you're the teacher. It's actually you still have to make it relevant and interesting and lively and everything else and creative so I think yes the mind friendly framework has helped me to be maybe more creative in my teaching and not just go to the things 'well it feels comfortable to me because that's my learning style' that's something else I've learnt. I've not just learnt about children as learners, I've learnt about myself as a learner. A whole load of stuff that I couldn't have articulated four years ago, I could have told you some things but it would have been quite vague and I certainly couldn't have told you what my strengths were intelligences-wise or anything like that. I couldn't have articulated that nor could I have helped other people articulate what their learning styles are and now I'm helping children, 4 and 5 year olds, to articulate what their learning styles are, to help them to identify how they're learning to understand that and the key thing, I think for me, is why do I keep going with mind friendly learning? because it isn't just about the children, it isn't just about me, it isn't just about the job, it's helping people to understand how they

learn, so they're better learners, so you're really giving them tools for life. I feel that's what we're doing. In my classroom at the moment we spent a week looking at each intelligence. So when we were doing the kinaesthetic intelligence, every time they were doing a kinaesthetic activity, I'd said 'oh that's using your kinaesthetic intelligence' and I had some pictures and labels and we talked about it and that was quite helpful so they would start this. They'd heard the vocabulary, they were starting to identify that there are differences and that there are some people who feel really comfortable with some activities and they like to choose those kind of activities. There are others that maybe they don't, but everybody's the same, that we all have different strengths, if you want to put it that way and areas that we're not not as strong at, so it's helped everybody to recognise they can all achieve."

Marie's commitment to her work speaks volumes. Sotto (1994) suggests that teachers need tools to be reflective and it is evident that Marie feels the Accelerated Learning model provides these. She encapsulates for me how we should all approach our work with children. They are central and we must continually reassess our approaches and challenge ourselves. It is her sense of empowering others that holds true to the Accelerated Learning Model's philosophy of active and independent learners.

Mindmapping Techniques

Marie has also considered different techniques to help children connect their learning. Mindmaps are based on Buzan's (1995) work. He proposes that they aim to create a more effective way of organising information that is closer to the way our brains organise it rather than by recording through language in a linear way.

"I use mindmapping at the moment with my class as a good way --- I tend to model them with 4 and 5 year olds. So when we're planning our role play area and I get the children involved in that, I say 'right we're going to have a castle, what are we going to need?' So they'll start telling me things we need and so I'll say 'well that's actually, that's a props branch' so we have a branch and we write props on 'so ok now what do you think this is?' And they this time of the year they say 'well that's a prop'. They're understanding that certain things go on different branches and

depending on what they link with, 'that's the people' or 'that's the costumes' so I've done a lot of that. What I also do is, I use it as a tool for 'what do we know about something' because that is something I think is really important as well. We have our objectives and we know why we're doing something but this is not just about something that we're trying to teach, this is about children and what do they already know? It's a good way of kind of collecting information together, the information the children already know. So we'll do that together as a class. A big one on the carpet and I'll be on my knees and they'll be telling me ideas and we'll put them on and another way of doing it, I suppose, it's a good review tool. 'So what have we found out about something?' and with older children I would do this an awful lot more at the beginning of a topic they could do 'what do we know about ____?' and they do their own and at the end, 'now what do you know?' and do your mindmaps to show all the different things that you've learnt. It's a good reviewing tool and helps children to make connections and a revision tool but with 4 and 5 year olds its simple, to get used to the ideas, the colour, that you have pictures linked to them and that you are grouping, logical and mathematical as well as being visual, you are grouping ideas that connect together in the same way as the brain does making connections. We did one where one of the choices that I gave the group after one of the lessons was a mindmap. We did about places. I'd done a simple outline of a mindmap and the children could choose to come and do that if they wanted. We'd been learning about the city, the countryside, the town, the village and one group chose mindmaps and it was mainly girls, which didn't surprise me because it is a lot of writing and pictures, it's words and pictures and that did appeal to the learning style of a lot of the girls and a lot of boys chose to go and build me out of big bricks or duplo or whatever they'd built me, a village or the countryside, as best they could using what they'd got. So that's the next step where children are starting to do that using a framework, just like writing frames that we use, so it's a mindmap frame and that's good and that's what I'm going to do when I meet my new class next week I'm going to give them the same mindmap I gave the parents which is all about yourself and get them to draw a picture because they've never used mindmaps before and these are year 2 children so I'm going to teach them the basics of a mindmap so they can learn a bit about me, because I'm a stranger and they don't know anything about me their new teacher and I'll model it and then they can have a go themselves and that will start us off. We'll do some

Brain Gym. I'll teach them some exercises so that come September at least we've started the way we mean to go on."

Marie recognises the importance of providing structure for the children to develop their understanding of how they learn. This fits with Vygotsky's (1962) concept of 'scaffolding' and helping children develop their ability to organise knowledge. It helps to identify connections in the learning process so that information becomes meaningful for the learners.

Nicola has considered introducing mindmaps into her teaching but has some reservations:

"All the things that I've looked at for mind mapping seem to be and this is my impression and I don't know if I'm right, seem very much junior based and quite complicated. I know that some of them have drawn pictures and so on and how they perceive things but I'm not very comfortable with that at the moment so I don't think I've got my own head round it let's put it that way, so that's why we haven't – and really because we were tackling it from so many sides. I think we need some refining and consolidation and doing things a little bit better, the things we're actually doing rather than tackling anything else."

She remembers using a similar structure to do planning in the past. However she also recognises that if things are to be successful in their implementation there is a need for teachers to consolidate their own learning before introducing new things to the children. This highlights how important it is to apply the theory of Accelerated Learning to what adults do as well:

"In our planning we used to create these marvellous flow charts and things. You do get into that sort of pattern of going off at tangents, but if you're not careful you go off and it almost takes over from the main body of planning, so we have worked in that way before but I don't want overload because I'm very conscious that in our multi-sensory type of learning and teaching we are really bad at the moment with our white board training aspects. We want to get that under our belt so there's technical things we really must consolidate. I mustn't take my eye off the ball there

and we'd like a lot more good work going on in our role play because every so often you think 'oh yes have you changed it this week or in the last couple of weeks?' 'oh no' because it is about pressure and I am perfectly understanding about that. Firstly I want to make sure that what we're doing is good."

Elizabeth explains how she has applied the mindmapping techniques and has been surprised by the effectiveness of the technique:

"We do a lot of mind mapping. I could do it regularly now, I'm a real fan of mind mapping and the children love doing that and that was something I'd not heard of before I'd started on this Accelerated Learning. I use mindmapping at the beginning of a topic. I've used it to brainstorm what they know about a topic and then to recap and see what they've learnt and remembered at the end, so it's been really, really interesting and when we were doing the story wheels the things they'd remember. We've also done it with Divali. Sometime after Divali, we did it just to see how much they could remember and I was amazed, things they remembered that--- I thought it was so nice, it brought it back and it reminded other children and that set their train of thought onto other things that they remembered. It was such a good tool I thought, to recap and remember. To begin with, they'd not done one at all so the first session Sandra did and guided us and we all needed guiding and that was on ourselves, I think, but since then although Sandra's been involved, she's come in, the children more or less not that we do it as a class although they're all doing an individual one but you know we'll start with a big one and go off on our branches we give titles of the branches and then they spread out from there you know we'll have talked about a few ideas and then you know during the mind mapping session we'll bring a few you know as we're going round oh I remember this or that and that'll set them off again it is a really good exercise that I enjoy doing that and I think the children gain a lot from it which I wouldn't have thought of doing with the children had I not been involved and we still do the Brain Gym at least once a day but usually twice depending on other --- if it's a PE day maybe just once but they love doing those exercises they love them and they'll ask to do them. I've really enjoyed taking part in that and I really think the children have benefited from it it's given me new insights it's given me new ideas and new approaches and I think that can only be a benefit really to the children"

Susan explains how her school are connecting learning experiences by developing mindmapping skills and using Brain Gym to break up the learning sessions:

“At the moment Sandra is coming in she’s been working with year 1 on mind mapping we have introduced it last term on a very basic level but she’s coming in now and she’s working with the children and the staff in year 1 and expanding on that into thinking clouds or so that’s quite exciting that’s the next step forward. It’s been really good and we’ve found it really useful with the children who, struggle for want of a better word, with their writing skills it does it sort of visualisation does help them certainly transfer their thoughts so that’s something that we’re continuing to develop and the other thing that we’ve been doing a lot of word go is the Brain Gym, looking at the different activities and Sandra’s been coming in and working with that with the children and going in the hall and working with year groups and giving staff different ideas for developing the types of things that you can do. They use Brain Gym throughout the day and in Debra’s class they will take the lead in it and she will ask so and so to stand and then the rest of them follow while they lead all the different things. It’s brilliant, really good, so it’s very much part and parcel of what we believe our school to be now. “

She continues:

“Last week we started work on word association and cloud chains and early mind mapping so we want to continue with developing that and Sandra was talking to me about trying to develop like a communicative inquiry, so I think that’s where we’re going now. We’re starting to use discussion cards taking it along that way, much more reasoning behind things and language, taking it along that route. We’ve done lots of the other things. The big picture I think has been good as well, the children come in and they’re so confident they know exactly what’s going on and no fear over anything that’s been a good thing, that’s been a very good thing”

Making connections

Gardner (1993) proposes that one of the most important challenges for teachers is in:

planning the steps – the hurdles that the child must overcome so that he can progress satisfactorily through the domain (p389)

It is also important that children are helped to realise that they may have the steps planned for them but that they can control their learning. It is therefore important that the model is shared with the children.

Catherine explains that:

“Accelerated Learning should override all of the other strategies. There should be some form of helping children to think --- discuss their work so in English you write for 5 minutes, then talk to your partner, you and your partner, help each other how you could alter your work and things like that. I think Accelerated Learning’s a lot about working together and snowballing ideas from each other and sharing and that includes the Teacher as well. I think children should not always regard the teacher as the font of all knowledge. They should be able to say ‘well I don’t know this, can I go and find it out?’ ‘can I go on the internet, can I go to the library?’ and it is happening in other schools, I’ve seen it happen in schools. I’ve worked in schools where --- so I know it works. It’s just gradually moving the school that I’m in now to get there. It’s no good doing it if teachers don’t believe it happens, so you can’t do it overnight.”

Catherine identifies that the Accelerated Learning model is reliant on a strong foundation of interpersonal skills eg. working together, sharing ideas, as well as children understanding that they can control their own learning experiences. Her belief that the teacher should not always be regarded as “the font of all knowledge” echoes Marie’s earlier statement that children should not be asked to learn information just because you are teaching it.

Susan believes that to establish Accelerated Learning firmly within her school there was need to connect it to what was already being done and set the pace of change at a speed that everyone was willing to accept:

"I can't honestly say that anything out of it [Accelerated Learning] that we've tried that we've thought 'oh no'. It's all kind of fitted in. I think the fact that everybody here--- the way we've introduced it, it's only been small steps. I don't think anyone's thought 'oh my goodness I'm not doing this again' or--- and nobody's come up against anything --- but I think it does have to be a whole school thing if it's going to work properly. You really have got to get all the staff on board right from day one and involve them, but I think because after that day's course with Sandra and Paul we came back so full of it and really excited by it, 'it's good' filtered through. It made you think about yourself, as much as the children. I thought 'that is what I do, that is me'. It relates to adults as much as to children doesn't it? Lots of the things I would do naturally, so how can I expect children to go through the day without a drink or not knowing what's coming next or--- you could see the relevance of it before you'd even implemented it and once you'd started it, it kind of snowballed. People say to you 'what's your philosophy of education?' and I --- before all this, I very often thought 'what is my philosophy all about?' and really this is it. But it's your's, it's our's, it's everybody's now, isn't it? It's given a kind of direction -- and its incorporated into our vision, it's really just kind of --- I can see where this school is going to go forward and I think you can honestly put your hand on your heart and say this is our philosophy, it's not just some rhetoric or a little phrase that you've picked up somewhere and it's just very much part of what goes on here and what we're about."

The Accelerated Learning model provided Susan with a framework on which to place her current practice and then develop it further. A key concept that she identifies is that the Accelerated Learning model can be used as a philosophy of education and that if this is shared it creates a powerful working environment.

Susan continues her argument for having it as a whole-school strategy and reiterates Diane's view that implementation of strategies is easier with more than one person leading:

"I think when they advertise the course, it would be a good idea advertising for someone from the senior management in addition to a teacher. As a teacher you might get it going in your class and that's it then, isn't it? I mean at some of the follow up things with Sandra, very often there's just isolated cases, trying to get these things going but it's just in their classroom and I don't know it just seems a shame, if somebody from senior management hasn't been on it, then you really haven't got much chance of it being a whole success. It doesn't always have the --- it's not always taken seriously is it? it's just another thing, especially if you're in a school where courses aren't disseminated which does happen. You go away, you find that out, you try it out in your class and that's the end of it then, isn't it? But I think as well it also it encompasses a whole host of things like--- with the gender issue, boys and girls, I think particularly with the multi-intelligence planning, it looks at how you can remedy weaknesses in your planning or how you can enhance boys learning."

Alison explains that when introduced to the Accelerated Learning model the first step was to connect what they were already doing to the model before moving on:

"When you gave us an overview of the Accelerated Learning you did the overall picture in the library didn't you? Without realising that we're dealing with Accelerated Learning techniques already. I mean we let the children--- they know what the learning outcomes are, we'll have feedback to see whether they've come on board and whether they've applied it and whether in the plenary ---. We identify in our planning whether a child has taken something on board, whether to tackle it in another way, what the next step for that child is, that's all really part of our planning. I think we're well aware of the need to get as much practical work in as we possibly can. I know we're not as well off as some schools who've got 2 or 3 computers in every classroom but we do a lot of work through ICT."

Stage 3 – Big Picture

Within the Accelerated Learning Model the 'Big Picture' follows 'Connecting the learning'. It aims to give children an idea of what they will know at the end of a lesson, day, topic or whatever the teacher wants to apply it to.

When a teacher begins to explain a new topic by stating a series of new facts, the learners will not really understand those facts till the teacher has finished. Put that way, it sounds as if one must begin at the end.

Sotto 1994, (p43)

Based on the Gestalt approach it is not only separate facts but the way they fit together that is important, allowing children into the picture early on helps them to grasp what is being taught. Dryden and Vos (2001) compare the techniques used to those applied when completing a jigsaw:

If you see the total picture on the package, you'll know exactly what you're building. Then it's much easier to fit each piece in place. (p151)

Diane describes how she uses the concept behind the Big Picture to keep both children and parents informed:

"We already had a system in place which I'd set up quite a bit earlier where at the beginning of every project we brainstormed and we had pieces of wallpaper on the walls and said to the children 'right this is the topic, so superman, what do we know?' Whatever it is we put down and then they had been used from first coming in reception to actually throwing questions out like 'what do we know?' 'What do we want to know?' and so we already had a system in place that was done at the beginning of every module. These would then be condensed and handed out to parents and parents were encouraged to give us--- to participate in any way that they could. At the beginning of each module we also had a meeting where parents if they wanted to, could come and talk about what we were going to do, so when we were jumping up and down and saying we want to try and make the learning more kinaesthetic and also that we wanted to make sure that all the intelligences, rather than strict curriculum areas, were covered the parents became very interested and in fact I still see some of them now and they have as teachers gone on to follow it through. It was crude, it was very much--- now with the concept of bringing it into not only your medium term planning which was essentially what that was, but actually taking it into the lesson plan. You see we didn't have--- at that point we didn't do lesson plans, we just had to teach and so it was very joined up and very

creative. It was also a bit haphazard now looking back on it, but there was a lot to be said for it. I mean it was very creative and there was a lot of joined-up-ness about it and it was--- but it meant that I could really experiment with some of the things that I was reading from the States and Australia, because there were things happening in Australia too which kind of supported it with Holdiway's work and other people. So you were able to really have the freedom of the class teacher which I think is probably very, very difficult to achieve now, from my point of view. I then went on to be a head and I knew it worked. I was completely sold on it because I'd seen, in my own experience, but on top of that I'd also seen other people doing it, my colleagues. I was always worried that when you have an enthusiasm, you enthuse, you make it work because you're so enthusiastic but I also knew that other colleagues had made it work and they were dead keen too."

Here Diane states in her own words that despite the quality of the Accelerated Learning model it is dependent on teacher commitment and enthusiasm. It appears to be difficult to separate whether the success is the model or the teacher who is applying it.

Diane continues:

"So I wanted to try and bring it in, but at the time the school was, what would now be called special measures, the LEA had said it would fail in terms of quality of teaching and quality learning and Ofsted had just come in and we could be visited at any point and so I needed a combination. I needed an approach which meant that teachers could --- I had to sort of move goal posts because if I'd said I want you to come and start doing things to do with multi-intelligence and multi-sensory, I'd have had a revolution. I couldn't actually introduce it in that form, so what I did was do a number of sort of demonstration days where I was doing things, kind of mini versions of it, so I would go in and I would do a day on North American Indians and I planned it very much within, what is now the mind friendly cycle, so that there were different elements within that day and worked alongside teachers and I didn't do it as often as I would have liked because various things were getting in the way but I sufficiently --- so that I think some staff were curious as to why the children were so keen and why children who weren't traditionally doing as well

seemed to do particularly well in these sessions. The sessions were very much to do with trying in the planning to make sure that I appealed to all the intelligences, trying to make sure that each of the senses, it was multi-sensory, that there was the link to what the children already knew, what--- trying to get in the concept of the big picture and the small steps, so that the children who felt comfortable with leaping straight to big pictures were able to move quite swiftly but also those who needed the small steps were reassured and there was sign posting throughout the day and that this was going to happen, so we then did the actual work in as many ways as possible, very much allowing the children to self select which type of learning they wanted to do, so there's a bit of teaching from me as to what were the options and what would act as a sort of stimulus catalyst and then they could choose how they would respond and then at the end there was a sort of show and tell type activity. And what happened was that a number of teachers, were sort of saying--- were finding it difficult to believe that certain children were able to produce in the form and standard that they did."

This comment encapsulates for me one of the main reasons I believe in the Accelerated Learning model. If we are to achieve inclusion within our education system we need to challenge our views of what is achievable. In particular we need to ensure that we refrain from labelling or categorising children by the abilities they initially demonstrate. The 'self fulfilling prophecy' is a powerful concept which we need to ensure has a positive outcome.

Diane states:

"I wouldn't say it happened overnight, it was a deliberate ploy, we were going to take it very, very gradually. I included as much on thinking and learning theory that would support this in the inset, so whenever we did inset there was always an element of creativity or how could we translate this into teaching? how would children learn from it? so there was a kind of element of bringing those things in slowly and about --- I would say, probably about 4 years in, 5 years in, I felt confident enough to sort of start, we actually had ---Howard Gardner came to the county and he came to the Senior Education Executive Officers Conference and I managed to persuade our Education Director to open it up to schools. They had

Robert Fisher there, they had--- it was a marvellous conference and we went as a staff to it. It was a Friday and a Saturday, not everybody came to the Saturday but sufficient numbers came to the Saturday for it to move into the critical mass, where people were starting to say 'oh I really like--- want to try that out.' Robert Fisher was a little disappointing, I didn't go to him but colleagues went and I'd been to him before and thought it was just wonderful. I think he was having an off day or something but the--- it sowed the seeds and then what happened was I --- there were members of staff who were then hooked and from that moment on they were trying things out and clearly becoming very excited, so in the staffroom, from it being a staffroom where nobody --- the topic of conversation was usually Coronation Street or something like that, it actually started to be 'have you tried?' 'did you do it?' people started to plan things together as opposed to planning on their own and there was a bit of puzzlement with other colleagues but gradually more and more people became quite interested in what they were saying and what they were doing."

Linking Accelerated Learning with the National Curriculum

Rosemary has applied the Big Picture to school planning with pleasing initial results and identifies the importance of not taking behaviour at face value:

"We really worked hard on our medium and short term planning to make sure--- you can imagine the massive range of pupils we've got here, to make sure the children's needs were really being met educationally and actually there was an upsurge in standards because children who were told --- I was told were naughty, actually couldn't read and things like that. So we really accelerated standards, probably up until this year because actually what we were accelerating was not genuine special needs it was emotional problems which we'd tried to address by --- and I clearly said to them 'you read the newsletter, you sort yourself out, it's not mommy's problem' because actually the only way out of here is if they activate themselves because the parents (very quiet speech) are not very good really."

Rosemary continues and explains how they adjusted the curriculum to make it more purposeful:

“What we did was we mapped it, the English and maths are national numeracy and literacy tracked so we really went down that route previous to the county model which has since been brought in so that’s fairly straight forward. The non-core I hate an hour of History, an hour of Geography, an hour of this because I don’t think well what’s the point? You can fiddle about for 15 minutes and nothing happens. So we have blocks of work like, half a term they do History, so that’s five hours a week you teach History, so you’ve a massive potential there to cover whatever it is you’re supposed to cover, get in depth and also to know what resources you want because there are no resources here apart from our bare hands and it’s only this year we’ve actually been able to buy anything. It’s all been what can we make, or borrow, or bring in from home and so on – so we have 3 half terms of Science because that’s a core subject so that’s done in the afternoons and half a term of History, half a term of Geography and half a term which is choice. Now if it’s the year 6 teacher she uses that time to practise for SATs, why pretend you don’t? nearly everybody else does PSE. I’m very, very keen on PSE. I written a scheme of work on it, we’ve got the Folen’s thing, it’s done as the hidden curriculum and as the mainstream curriculum it’s given legitimacy through that. There’s no problem in September when it becomes part of the curriculum. The only thing which I don’t think I’ve achieved yet is to get – one of the problems with key stage 2 teachers is they are very knowledge orientated and I’m a key stage one expert and everything to me is based around the skill. It’s how do I get better at this? how can I see that I can fit that into the curriculum? what I – what the real push is now is to get them to use those 5 hours even better than they are already because they’re certainly getting the results, the children do understand what it is they’re learning about but there’s more potential to bring in the Art, to use the RE and things like that so I give very high priority to subjects like RE, PSE, Health and Sex Education but they’re taught in a way that is helping their reading. I’ve got loads of group reading books so when you’re doing life and living processes there’s a set of BBC books that 6 children can read and answer questions on and things like that. So it’s trying to – trying to make sure we don’t go back to the pre National Curriculum let’s do a topic and do a load of rubbish but let’s have the rigor of the National Curriculum but actually the depth that comes of actually including all these other elements and actually the children’s --- coming up so that’s the real

challenge. I think now that we actually understand how the children tick and they are actually learning, we've found out who really has got special needs."

Rosemary feels that for effective learning to take place there is a need for careful planning and 'chunking' of work. She draws on the model's philosophy to ensure that the time children spend learning is used in the most effective way.

Despite the changes that have been made, Rosemary is conscious of the need to continually be aware of staff's needs and of the wider picture within school:

"We're all coming from and we all want the same thing. I've got a variety of teaching staff with a variety of experience and I don't push people further than they can go which is another issue. We've got the Brain Gym and we've got circle time so --- what we've found is, really the year 3 teacher and the resourced provision teacher do it the most and I do more as they go up because suddenly to plunge year 6 into it, it's like everything else it needs to be part of, this is what we do."

Catherine feels that making connections within the curriculum helps children to understand why they are asked to learn certain facts. In her school they have been developing the links:

"We've done whole school projects on Art, where every child was involved in quite --- in actually painting for a full week and then from the Art we used that to --- we based it on the theme of Myths and Legends, so the children had listened to lots of myths and legends, watched videos on them and then created their own story boards based on that and then after that--- we're doing lots of trying to link the Art work with the written work which I think all helps with the thinking skills and helps children to make links and make sense of the world really, rather than doing things in isolation. I think you have to be flexible and quite strong as a head to say that it doesn't matter if we don't do an hours geography a week, at 10 o'clock on a Wednesday morning, as long as over time children are experiencing the geographical content that is in the National Curriculum. Obviously in inspection week you do it exactly how they want you to do it."

This comment raises the dilemma and conflict perceived within the education system, that those monitoring what is done may not agree with the practices implemented. Catherine has no doubt that what she and her staff do is helping the children to learn to the best of their ability but she feels there is a need to 'jump through hoops' at times. These inconsistencies within the system need to be addressed.

"You need to look at the long term plans so that you're able to monitor that that's happening and like --- one of the things that happened was here, we were doing --- one of the Year 5 classes did myths and legends based on Greece, Ancient Greece and they did so they then did their D&T work. They're supposed to make something, I can't remember what you made - shoes, Persus' shoes, so it linked again they were still doing the D&T but it was linking in, so it made sense to them and it was fun for the children to do, rather than just 'design a shoe'. Then they're supposed to actually study a country other than ours. Now it was down on their plans to do St Lucia, now I feel it would have been better had they done Greece. They were nervous about that, but I think as the teachers grow more in confidence with the Accelerated Learning and the ways of linking things, I think they --- when we talked about it afterwards they wished they'd done Greece, they could see how the learning objectives could be met, so the National Curriculum does it - I'm sort of contradicting myself but the National Curriculum allows you to do it as long as you stick to the learning objectives rather than getting caught up in the programmes of study. "

Catherine feels that one of Accelerated Learning's strengths is to help children to develop a 'love of learning' and that by sharing information with children they can explore their learning environment:

"I think Accelerated Learning needs all the other things I don't think it --- I think Accelerated Learning is a terrible name, but what else do you get? I think in isolation the very thing it wouldn't do is accelerate learning. I think it has to fit in with the other philosophical things and being positive with children and sort of encouraging positive behaviour and sort of creativity. The philosophy of Accelerated Learning is wide enough but obviously as we're just trained in small

aspects of it, that isn't wide enough. Obviously people don't have the time to delve in and to and do the stuff the Psychologist's training and I mean the people who want the bigger picture will go and read and do extra training, so I think by going into behaviour intervention and other things that can link in, as a manager, I'm trying to give them the full philosophy without making them go away and do the doctorate, because I don't want to go away and do a doctorate either! I don't think it's what it [Accelerated Learning] really does for schools, it's what in turn that does for children which I do think--- it goes back to improving children's self-esteem and I know that sometimes it's quite old fashioned to think we're supposed to actually be here to develop a love of learning, to stimulate children, to be excited about what they might learn next week but if we don't, if we're not turning children on to education between the ages of 3 and 11 we've lost them for life so --- the National Curriculum is probably guilty of making teachers afraid to be creative and try new approaches and to let children think and I think that's probably turned off more children that will show in time as they're going through."

Emerging Themes

"To develop a love of learning" what greater aim could we have as teachers? Connecting the learning has been interpreted in two ways: it is linked with what children need to establish themselves as learners and it has been linked with the journey that the individual teacher needs to make to be able to fully integrate Accelerated Learning techniques within their daily job.

Teachers need to apply the model for themselves to recognise the impact it can have and some they need it to be given credibility by inspectors before they are willing to take it on board. Is this a reflection of the pressures teachers are under which results in their not wanting to take things on that might not be recognised? This underlines the importance of adopting the methods as a whole school strategy which has the additional benefit of enabling teachers to share ideas and work together on planning the curriculum. This is a key area that needs to be worked on and teachers commented on the pressure and restrictions imposed by a National Curriculum.

There is also a recognised need for continuing training and research. How this is achieved is important to teachers when they consider the other pressures of their work. There is definitely a role to be filled, possibly by outside agencies including Educational Psychologists, to help teachers to develop their skills.

In adopting the model teachers comment that they have had to learn about themselves to be able to adjust their teaching methods. One teacher goes as far as to say the model encapsulates her own philosophy of teaching.

Connecting the learning and providing children with a Big Picture has demonstrated benefits within the classrooms and has increased children's confidence. It has also helped to include parents in the learning experience. These techniques are helping children develop themselves as active learners and challenges their ideas that the teacher is the 'fount of all knowledge' and that their role is just to listen. Gardner (1993) encapsulates this view:

the young child is already developing incipient theories of himself as an agent in the realms of learning and thinking...often included in his theory is a perception of how learning occurs: you go to school, a clever person tells you something and you are expected to learn it and remember it and if you don't you are stupid. Rarely is there a conception of learning as a long process of experimentation. (p94)

By encouraging children to take some control over their learning and also by matching the learning to their needs we may be able to challenge the current view of Special Educational Needs. As Rosemary suggested children had been wrongly labelled in her school and, therefore, teachers were able to raise standards easily by matching teaching methods to children's needs.

Children are also benefiting from the use of alternative 'tools for learning'. The concept of mindmapping is still relatively new in schools and highlights the different stages teachers are at on their journeys within Accelerated Learning.

Chapter 6

Teaching for effective learning

Stage 4 of the Accelerated Learning model addresses the teaching element of the lesson. It explores the most effective ways to encourage successful learning.

Once the learning environment has been constructed and children have been led through the stages of connecting the learning to previous knowledge and also been made aware of what the Big Picture includes, this stage focuses on the teacher's delivery of the information to be learned. This part of the Accelerated Learning model draws on the theories of learning styles and Multiple Intelligences. In the model it is suggested that children learn primarily in one of three ways either using their visual, auditory or kinaesthetic skills and that teachers should use a combination of these methods to share information. It also proposes that children have a range of intelligences that help them to make sense of the world and these, too, should be recognized in teaching methods.

Stage 4 – Input

Stop thinking about teaching primarily in terms of the content of the lesson. Content is important. But when one begins to think about teaching in terms of learning, it becomes obvious that content is only half the matter. The other half is what the learners *actually do* in a lesson

Sotto 1994 (p200)

Diane explains how they developed these techniques within her school:

“We were looking specifically at increasing the amount of kinaesthetic in our teaching so we were doing a lot of — In terms of the multi-sensory, that was the area that we all thought was the one that we weren't meeting as much as we would like to and so we focused very much on that. We tried to think, every time we were planning and again we had incredible freedom because we could do whatever basically we wanted, provided we delivered in terms of results. I was lucky in that I had a very good reputation with the parents and so they were willing --- There were a number of teachers amongst the parents who were interested in what we were

doing and when the children were singing what they'd learnt or they were dancing the times tables they were doing, the parents were keen to actually follow through and keen to find out more."

She continues by explaining the process they adopted:

"They started off again primarily with multiple intelligence, trying to make sure that they were --- Initially I did it with one colleague. I said 'right have a look at your planning and have a look to see which senses you're actually appealing to most in your daily planning and also which intelligences' and she did it as an exercise for me. She was absolutely horrified. She was a very, very good teacher. She was already a very good teacher. There was no question about it, but what she realised, in analysing what she'd done over the last half term, was that there were certain groups who were actually getting far less in terms of what they needed to display their intelligence through multi-sensory or multi-intelligences from her teaching. So that was tremendous, it was so lucky really and she was prepared to talk to everybody about it and bore everyone silly and we were starting to really sort of motor then. They're a very competitive lot at our place, in the sense that they want to be good and if one person seems to have found a way that works really well, the others immediately want to try it. That was a brilliant culture for it to work in."

Again, the idea of teachers needing appropriate environments to ensure success is developed. A commitment is not only necessary in individuals but also in the colleagues they are surrounded by. One co-researcher is currently working alone but she receives her support from the Educational Psychology Service and her direct involvement from the project.

Diane continues to explain about the benefits of a supportive environment:

"Again, we were lucky in that our education officer was very, very keen on the whole of this area and he called together a big conference of volunteer schools to look at ---. This was in the academic year 1998-99 and he wanted to look ahead to what was going to be necessary for the curriculum 2000 and so he pulled together people as many schools that were interested. The idea was that schools were going

to network and do projects. Initially I went with one colleague but she was moving on and Sally took up the position and we had a project going in the three schools. It was action research where we were looking at Brain Gym and we were looking at multiple intelligences, particularly in planning and things like that. She is a very ambitious person and a very, very good teacher and she was recognised --- the adviser was very interested in this little group and she joined us for most meetings and that again gave us a real boost because she is a highly intelligent lady and the fact that she was excited by it meant that --- it also meant that we didn't let it drop, which we might of done with things --- Sally then started with Brain Gym and the idea was we had two control groups, we had three parallel classes and she was going to try with Brain Gym and what I discovered was that the other two felt --- She was completely convinced very quickly that Brain Gym was having an impact in --- it was three parallel classes year 1 and year 2 and she felt that it started the day in a very positive, well it started each session in a positive way. She was using them for brain breaks and she thought that that had had an impact. Now you've got to remember these 3 classes were planning together, so they were doing more or less the same things and part of our policy was to have year group meetings each week and within the year group meetings there is one fixed agenda item, which is dictated by me! where they have to compare the outcome of one teaching activity that they have done throughout the week, in all three classes and they had to really look at outcomes and sometimes it would be a written outcome, sometimes it would be other forms but you know the idea. Each alternate week it's a core subject and then the foundation subjects fit in between, so that you go through quite a breadth -- not as quickly as one would like, but relatively quickly. But what was happening was they were comparing the results and there was a feeling amongst the other two that Sally's class were actually doing better and what I discovered was they were surreptitiously doing Brain Gym, when they thought no one was looking and it didn't --- It wasn't action research in the sense that you were going to be able to publish it. It was to try out, to see how it went and it had obviously been compromised well and truly! They were saying things like 'it isn't fair our children should have the same chance as Sally's' and that's how Brain Gym got in and the same with the water and the same with brain breaks."

Marie explains how she applies the techniques in her work and how it has encouraged her to become more reflective in her teaching:

“My understanding of multi-sensory learning is that some children are visual, that some children are auditory and some children are very, very physical and have to have hands on, the kinaesthetic has helped me to understand that. It’s also helped me to put this into practice in my teaching so I’m looking — If I’m teaching something, I’m not going to just talk. I’m not going to just do the ‘old chalk and talk type thing’ and have words on the board. I’m going to use lots of visual images and I like using technology as much as I can, so that it is very, very visual and attractive and colourful and bright and interesting, because I know that’s stimulating to many people’s brains but also that even if they’re sitting on the carpet there is a kind of kinaesthetic activity involved. Sometimes we are doing gestures, so it might be that going through the mind friendly framework, say for a lesson, that as well as there being during our teaching, so on the carpet there will be gestures. If we’re doing counting, we’ll be doing it physically. We get up and we’re marching, it’s not just always sitting and saying. I build into my lessons lots of opportunities for role play so the children are up and active and are busy moving around - lots of kinaesthetic, but they’re working in groups so it really appeals to children who like working in groups so the interpersonal intelligences so that really appeals to those but there’s also opportunities for children who don’t want to be with a group, so they can actually have kinaesthetic activities that they can do by themselves. If I can give you a couple of examples it would really help. We had a lesson on houses and we were learning about different types of houses and the children looked at pictures and we talked about ‘how did you decide it was detached?’ ‘how do we know it’s a bungalow?’ We went on a walk, I try and build in using the environment as well as much as possible, we’re lucky here so we could go out of the school and see all the different houses that we’ve been learning about. When we came back they showed me what they’d learnt. One of the options was they could role play it, so we had groups of children and particularly at the young age they do like to be very, very physical and very active and so everybody joined in with that. So they role played a house and I looked round and thought ‘what are you doing?’ And you realise they’re showing you exactly what they’ve learned and that’s 4 and 5 year olds and they worked --- sorted themselves out. I was very impressed with that and I’ve seen

that time and time again, right from reception children doing this and then other times what I'll do is, I'll have options where the children can build something that relates to what we've been learning about. The children have choices so having done the teaching, having done the learning which is the multi-sensory bit with me, they can then explore and show what they've been learning and explore it a bit more in their own preferred learning style. Sometimes there'll be a writing type activity for the linguistic, there's a visual one so it's usually sort of some kind of drawing. There will be a kinaesthetic one, sometimes role play, sometimes building, sometimes--- depending on what the activity is. I try to build in where I can a mathematical one so it's much more appealing to the logic, so sorting activities are quite good particularly science and history and those things, they lend themselves to using those intelligences. The one I've found the hardest is the naturalist intelligence because of course it's come along later so it's one that I've only had to think about more recently, also I don't find that it fits in in the same way as a lot of the others. I have a naturalist area in my classroom so at the moment on there we've got a chrysalis and we're waiting for it to hatch out, hatch is the wrong word, but to come out as a butterfly and the children keep going and look at that. We've got all sorts of natural objects and magnifying glasses and you do find certain children are always there and they can go and look at --- and I have had giant snails there at times, so there've been living things but I find that hard. I can do an area but it's hard to always link it in to other lessons that's --- I don't find that one slots in in the same way, that a lot of the other intelligences do. It's not a subject but it sometimes feels like a science subject rather than an intelligence which can go across the board, skills that you can apply in areas. So I found that one a little bit harder but that's also partly me I'm only getting to grips with it more recently."

Marie does not dismiss the new intelligence despite finding it difficult to implement. Instead she demonstrates determination and belief that she will find a way if she perseveres. I believe this is a key point that goes beyond this example. Successful learners know they can achieve but are also aware of the effort that they must exert during this process. Children or adults who do not perceive themselves as learners often underestimate the learning process itself and the effort it requires. These ideas are developed from Billington (2004).

Brain Gym used to support learning

Hughes (2000) states that:

The brain uses in excess of 20% of the body's oxygen. It also requires water, rest and protein to function effectively....oxygen to the brain reduces by 15% following a period of sitting. (p29)

Marie has found there are benefits to using Brain Gym, not only to divide lessons into manageable 'chunks', but as a regular learning tool:

"I just read a chapter on Brain Gym and thought mm-mm, this is really interesting. That was put over as very much 'this is research', 'this is how it's helped', 'here are statistics to show how it's helped' which was enough to make me think there's something in this it's not just anecdotal evidence. Too many statistics could turn me off but it was enough to make me say there's something here that going to make a difference and I want to try it and I want to find out more. So I did and I had a word with Denise. I've read about something I want to do and she was happy with that. That was fine, although to be quite honest I'm probably subversive enough that had she said no I would have wanted to have a go on my own, because in my own mind there was something in it, to go ahead for it. So that's how Brain Gym came into our school. I started doing it and was able to say 'wow! I've had two terms with the children. I started it after Easter, in fact it was about Whit, and I noticed a change' and it was just before we were doing the SATs and there were a couple of children who --- We did Brain Gym everyday, because I'd read that's what you're supposed to do and it changed one of two children, to my mind, radically. It wasn't like a small change that you could put down to several things. It was one thing we'd changed. My teaching style hadn't changed. It was one different thing that we were doing, for me to say 'yes this is making a difference' and for some children it's making a huge difference and for other children it may not be such a big difference but it's certainly a tool that's going to help them and it's worth continuing with. The one that it really helped was a child who had spent two terms who was quite a passive learner, I would have said. He would sit and he would listen but he would never actually himself get involved and I was doing different things to try and get him, but unless I said his name to him and prompted him, he would never ask a question or put his hand up and volunteer and suddenly, it was literally like a switch had been switched in his brain and, his hand was shooting up, he was saying

all these things and he was joining in and even his Mom and Dad noticed it. His Mom came and said 'he's different, what is it?' and I said 'well, this is what we're doing', so I showed her the exercises and she was doing them at home and I said 'look it's made such a difference to him as a learner. He's going to need to carry on with this when he goes to junior school' because at that point I was in year 2 and I was within six weeks of losing them and I felt this was making such a difference to him personally, even if they don't do them at junior school, I want her to do them with him at home, because I felt that did make a huge difference to him. He went on to achieve probably one or two grades higher than I'd expected him to do in his SAT's and it was just the application, because he'd never sparkled. Now maybe part of that was down to me, because I didn't understand. This is my very--- me getting into accelerated learning mind friendly learning."

Marie highlights how easy it is to want to continue developing the Accelerated Learning model's techniques when the results are so obvious and have a significant impact.

Marie explains which exercises are the most important:

"The reading that I did seemed to suggest that there were a lot of the activities, the exercises came under four main categories and if you did one of each of the four then you were going to be covering them, but there were variations on a theme, so we always start with brain buttons, then we would go and do cross crawl; connecting the two sides, then we would do hook ups, which is connecting the two sides of the brain and helping children to calm down, focus them on what's happening now. Because they're focusing on their breathing, they're doing deep breathing. Deep, slow breathing is all a calming thing so getting them ready for learning and then the "lazy eights", which is for the hand-eye co-ordination. So I've always done those four as my core, but what we do is, we have variations on cross crawl and we start off, always with just opposite elbows and opposite knees and that's always interesting to observe with children. Who is finding it incredibly hard to touch their opposite knee? Which ones are still right hand, right knee, left hand left knee and struggling with that and it's really helping them with that. They're tending --- my reading suggested that if they are tending to use one side

they are finding it hard to make those connections, so this is actually very, very important for those children. So we have a whole range of cross crawl exercises that we do, including touching the ear and the nose which we love. 'You're doing it too fast, you're doing it too fast,' 'no, you do it in your own time.' The "hook ups" is probably the hardest one that the children find, because there's so much to focus on and it's not anything you would normally do, whereas touching is stuff you do in school anyway, opposite parts of your body and things, but that the "hook ups" is hard. "Lazy eights" we sometimes do the elephant, in the hall, so that they can do it really, really big and for young children the hardest thing for them is to remember to try and keep their eyes following. They just don't work if you don't do that. It's a process, so they start by getting the shape and Eva Hofman --- I had to go and do a course, for "Learning is fun". They ran a course in the county, "Putting fun back in the classroom" and they asked me to come along and talk about what I'd been doing. So as part of that, I did just a little touch on Brain Gym but focused more on the mind friendly framework and lessons and how that worked, how that slotted together and the differences that made. I was lucky enough to come on a day when she then did a whole day on Brain Gym things and she was talking about the importance of starting with a drink of water and how important that is. She was the one I think who helped me to understand more, about the different categories of the different types of exercises, that you do different ones for different reasons. We do slot others in, we do shoulder rolls and head rolls and other things but those are--- and the owl and we link it in, if I can I link it in with other themed work that's going on, so when we're doing the owl babies and we're learning about owls, we do our owl exercise, it slots in as well, but those are four sort of basic ones. Those are the ones that made the difference for that class. There was a girl who ---I had was a mixed year 1 year 2 class, she'd come through reception and she'd done all the very kinaesthetic things that you do in reception to help children learn letters, doing them in the sand, painting them on a large scale, practising the handwriting. All the kind of kinaesthetic, multi sensory activities that you would expect and was still struggling such a lot and for her, it was when we starting doing these, she - it like clicked but it hadn't done up to then. That just helped her to get them and she was suddenly up to 20 out of 26 correctly formed, compared to 6 out of 26, everything was either reversed or always formed from the bottom and it didn't seem to matter what we did or how many times we practiced it, it didn't click, until we did the

Brain Gym and that for her is what made the difference. These ones are extreme examples and now I always start it from the beginning of the year so I can't now say 'this is what this child was like and then I did this', because I don't want to wait for six months or even a term to say 'oh this is what she was like or he was like or this is the before and this is the after', we go for it straight away and ---We do tracking writing, which is a termly writing, which is done across the school. My reception colleague went on the "Putting fun in the classroom" course and as part of that had to come away and do a project, but she hasn't read round and hasn't taken it on board in the same way as I have, so I know for a fact their class don't do Brain Gym everyday, but I know if I go into observe they'll do it! but that's enough to say 'right this is the class that is doing it everyday, and this is a class that isn't'. They'll do it from time to time, but the research seemed to say that unless you do it everyday on a regular basis it's not going to make any difference and my class usually make better progress than hers, so there's that. They usually do better in tests even if I've started with a poorer cohort, they've usually caught up and some have exceeded. The actual progress they've made is usually very good and I can say that because Denise wrote it in my reference, that children usually make above and beyond the expected progress so it's not just --- she's kind of quantified that and she has said yes and looked at assessments we've done that are measurable to show that this is the case so yes that's definitely another incentive. The very first year when I did it there were 2 children, then one I told you about the boy who started joining in and another girl who was a lovely girl, who'd had a very emotional year. You would have thought on the surface she was a very, very dizzy blonde but doing these exercises, she was in that group that we started it part way through, she suddenly exceeded her expectations and the only difference was --- and she hadn't been doing it in her class work, but she did it in her SATs. She sat over there quietly and I had calming music while we were doing it and we had a nice calm atmosphere."

Marie identifies the benefits of the child-centred approach advocated by the Accelerated Learning model. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the teacher's perspectives of the Accelerated Learning model the impact on the children should not be dismissed. This is obviously very important for teachers as children's

learning is central to their work and any model or technique which develops this is welcomed.

Elizabeth became interested in Brain Gym and trialed it to see what impact it might have on her children's learning:

"I got involved, now it's over 12 months ago, with my last class half way through the year with that class. At the time our SENCo, Hazel, was attending meetings with Sandra and she brought back Brain Gym and was enthusing about that and I said how I'd like to try that and it sounded really interesting and Sandra was in school, because I think then she was still our Ed Psych, and she was in school on one occasion and I was asking her about it. She was explaining further and I said how interested I was and how I'd like to follow that up really and try that as an experiment really, just to give my class a new approach and so that's how I became involved. We started doing the Brain Gym exercises and the water, sips of water and it worked really well and I did notice a remarkable difference in their concentration and their attitude. Really it was remarkable because, there was quite a difference so that's all I did more or less with that year. That was a split year one, year two class. I'd had the year 2 children for three years from reception and I felt they just needed something new and different because they were so familiar with my way, my style and they were going to the juniors with a new teacher and I thought it was only fair for us to try different things and I was so pleased with the results because it was quite remarkable, it really focused these children. We were doing Brain Gym about twice a day, morning and afternoon at least and the water was on demand."

Applying Music to Learning Tasks

Marie uses Music as a tool for learning with positive effects:

"Music is one of the things I picked up on straight away, on the very first time I heard anything about mind friendly learning. It was a day's inset but the only things I took from that was "lazy eights" and music. So that for me is really important, because now I'm going out training people I have to remember I didn't take it in at

the first time. There's such a lot here and for the first time in a way you're learning about yourself as a learner and it's only when you understand yourself as a learner that you can start to apply that too. Or maybe that's just me, that's the way I am. I have to apply it to myself before I could see it with the children. Maybe not everybody has to do it that way but I certainly did because some people feel 'oh this is all new' and it's not. Some people feel this is going to take massive organisation and that puts people off and I would say 'it's not', 'its tweeking' and its tweeking with understanding so you're saying 'yes I'd normally be doing this, this and this and maybe what I need to add is this' because this is what I'm not doing and I'm a musician and music, which comes back to what we were saying, music was the thing that I wasn't doing I was doing music in singing and I do lots of music in assembly but I never thought of using music as a tool. I never thought of music as a way of helping children to learn things and remember things. For me I saw music in a separate box and I hadn't made --- and I could link it with History, I could do cross curricular music but not using it as a tool for learning and that horrified me and when I thought, I'm a musical person and I'm not doing it so what are the chances of other people? So I felt that was one intelligence I was certainly neglecting and was probably being neglected in a major way in other places. I think in early years it's easier. We have lots of songs that have been written. There are resources out there that you can just pick up and use there's the wonderful Tom Thumb's musical maths. It is an excellent book which has maths concepts to familiar tunes, so the children are not even learning a new tune. They know the tune, so they can concentrate on the words and the actions and we always do actions with it, so you can get the kinaesthetic in. So they're getting musical and mathematical and kinaesthetic all in one activity and for some children that's the way they remember. That's the way they learn they can --- you hear them saying which is the square? "Find four corners, find four corners, sides the same" and they're doing the actions. That's not when I've been doing it, we did a maths assessment NFER 5 Maths recently here and as a class teacher I don't get involved with that assessment at all. Somebody else does it, so its completely objective and everybody has the same--- it's done in the same way and Denise could see my children, some of them doing the actions to the songs, singing the lines of the songs in their heads, because of course they're 4 so they are singing it partly out loud but she said that she could see them relating what we'd done in the classroom through the songs into another

situation. They were asked about and they were remembering it, so yes I use music a lot more now but it is easier in early years. The harder thing is, as you get older for some children it's not cool to sing so you do it through raps and you do it through rhythm that's what we did with our year 2's. We made up our own raps and we would do gestures with them, so you were getting your musical because it's very, very rhythmic, you'd have kinaesthetic and you'd repeat it over and over again, so you've got what's that? That's it musical and kinaesthetic and that's another way of helping children remember key facts and they do. I've found that really helps children to remember what they're doing. One of the things, this is a nice story I must tell you, when we did our house lesson and we'd done the detached and everything and I looked round and there were four children trying to climb on top of each other to be a block of flats, so I've got photographs of that because it was just so good I thought you cannot miss this quick and you look and think, what are they doing? I've set them off on this activity and then you realise and you think no that's brilliant they're really applying it but what I did find was that two terms later a little girl was building in the sand and we have some sand that has wax in it and its really good for modelling, it gets all over your clothes but its really good for modelling, and she said 'look, Mrs Wright, look I've made a detached igloo' and this was like months later and not only had she remembered the word which I was so proud of, but she got it right. 'well, how do you know it's detached?' 'Well, it's not joined to any others', and I think for me that showed that real learning had gone on. She had not just understood, she'd not just remembered, she'd applied it in another situation and that's really the test isn't it? Of true learning but for me that was thrilling to see that and I was lucky that she'd done that while she was still in my class and she'd showed me so I was able to see that."

It's that sense of achievement that Marie defines that is so important for me. It's not about exam results and league tables, it is the pride of a teacher when they have influenced a child and encouraged them to make their own connections.

Marie explains how once she had established techniques within her own classroom she returned to the textbook to see what else she could do:

"But that's one of the reasons why I'm so keen on mind friendly learning. One of the things when I went back and read Alistair Smith's book and I can't read a book cover to cover, I'm just not that sort of person. I have to have books that I can dip into and out of and look at sections, but when I went back and looked at the way --- He has some sample timetables for organising the day and I looked at those and there were certain things I could really relate to and I thought 'yes I'm doing that, I'm doing that' but there was one thing where they would have daily practising of the spellings. I sent spellings home ever week. Even with reception children we start them after Christmas and for those who are ready for it we start with 3 or 4 simple words, high frequently words, which they are going to come up with in their reading and their writing and they do that and it gives them real confidence and helps them to move forwards. I was sending these home but I'm not really helping the children to learn them. So I tried to think, how can I actually, knowing what I do know about how children learn, how can I help the children to learn, particularly the children whose parents won't be working with them at home. We're in a very mixed catchment area, some parents will do a lot of work with the children at home, probably too much, some parents won't do anything at all and then everything in between. So I used to do that, which was something picked out of here, I need to do this everyday so I started producing little posters. Very simple, with the words nice and big, but with a picture next to it, because some children won't be able to read what the word said so there'd be a visual clue, the word would be there itself and then what we did, we practised them so we'd say out loud 'r-e-d spells red' and I'd have the word written in red and I'd have it big with a big splodge of red next to it, so they could understand that and I'd explain that so they could see the connection and understand why I'd done it in that way. Then we started writing it on our hands so we'd say it, 'r-e-d spells red'. So you've got the saying it, so for those children who learn in the auditory way, they're hearing that, for the children who learn in the kinaesthetic way, they're doing it on their hand and of course there's so many nerve endings in your hand that they really feel it and it does send the message to the brain. When I started doing that I did notice that although all my top group who were probably getting lots of input at home they carried on achieving 4 out of 4 every week. My middle two groups who are the ones who get less, started doing better and then I thought 'right, ok what can I learn from this?' So I started trying to just observe them. So rather than having the whole lot, I tested just a group at a

time and sat and observed them. So I could actually observe them do the spellings and I could hear one boy going 'r-e-d spells red' and I thought 'yeah that boy is an auditory learner.'"

There is a sense that the Accelerated Learning model is not just about identifying individual styles but using the information to help children develop their own learning. There is an understanding that if children acknowledge their strengths they can use them to help them learn new skills.

Marie explains the importance of sharing this information:

"So I made a note of that and at parents evening I told his parents, 'look this is what I've noticed, this is how he's doing it, so if you're trying to practice them at home with him he doesn't always need to write them.' I'm not saying never write them, because I think they do have to write them at times, but this is the tool that he's using, if you practice them with him in this way this will really help him and of course they're all different and so for some parents it's explaining that actually they're kinaesthetic, if you can get them to jump up and down the stairs while they're saying them, that will help them to remember. It's involving movement, if you can get them to do it on their hands or on their back or somebody else does it on their back and they have to feel it through or they do it on your back, so lots of physical feeling and parents were really surprised but really glad to hear that and I'm saying 'look I'm just trying to help you but these are the ways, this is what I've noticed' and these are the ways that using your child's learning styles can help them to learn most efficiently. This week we followed up from that, I did an evening for parents on "How we learn" and I thought what on earth am I going to do? Because there is so much, where do you begin? and I wanted to do so much but you can't blind people with science and if you give them too much to take home, they'll take nothing home. Which may have been my problem when I had the first bit of training, all I took away was music and "lazy eights" which is not a lot from a whole days training."

This is a very interesting point raised by Marie. The area of Accelerated Learning is so broad and incorporates so much that it can appear daunting at first. Gardner (2004) reiterates Marie's thoughts about how to ensure people take new ideas on:

I think that you need to be willing to state your message clearly, over and over again, with very rich examples, and you have to be open to criticism and try to deal with it in a responsible kind of way. To put it backwards, if what you're in favour of is too complicated for people to understand, it's dead. If you think you're going to say it once or twice and people are going to understand it, I can guarantee that it won't be the case. If you think you have all the answers and you're not willing to listen to others and to try things out and if they don't work, revise, then I think that you won't be successful and you probably shouldn't be successful. (p1)

Marie explains how she introduced the Accelerated Learning model to the parents of her pupils:

"So I did Brain Gym and I taught them the four, but I gave them a handout with more and explained to them why and how it helps them and got them to do it so they were doing their kinaesthetic bit. 'Your child is familiar with these exercises but you can do them as well.' You can do them with your child at home, you might want to do them after a break, just before they sit down and do a bit of homework. It could be a good thing to do. So I did that. I did multi-sensory learning because I thought the intelligences were too much to go into straight away. If I go into multi-sensory learning that will be a real help. I think a lot of parents all they know, and I was the same, is how they were taught at school and of course what we're doing is so different and that was the comment that I got from parents, 'it's so different, it seems so much more fun'. 'How can I tell which my daughter is?' And I said 'well, there's no easy checklist'. For adults there's a multi-sensory questionnaire preference thing that we went through and I said 'work out which you are mainly A's, B's and C's', now this is what it means and look, if that's what it is, this is what kind of things you like doing'. I started to put some in that were more relevant to children. 'So if your child is this kind of person, this is the kind of activities they will like doing' and parents said 'how can I tell?' And I said 'there is no easy checklist for children, you can't use this questionnaire on 4 or 5 year olds but you can look at their choices. 'Does your child do lots of physical activities? Do they like to be out

on their bikes, running around, building with the bricks, lots and lots of physical things? Or is your child someone who likes to sit and draw and paint and all sorts of creative stuff; they're visual and kinaesthetic. Is your child one who loves to listen to stories likes having tapes on, likes holding conversations and things?' You can tell by your child's choices, 'oh I hadn't thought of that' and the feedback that we've had, it was only on Tuesday night but so many parents have come and spoken to me afterwards and said that was not just interesting, but it was useful, it was relevant and it has helped me to understand not just myself, which is what I wanted parents to go away with and understand a bit about themselves, because I found that helped me, but to understand how to help their child. The other thing that I did was mindmaps. I got them to do a mindmap about their child. I explained the principles, showed them together. I modelled one and then gave them one to do either about themselves or their child they could choose. Very simple and although at first a lot of them said I can't think what ---, 'ok you've done likes, I can say well I know what they like but what comes next well? What can you tell me about that thing? Who do they do it with? You go on forever with it, so because parents are hearing children talking about these things but don't necessarily know what we're talking about, what is a mindmap? They don't know what a mindmap is, most parents have never heard of them, so it was showing them. It's not just giving the children the tools but educating the parents as well."

Elizabeth is also developing the use of music in her lessons:

"I have done music as part of the sensory one. I don't know which one that comes under now, that was with "wheels" as well we had "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" playing without the words and they all had to think what it reminded them of and we had some really weird and wonderful ones and then they drew what they could visualise through the music and then we played it with the words."

Developing Children's Spoken Language

In the Accelerated Learning model developing language and the connections it makes is referred to as 'Pole-bridging'. As Smith and Call (2000) state:

Pole-bridging is a deliberate attempt to connect-up internally one's own understanding using the appropriate language. The purpose is to use the vocabulary that relates to the real experience within the experience. Not afterwards, when you write it up, nor afterwards when the teacher asks, 'Put your hand up it', but there and then, during the real experience. Pole-bridging requires the children to notice what he is doing. It encourages observation of detail, classification, reflection and speculation. All are powerful tools for developing an intelligent response. (p210)

Elizabeth has also developed the use of questioning as a tool for learning. She has adopted What Are we Learning Today? (WALT) and What I'm Looking For (WILF) to help her children focus on tasks.

"We use WALT and WILF regularly, well, daily and the questions. Certainly all the rainbow tasks use the questions. It's funny because you see the children whatever we're doing maths, language, science investigations you'll see them looking, 'how shall we do it?' you'll see them thinking as they're encouraged to do when they're in the rainbow groups and I think 'oh well at least they've taken that on board they're remembering and they're actually using it.' Some children have definitely gained in confidence and that little independent learning and independent thinking they're not so reliant on me or whoever else is in the classroom."

Alison is looking into a variety of ways to encourage children to become more active:

"We are very impressed with the "Let's Think!" pack and I would like to work on that but not with everybody. What I would like to do is pick focus groups out to have a go with and I would like perhaps have a group of our potential level 3 children our high flyers and also a group of our children who are in level 1 at the moment and see how --- and perhaps with six of each of them and I wondered if, if I did one group and you did one group and we could perhaps see if we can move them. I think the level 3 children --- we've got some very, very bright children but I think it would extend their lateral thinking and I think it would make them focus a little bit more and the level 1's it might just make them stronger level 1's or lift them just into the level 2 bracket."

Alison is linking with Diane's ideas that special educational needs are at both ends of the spectrum and also include those children who are very able. This view also demonstrates a commitment to meeting all children's needs, a key issue when developing inclusive schooling.

Alison continues explaining how this may be possible and also other strategies that they are developing in her school:

"I don't know but I'd like to do that if we could and so if it's ok with you I'll take the "Let's Think!" pack home over the summer and really get to know it and then perhaps we can start next September on a programme. If I haven't got time to do it I'll ask the support teacher if she can do it every week. So especially with the level 1's, right at the beginning and we do it all the way through 30 something weeks isn't it? so I was thinking for the level 1's especially it might be very valuable for them. It may be with the level 3 children, potential level 3's, it's a case of dipping into various bits I don't know, but that's something I would be guided by you with, but I think it would be ---I'd like to see what success we have. Brain Gym we're taking on board as well. Again I've ordered the Brain Gym so every classroom's got a Brain Gym. Staff are very interested in that because they're already aware that if you stop something and go for a little run round the yard and they come back in the children are focused, so you know we can see that working very easily. One teacher is already using it when the noise level goes up a bit and she'll do something and then straight away they'll settle back down and they're concentrating again. Again it's only just early stages. That's something we'll all do from September without a doubt."

Alison is also developing a new movement based programme that was introduced into the county during this academic year:

"The other thing I want to get involved with is "Classmoves", now this all came into school but there was no sort of explanation with it, it just arrived in the box and

to be absolutely honest with you Helen we haven't had time to get to grips with it and I did send — it was on a training day in October but our staff had to do performance management because that was what the day was delegated for but on that day I did send all my nursery nurses to the "Classmoves" training but they've not had chance to put it into practice, to sit down with the staff and go through it. So again that's something we've really got to get on with, to take on board next school year but as you know it's been an inspection year and it's been my first year as head. It's been pretty hectic this year hopefully from September things will calm down, I hope if there's ever such a thing as a calm year and we can start really getting to grips with "Classmoves" regularly. As well the big feature in my school development plan this year, apart from taking on the aspects of accelerated learning which I've already described, is to develop the whole of the outside classroom and that is as far as I'm concerned a major --- I'm so impressed by a lot of the Reggio Emilia philosophies, the little I've found out through Hilary and the conferences I've been on. I think the whole ethos of Reggio Emilia is absolutely superb I would --- I'm desperate to get the foundation stage into school, so we get rid of National Curriculum, because I think National Curriculum is like putting these young children into a straight jacket. I mean if we were made a pilot school I would be absolutely over the moon. I doubt we will be but I would love to be because we've got a lot of the --- a lot of the ideas are already embedded in the early years unit and it would be so easy --- we're so desperate to carry those ideas right through school. It's purely active learning down there, it's children finding out for themselves, it's the staff facilitating the learning The inspectors were very impressed with it and it came out with absolute top marks in the inspection. The children are actively engaged all day. They get through a tremendous amount of work and there's every facility down there, they are baking, they are exploring, they're investigating every minute of the day. What I'd like to do --- this is why I want to get rid of National Curriculum because time wise you're so restricted, but I would like to get the emphasis on to investigation, to exploration and bring a lot of work --- take a lot of work outside, so the children are working outside so they are finding out for themselves, skills, posing a question like go --- 'let's explore this', 'let's find the answer', so the children are working together pooling ideas, investigating ideas, setting up investigations, evaluating results, coming to conclusions, sharing their ideas, sharing their conclusions. I think to develop the

thinking skills and to get them to think round a problem helps. Again I have a lot to learn about, I just feel we have an environment outside that's totally sterile, there's nothing, there's nothing for the children a few trees and nothing else. I feel we need to get all --- not expensive equipment, because that's not what allows --- we need to encourage a lot more ideas out there. I want to work with things out there that --- the children can use sundials and we need to have places where they can go and look for insects, logs where they can lift up and have a look underneath see what's there and I want planting and watching things grow, there's so many things. A lot of our work we could do outside using natural materials and things like that but it's something I want us to explore and what I'd like us to do is go to a school, the entire staff to go, to a school where they've got exemplary practice. We could go and have a look at ideas. I've spoken to Hannah because I'd like to do to a Reggio school. I realise we can't go to Italy but there are one or two places in Wales I believe and Northern England where they're working on Reggio practices. The thing that really appeals, I've seen videos really that's all, the thing that really appeals to me was that children are no longer sitting at a desk, watching what the teacher is doing, they are controlling learning, finding out for themselves, teacher's facilitating that learning and that's the crux of what I'd like to get into our school. It happens down in early years. We do an awful lot of role play in this school in early years they've got a beach, sand all over the floor, stones in it, they've got a rock pool, they've got a sun brolly up and they are on the beach. Children take their shoes and socks off, they go on the beach, they have a paddle, they strip off, they put swimming costumes on and they sunbath and they are at the seaside and it's wonderful because little children need experience. They can't -- you've got to give the children the experience before they can understand and appreciate it, before they can take that and work with it."

There is a need to develop this independence within the learning environment. Gardner (2004) states that:

The purpose of education is to increase understanding. Understanding means that you can take knowledge, facts, concepts and apply them in new situations, situations you haven't already been coached on, and that if we really tried to do this we would have to change our educational system very, very radically.(p2)

Alison is already aware that there needs to be changes to the curriculum demands if understanding is going to become the central theme.

Alison continues about the learning experiences in school:

“They’re going to the seaside down there, ok they haven’t had the sun. They’ve made water bottles with stones and sparkle in them and that makes the sound of the sea, they’ve been lying on the beach, they’ve had that experience as much as we can possibly have given it to them. They’ve got an under-the-sea down there which is all blue with a wet suit in there and there’s obviously soft toys but sea creatures, they can get into and all that as much as possible. They can go deep sea diving and they do and I think obviously we can’t create it exactly but you’re giving them the idea and it comes out when they come to do creative writing or when they’re sitting on the beach doing their writing, writing postcards they --- it gives them ideas of what to put down. You can see its going in, they’re using those experiences on the paper which is superb. There’s a huge aeroplane down there. They can go in the aeroplane, they have an air hostess who goes along and the socks that they wear, they put those on and they’re sitting with a little activity pack for them to do while they’re sitting on the aeroplane and – it’s as real as we can possibly make it. Role play goes on throughout the school and the areas are set up. I have to be honest hand on heart, we use them but they don’t use them as well as early years simply because of the time element, because they have this feeling of pressure. They’ve got to do so many hours of History, so many hours of Geography, so many minutes I mean --- the National Curriculum gives that pressure. The fact that you can’t --- if a child brings something in they feel as if they can’t go off at a tangent and explore it as they would like to. ‘We must get on now, we’ve got such and such to do today’ and I think Key Stage 1 teachers feel tremendous pressure and I feel if we get rid of National Curriculum that pressure will be lifted and then you can go with the flow as we used to in the old days, you could pick up an idea and run with it and take it as far as it will go.”

She explains how they are using role play to develop thinking and learning skills:

“All our role play topics are based on literature. Everything we do in school is literature based and we have a three week cycle so they had three weeks on the rainbow fish, they’re now doing “Dear Greenpeace” and when they came into school a blow up whale had appeared in the under the sea. They had to sort out where it had come from and how --- Year 1 are doing “Wind in the willows” so they’ve got Rattie’s cottage and are doing water. Year 2 are doing “The Secret Garden” so they’ve got garden centres and flower shops, so all the role plays are linked to the topics so there’s much more we can do and so much more that I want to do, but one step at a time”.

Nicola recognises the benefits of improving children’s speaking skills:

“We’re doing an oracy bid now which will incorporate more story telling, more puppets, with a group called the Treasure Trove Puppet Company and we’ve got two lots of story tellers coming in, unfortunately we have only got a few story sacks but again this tackles this issue of children touching, having an experience of feeling relating to little characters in stories, listening to tapes, playing games. We’re using “corner to learn” which is setting up role play areas and again we always, as any infants school does, have lots of role play areas or based corners, shops, you name it we’ve set it up but the beauty of his point of view was the changing aspects of it. So each week, each day, you’d set new problems and new challenges. For example, it might be a forest and you put some furry toys in there for them to find and you take them out and it might be that you put some binoculars in there, so they’re then going on a hunt to find them. So always changing the scenario so that the children are then having to respond to a problem or a request or to little notices up or whatever it is.”

Nicola’s school are also developing speaking skills within lessons.

“We’ve had to refine the learning scripts, extend them, extend the conversations from them. Not extend the number of questions but extend the conversation from the questions. So, for example, if you’re saying things like ‘what do you need before you start?’ I mean it was quite functional ‘oh I need a ruler, I need a pencil and I need some paper’ well perhaps we ought to extend it by saying - so the children say

things like 'I need to remember what I did yesterday, so I need to go not just getting equipment, I need to think what the story was about, I need to imagine it's that type of question. We're developing it by just tagging a bit on which we've done before with the maths as I said we've filled little gaps but this time it might be for example it's always hard you know when you're trying to think of little anecdotal to explain, now let's think of another situation – we've done maths, let's try something else let's try something like History, perhaps they're doing old and new it might be classifying the old and new what do you need for the task? I need the glue because I going to cut the pictures out I need my pencil I need the paper it might be – and would you refer to the books as well would you need to look at the pictures in the books? Oh yes would you need – so just add a bit on and then finally another bit more on until well quite a picture they can they talk about. "

Nicola is also developing methods to include those children who have language difficulties. She wants them to be able to control their learning environment too:

"We went to some schools in Denby for special needs – autism severely autistic children and looking at the way they knew what was happening through the day. The way they thought through what they were doing, why they were doing it, visual, lots of visual prompts so that - actually putting on with Velcro so if somebody wanted a lunch they were handed a card with the clipart. I think they've got a whole range of different things that have got this picture recall and they were becoming independent in their learning, because they had this way of expressing their needs, so we brought that back into the classroom. In our resourced facility, that's for our statemented children with speech and language, moderate learning difficulties, some emotional behaviour difficulties, so quite a mix now. The pictures aren't all that good actually. They're based around a clock instead of having really quite dynamic pictures but we can work on that can't we? Because we've got the idea in place, it's just a matter of refining it and adapting it for the all the school."

Emerging Themes

Changing how the content of lessons is presented may need the most commitment from staff but it also provides some of the most significant changes in the children's

attainments. It takes time and needs to be carried out with the planning process already undertaken in school. Some teachers found they needed to review what they were already doing and then work at changing small parts of their teaching. It has been found to be beneficial to have support to undertake this task, whether that is from within school or outside agencies. Teachers were inspired from what their colleagues were doing.

Some of the teachers needed to have some proven evidence that what they were about to try was worth the effort, but once undertaken it was not long for any of the teachers before they started noticing results. This had a very positive effect on them and encouraged them to continue. The results were able to keep the teachers focused even if they were finding it hard to apply the theory. One characteristic that is very evident is the personal determination of the teachers and their belief that they play an influential role in whether children become successful learners. There is also a move towards acting as a facilitator within the learning environment.

Once the teachers had seen results, they did not want to experiment with the children anymore and incorporated the new activities into their regular teaching. They were also willing to try new things more readily without needing to be convinced. One teacher became confident enough to talk to other teachers and help train them.

The activities that the teachers have adopted range from addressing the delivery of the curriculum itself to including water or brain breaks to keep the learning focused. The positive results include increased concentration, improved attitude and increased independence in learning tasks. There is a commitment to developing the techniques and also adapting methods to suit the task expected. This is done through 'tweaking with understanding', using a range of published resources to support them, exploring the outside environment and developing areas of the classroom to encourage particular skills. There is also an agreement that language is a key area that influences the children's learning.

Chapter 7

Applying Multiple Intelligence Theory

This chapter focuses on the importance of individual strengths within the learning environment. Multiple Intelligence theory suggests that we have particular strengths across eight types of intelligence. For effective learning to take place, we need to utilise these skills and apply ourselves to the learning task. The co-researchers identify their need to understand themselves in relation to Multiple Intelligence theory in order to help children understand theirs.

Stage 5 – Activities

Dryden and Vos (2001) highlight the importance of matching activities to what is to be learnt:

Can you imagine a two year old learning by sitting still on a classroom seat all day? Of course not. She learns through doing, testing, touching, smelling, swinging, talking, asking and experimenting. And she learns at a phenomenal pace. (p301)

Children need to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. This stage of the Accelerated Learning model is based on Gardner's research into multiple intelligences and encourages children to carry out activities that they both choose and are confident in to express what they understand.

Diane explains what it meant to her to re-consider the concept of intelligence:

"I first really came across it when I was looking, I was doing my masters degree and I was looking at why, it was in how children learn, it was learning basically special needs and also gifted and talented which was then part of special needs and looking at particularly the areas of language and reading and at the time Gardner had just - was really just starting to become a bit known over this side of the of the Atlantic and I got really interested in his ideas particularly in terms of the idea of intelligence and that there were different intelligences and that these were quite often society driven and that concept I found quite fascinating particularly since at the time we were very, very much hooked up on the idea of a general IQ and I had come across in the children the gifted and talented children, I was looking at, in my

control group and my actual group as well as the SEN children this fluctuating intelligence if you liked that some children were very, very quick numerically we were looking at, some of the children who were having major problems in learning how to read and finding that actually that if you talked to them about anything to do with money, anything to do with— they could do darts incredibly quickly far faster than I could and work out multiples of different things and I was then quite interested you know looking at the gifted and talented and the SEN, two extremes and yet seeing patterns of intelligence in both and it sort of drew me into the Howard Gardner concept and so I just started reading everything I could lay my hands on to do with what they were doing in Boston and felt that there was stuff in there that really revolutionised, in some ways, the way which we in this country were looking at intelligence it also led me into looking at the reading the way I'd been looking at how children wrote as part of this project and trying to see what was happening in the writing area - and there was work and I've forgotten the name of various people but various people were all coming up with things in different fields which seemed to be leading towards this concept that you know there wasn't one intelligence and if one could harness what children could do you could then actually it would mean they could do far more in areas that weren't recognised as such in our education system so that's how it all kind of started the more I read the more I wanted to read and the more I wanted to read the more I started questioning quite a lot of things about the way in which - children some of the - more accepted views about slow learners about - and also it looked it made me look at behaviour because a number of the gifted and talented children had significant behaviour difficulties, behaviour problems and so I started looking at what were the things that perhaps caused them to behave in the way they did and that led into how were they being taught and were - and it became a sort of cyclical thing, wanting to start asking questions about, was it that the teaching didn't actually appeal to the intelligences. At that point it was very much down to intelligence the sort of rather strict sense that Gardner had that - the different intelligences - and it was only later that one started to look at things like the multi-sensory side and that combination of the multi-intelligence and multi-sensory and how they operated on each other was the thing that in the end really meant that I wanted to create in my own teaching a form of - curriculum and approach that meant that each child, I - my teaching broadened in it's scope so that it would meet

more intelligences and also appeal to the different sensory strengths of children – this was quite sort of – I suppose - I was very lucky in that it was coming up to but just before the National Curriculum was brought in and that meant that I was able, I had far more freedom than many would have been given later to experiment and in experimenting in my own class I was also head of infants in a large primary school and in experimenting in my own class and it was a school where we were, within the infant department it was a very go ahead and exciting place to work and so it was the sort of culture where we all kind of talked about things and things that I was trying became interesting to other people who then wanted to do the same and so it kind of spread.”

Diane raises issues about intelligence that should make us all re-evaluate how we categorise children. She stresses the importance of not just accepting what we have always done or maintaining views because they are what we believed in the past. If change is possible and if we are going to challenge ourselves to adapt our teaching methods in light of new information we need to develop a commitment like Diane’s, where we are central to the change process.

Despite her commitment to the model, Diane is cautious about it becoming restrictive. She wants it to remain about inspirational teaching rather than a fixed structure:

“We don’t use the mind-friendly cycle for everything but we do incorporate it into literacy hour and into numeracy so that although it isn’t — it’s there for key lessons as a formal structure but – and so the brain breaks would come in - a lot of the time brain breaks come in when people feel the need. So sometimes they can be very often, sometimes it depends on the topic and how the children are.”

She has adapted the model to her needs and has also worked with others to achieve this:

“It was primarily from reading around, trying to find my own way to--- Paul was the SEN Adviser and he and I had argued long and hard about Gardner and about multi-sensory and we were--- he had looked at the work by Trevor Hawes and I

suppose was the one who really drew it into a formal structure, which was really useful. He came and did an inset day based on what we'd been discussing and how-- he's a very interesting chap-- and he did an inset day for all the staff, teaching assistants, everybody at our place. There was a slightly cruder version of the one we operate now in terms of a cycle, I'm just trying to think where it came from -- I think it just came, I think he must have found it somewhere and I never realised, I, -- - and we just adopted it, it took off really well."

Diane expands her views on ensuring the model is used flexibly:

"What I wouldn't want are the contortions that happened pre-National Curriculum days, where people were trying to fit every area of the curriculum into a title, that didn't hold together. I wouldn't want us to go down that route, but what I wanted us to do was to see that it's a way to ensure that our scope is as broad as possible in the teaching that we do daily, and that where we think it's not, we've got methods of finding out and assessing for ourselves. So that reflection is very much a part of our teaching. I think the other thing was that--- I do think we've got a culture where it's ok to try things and if they don't work nobody's going to be --- to feel it's a disaster and they've failed and that's been a another real plus because if people had felt they were going to be sort of chastised because it hadn't worked then I don't think people would have been as willing to buy into it, into the package. A lot of it is risk taking because if you are letting children self select their response to your teaching -- you have to be prepared that some days it won't work, you may have one group and you say, 'right make a play or you can do, you can write or you can do build a model.' You have to be prepared that at times the personalities involved won't let it happen or they will be disappointed or the child will be disappointed at times and the dynamic of the group that is putting together. I mean the dramas are things that either are heavenly, 'where's the video camera' or they don't work and usually that's down to the combination of the group, you've got too many leaders. It's very much self selection at our stage we will encourage them, if a child is constantly wanting to do the dramas and not wanting to make written response actually I think it's --- choose a different thing but most of the time they do choose responses, but sometimes you have to look at the pattern of what they're doing 'this time I'd like you to, this time have a go at this.'"

Recognising Children's Intelligences

MI Theory is not an educational end in itself. It is, rather, a powerful tool that can help to achieve educational goals more effectively.

Hopper and Hurry 2000 (p26)

It is important that children are helped to explore their own abilities and develop an awareness of their strengths. Diane explains how the staff in her school manage to do this:

“We try to find out from as early as possible, which intelligences children are using. Certainly in reception and the teachers will write this down and that’s passed on in their information to the next teacher. They do it partly by observing the amount of times the child will choose those particular activities. The symbols are up on the walls in the classroom, so the children are used to the language of the multiple intelligence. They’ll say, ‘I’m using my naturalist’ and when they’re four it’s absolutely gorgeous. They have girl of the week, boy of the week and the children in circle time describe that person, ‘he’s very good at ___ and he’s very good at ___’ or ‘she’s very good at ___’, ‘I like the way she does such and such’ and again that’s information that is ---. As the year goes on it becomes much more analytical by the other children. ‘He uses mathematical intelligence, logical’ and you’re sitting there and Sally is writing all this down and that information follows the child. I would say some teachers do it more than others but again that doesn’t bother me because I feel ---. I want us to be on a journey. Sally is feeding information into the next class. It’s superb, the next teacher then can move so fast. Eva Hoffman has done some really nice stuff, but it’s primarily for juniors with helping children to establish what are their intelligences. She’s now talking about doing stuff for infants which we will look at. It’s more a question with us of teachers observing and making judgements and passing that information on. What I find is that with young children it tends to be in peaks and real troughs. With adults and with older kids it starts to become a bit more even. What one’s trying to do in one’s teaching is to appeal to as many intelligences as you can. You’re providing that kind of support, through the intelligence that’s a success for a young child, to help them improve the areas that they find difficult.”

Marie feels that the Multiple Intelligence theory can support an inclusive classroom by recognising and celebrating children's strengths and differences:

"It's not your standard, 'what's intelligence? Let's do an IQ test'. There are all forms of intelligence and although 4 and 5 year olds don't necessarily understand the word 'intelligence', they do recognise that 'yes, we are different and in many ways we're the same, we all learn in different ways but we're all learning and we all have strengths and we all have weaknesses' and that's helped and the next thing from that --- that took us pretty much up to Christmas, by the time I'd got the children settled into school, and then after that I've been trying to get children to not think, 'the mathematical intelligence is what you use when you're doing maths', to start understanding that we can use that logical approach in all sorts of activities. We started to do that with the visual as well, that visual is not just about Art and its not just about drawing and painting and people who like doing that, it's about doing things in your mind. So when the children are doing maths I'd say to them, 'how did you work that out?' And the children are starting to say to me and I've given choices because that's hard at first. 'What do you mean?' and they don't say 'what do you mean?' They just look completely puzzled and blank so what I say is, 'did you hear something? Did you hear us counting the way we do? Because we do lots of chanting as part of our oral mental starter in maths, so did you hear the counting? Or did you picture the number track in your head? Or could you see objects that you were counting? Or were you using your fingers? So you've got them, you've got your auditory, hearing, you've got your visual, picturing or you've got your kinaesthetic, using very much hands-on tools and the children are starting to articulate that and they find that quite helpful."

Marie demonstrates the importance of encouraging not only active learning but also children's awareness of their own skills and talents, relating to the Accelerated Learning model. This is a very important part of the work that we do. It is vital that we aim for understanding of our strengths to enable us to persevere when the learning experience becomes difficult. It also helps to maintain a positive self-esteem as we can remember times when we were successful learners and not become despondent if we find a task difficult.

Marie continues to explain the activities she completes with her children to help them develop their own awareness of their intelligences:

“It’s still only early days but that will be built on so much more when they move into year 1 and 2 and they do a similar thing. They have times on the intelligences when they focus on one at a time and identify that, but it’s really helped self-esteem because the children are not saying, ‘they’re in the red group that means that they’re really good at stuff and I’m no good because I’m not in the red group’. I’m very careful with my colours so there’s no numbers it’s just colours but kids aren’t daft at all they know, well most do. I’d say probably 90% of my class have a rough idea what my colours mean but they do recognise, they do understand that ‘I might be really good at Maths but I might not be so good at PE and that person is wonderful at singing or doing a rhythm and things like that’ so it has helped their self-esteem. One of the other things I do, that has been really successful in helping children with their self-esteem, is the boy and the girl interview of the week. It is part of our circle time, and the children have a think or talk to a partner and decide well what do they like about that child. At the beginning of the year it’s very much, ‘I like her hair and I like her shoes’ but after Christmas I start trying to encourage them to move away from physical appearance, to what is it about that person, not what she looks like or he looks like, what is it about that person that you really like? and then you start getting them to say, ‘we play together in the playground’ so they start to go beyond just the physical appearance and that really helps the children because everybody gets a turn and everybody gets to say what they like and everybody is the girl and the boy of the week at times, so that they’re standing there, they’re listening to all these really positive things about themselves and you can tell that they’re really enjoying it. It builds them up, you see them standing up straight and smiling and walking out on a cloud and they go and tell their parents. The other thing that I do, we have an interview and this is something I got from the school that I went to visit in America, New City School which is a multiple intelligence school. I’ve always done the circle time but I hadn’t thought of linking it to the intelligences. They interview the on a daily basis I think, and their interview is published, so it’s put on the wall and it’s a question linked to each intelligence. So for 4 and 5 year olds the mathematical one will be, ‘how many people are in your family?’ for the naturalist ‘what’s your favourite animal?’ for the musical

intelligence 'what's your favourite song or rhyme?' Linguistic is to do with books, interpersonal 'what do you like to do with your friends?' And then intrapersonal 'what do you like to do on your own?' So it's helping children to realise that they all have likes and dislikes and they are different and just the fact that that is published and it goes on the wall and eventually at the end of the year I send them home to the parents, because the parents really like to see these because it's quite often --- it's not the kind of thing, as a parent, you necessarily sit down and talk to your child about, 'what are your favourite things that you like doing with your friends?' It's not what you do as a parent and so it's--- all that has given just a little bit of sharing with the parents, a bit of information for the parents. The children see how they're being valued and then what I try to do, but I can't say hand on heart I do it every time, I try to link that then and highlight that so 'Harry you said your favourite book is _____, how about you get that out this week and when children come in, first thing in the morning we're looking at books, why don't you share that with a group of children? Take it in turns different children, different days and explain to them why it's your favourite book and enjoy that with them? So I try and highlight something positively and again it's making every child feel valued and feel important. That's been, I think, a big part of the mind friendly learning is recognising children, recognising individuals and helping them to see themselves as positive learners. Every single one of them knows, we might not all learn in the same way but we all learn and it's ok to do it differently. One child might, when we're doing maths, might have seen a number track in his head and another one might have done it with his fingers and another might have heard a tune, that's fine, that's actually really good. I think it values diversity, there's some political talk for you!"

It may be 'political talk' but it also demonstrates an important element of inclusive education. We need not only to acknowledge our differences but help children to celebrate them. This idea also helps to promote self-esteem within children and adults because we learn that we cannot be good at everything but that we can excel in some areas. Providing a broad view on abilities also helps children who may fail in traditional areas such as literacy and numeracy to realise that these are not the only important elements within schooling.

Using Multiple Intelligences to Plan the Curriculum

During the project Elizabeth has worked through each of the intelligences and applied them directly to the topic-work in her class:

“I was introduced to the multi-intelligences and that wheel, so this year I tried working through all the multiple intelligences, through the topics that we use and Sandra’s come in periodically. She did come in once a week for one term and now she comes about twice a term to do sessions with the children and we’ve got through all the intelligences now. She’s coming tomorrow to do the last one with the intra-personal. We’ve been sorting cards and things. We’ve done the music, we’ve had them listening to music and expressing what they felt about that through art. We’ve done a lot of practical work. We’re working in rainbow groups with Sandra, which is different to how we normally work, so they really look forward to that. When they start rainbow groups, they know something new and exciting is happening because I don’t do it as often, when she’s not here. When they’re grouped normally, I’ve got a split class again, year 1 year 2, and they’re in their year groups, not according to ability or age or anything, just mixed friendship groups, five of them. When it comes to rainbow groups we have one from each of these groups, to make the colours of the rainbow. They’re totally mixed up with people they don’t usually work with, year two and year one are split whereas here they’re in groups of year groups so that’s helpful because if there is something that needs a little bit of reading then the year 2’s usually take on that role but we’ve prepared cards, prompt cards, ‘what we need to think about’, ‘how we’re going to do it’, ‘what would we tell people if they were to do it?’ ‘What would we do better next time?’ and they go through these prompt cards working together, because it’s not so much the task that’s the important issue, it’s how they go around organising themselves and developing the thinking skills. They can work within their group and it’s really fascinating to see the group dynamics that go on, because they’re different children that they’re working with. It’s been an eye-opener for me because you see different facets of the personalities. People take on the leadership role that you’d never dream. It was a revelation for me that children I wouldn’t have expected to take a lead did and others that I thought would push themselves, sat back and assessed the situation first. They go through their prompt cards. Last time

it was true and false cards, based on Jack and the Beanstalk, and they had to decide whether the statement was true or false or not sure and they had to explain why they'd put it in whichever pile they'd put it in and to explain their reasoning. Each person in the group was either responsible for the true, the false or the not sure's or it was their job to read the card or it was their job to report back. We don't set the roles, they decide amongst themselves whoever's going to do what and when we first started doing it way back in September, that took most of the session deciding who was going to do what and they didn't have much time to do anything else. It was just 'no, I'm going to do this, no, you're-' but now they've got so much better at organising themselves and deciding who's going to do what, that once they've got that organised they do the activity and they want to do it now, so they've got better at organising themselves. I must say definitely that's been a bonus."

Although these activities will have taken time to set up Elizabeth has seen the benefits of not 'stepping in' and organising the children herself. The social skills that have developed and the benefits that she has seen across other activities have provided reassurance for allowing this process to take its course. It underlines the importance for teachers to feel supported enough to take that 'leap of faith' and experiment within the learning environment.

Elizabeth continues by describing the activities she has done:

"The activities go with our theme of the term. We team teach. Sometimes Sandra starts off with the brain gym and will introduce the activity and then we go around the groups and then maybe I'll bring the thing to a conclusion, for our feedback session. Tomorrow it's 'who said what?' based on Jack and the Beanstalk and they've got sets of cards was it Jack? Jack's mother? the ogre? the ogre's wife? or the old man? They'll be setting them into sets and we'll see how they get on with organising themselves to do that. We can use some of these activities in other areas of the curriculum, particularly this exercise now they've used it. Last week with these true false statements they'd built them into their own play scripts as a group, so we've got play scripts for Jack and the Beanstalk which developed that idea. I'm not sure whether we'll have time to do much on tomorrows because time's fast running out this year and there seems to be such a lot of other things but certainly,

because it takes time to prepare what we do for these rainbow groups, so obviously I use that then in my class teaching and for further lessons and it's based on what we've been doing anyway so it's all relevant. I just haven't got time to pick something out of the air, it's got to be related to what we do, but certainly we've covered all the multiple intelligences now with Sandra. She's come in for most of them and we planned the theme, because last term that we did 'wheels', based on the book 'Wheels' by Shirley Hughes."

Staff working in Alison's school have also had success with recognising individual needs and planning the curriculum:

"I think we do tackle that children learn in different ways. We do gear the curriculum to that in that in early years, for example, there was a boy who was very, very physical, so we have to really put on kinaesthetic styles of learning for him and even to the point of words were footsteps on the floor and he jumped on them instead of sitting and reading books, because he couldn't sit with a reading book. He wasn't concentrating at all, so we did his reading on the floor or we stacked words on to blocks and he had to build a wall with a sentence on. His class teacher is such an artistic lady and she has made life size figures of children out of fibreboard but they're all painted and they're all beautiful and they actually clip onto the fence of the early years yard and some days these children will be holding sounds, some days they'll be holding a word, some days they'll have a number on and this little boy was given tasks and he'd go round on the bike. He liked the bike to go and do various tasks by visiting each of these figures around the yard. We geared his whole learning to his needs and we do that for all the children. We try and address exactly the needs that they have. Staff are very aware too, of positioning in the classroom where the children sit in the classroom and will arrange their tables in certain ways and some children obviously work better if they've got no distractions at all. Some children are better if there's a rhythm going and staff are aware. But I think you talking to them about Accelerated Learning made them more aware. So some of those ideas are into school but again we can tweek them. We need to perhaps be a little more aware in our schemes of work possibly but that's perhaps something that will come. Things are going on that we take for granted really and it isn't until someone like yourself comes in and says

this is the theory behind it --- You know from experience it works so you do it, don't you? It raises your awareness and I think we're a little bit more focused on that now."

It is important to me that the theory of why things work should be shared and then applied within the learning environments. Several of the co-researchers have shared the view that having explanations and understanding some of the underlying theory is beneficial to their work. Sotto (1994) argues that if teachers are going to develop their work they need access to models which help them evaluate their current practice. It is evident from this thesis that the Accelerated Learning model could be one such model.

When developing their planning the staff in Nicola's school joined together and learnt about themselves as well as the curriculum:

"The last bit of the picture is the multi-intelligences where again we talked about it in the network and didn't really know what it meant. Sandra, your counterpart, had talked to us a little bit on-, must have been a course that I'd been on, to a group of us and I got quite excited about this because she was talking about successes and past failures in your own lives and what was exciting for you? Why it was--- why did you recall that incident as a good learning opportunity? And when I did a little chart and looked at what I was like as a person, where my skills were? I thought 'yes it really does make sense,' so I talked at length with the staff and then we had Ann to come and talk to us about how it works in topic work. So we chose a topic on the circus, that we don't do. We might have done 'eons ago' but we don't do now, so nobody would have more knowledge than anybody else and we just brainstormed and tackled that, from role play, from hot seating, from the naturalist point of view, touching and feeling, from sensory. We had a big long discussion and then I think at one point, about half way through, it actually showed what type of people we were because there were gaps, because we are more hesitant in one area. So that was interesting, we really had to push ourselves in one or two areas because perhaps we're more literacy based or humanities, so that was interesting. So now we're going to plan each topic, very much looking at multi-intelligences as well. We've dabbled a bit. It's been like a big paint pot where we've dipped our brush in lots of

areas and now it's really getting to paint the picture, fill in all the gaps and becoming a bit more proficient at it. I think it's exciting."

Combining Elements to Full Effect

Susan explains how in her school they have combined a range of the techniques to ensure that the children become active learners:

"In year one and year two we've had, right from the start, the pre and post task questions and those questions are displayed up on the front of the classroom, so that the children can refer to them throughout the day. Any activities that they do, the teachers refer to the questions and it just gives a logical sequence of events for the children to think about. So that's really good. We need to look at the way forward, I think we need to introduce that into reception. They haven't got that yet, but that's the next step forward there— Also from the onset, we've looked at circle time and this is how we've brought in our thinking skills, to try and encourage more thinking skills. Each class teacher got together with their parallel teacher and we'd set up a series of focused questions related to circle time so that hopefully we could encourage different kinds of thinking skills from the children. That's worked really well and we've planned those questions for each term and we've got a bank of those now. We've done the three terms, so every year group has got their own bank of focused questions. That's been really good. We are developing our planning for multiple intelligences, looking at the different approaches and we using the web for identifying those intelligences and bringing that into our planning. At the moment we've got that for our English and History. We've tried to incorporate our planning using that web and from next term we're going to be working on a theme or a topic basis throughout the whole school. We're going to be using that web to plan those themes and also for role play. We're going to be introducing a lot of role play and again I think that the multiple intelligences web lends itself to developing ideas and learning opportunities."

Susan identifies the importance of training the children in the techniques. There is an acknowledgement that children need time to familiarise themselves with the

model as well as the teachers. This is an important issue that if change is going to be successful there is a time commitment necessary.

Nicola has also combined the Accelerated Learning model with other strategies and schemes to give the children the best experiences:

“It all came about because we heard about thinking skills in children not even knowing what it all meant. I’ve no idea where we heard it from, it seemed to be in the media, it seemed to be everywhere – ‘We must improve pupil’s thinking skills’. Now obviously we knew that our children learnt a lot by rote or by repetition, rather than actually understanding concepts and ideas and they certainly couldn’t adapt or explain their ideas, especially in the SATs. When they first came in, I think there was an example with floating and sinking, which was horrendous because everybody ate the fruit that was supposed to be sinking! You didn’t end up with any fruit whatever! and they certainly couldn’t talk about what they had witnessed and the other thing was to hold an object behind their back and describe it and so they put a comb behind their back and you’d say ‘well, what does it feel like?’ and they’d say ‘a comb’, so you were on to a ‘no-no’ there, so we knew we had to improve the children’s speaking skills and it seemed to fit in with all the things we’d heard about thinking skills as well and then I started to think about how we as adults thought or as we were, as children thought. I thought ‘what’s the most tricky things that I find doing?’ and I thought ‘well’, I thought, ‘actually following directions is one of my really bad things’. Somebody stops the car and you almost don’t want them to give you directions because you know you’re going to glaze over half way through this explanation and I thought the only way I learn is actually by repeating what they’ve just said to me. I thought a lot of children respond to formal questioning but they never really have a time to ‘buzz it’ around in their own head, in a different format that they can use, so that’s where it all came about. That’s our premise. We wanted to improve our children’s oracy, the speaking skills and then again in the media we heard more and more about children becoming dehydrated. They weren’t having access to water, they weren’t having access to vitamins and good fruit and vegetables and then of course we heard about Accelerated Learning and about looking at children’s ways of learning and functioning, with their different multi-intelligences. Then we were looking at schemes of work, where

children were more interactive. Looking, first of all, in maths and mental strategies and breaking down how a concept is developed so this --- Now when we look back, we've come from all different angles, but it was all homing in on the same thing. I'd gone on a really very, very good effective leadership for maths course with James, one of the link officers for the authority. I thought no wonder I used to struggle in maths as a child, because I was following set procedures that really --- I knew how to function that procedure but not really from an understanding of number but because I had remembered the structure. I thought no wonder, when we were looking at different ways of interpreting number, whether it's adding up or taking away, no wonder I'm struggling because I'm always trying in my head to write it down in a formula in my head, which I can actually hold in my head and we were expecting our children to do the same. So I thought 'why have we done this?' So we looked at the mental strategies for children and suddenly we were getting children filling in the gaps. For example, if I wanted children to say 'I want to get to the answer 5, so what did you do?', 'well, I got the number 3' and then they don't know what to say, so then you say 'you added on something, did you?' 'Yes, I added 2', so you're talking them through the sentence and that was helping. Suddenly we were finding a lot of our boys who hadn't been very interactive were suddenly quite excited by this and responding, so that was another strand and then we thought, 'well how can we take it further back with our younger children in maths?' So we looked at "Platform One Maths" which is far more to do with children talking through their decision-making. Why they're making patterns, what does it look like? How many do I need? They were actually saying these things. We were really pleased with that. "Jolly Phonics" is also good because it's interactive, because you've got the action and the sound and the visual prompt."

Nicola is aware from her experience of the links between language and thought and wants to improve her children's experiences. She also supports the view that to help the children develop their understanding we need to analyse our own learning styles and then support the children through a similar process.

Nicola has also developed learning scripts in her school:

“People started talking about learning scripts as well and I just thought oh for --- because what I hate is things on the wall that are supposed to be interactive when actually nobody ever refers to them and it’s just done for effect - but then people were talking about how they were using these learning scripts with the children and children were actually going through processes, which they found difficult, what they found easy, and interacting with other children as well and saying that ‘I found this bit easy’, ‘you will need to do this’, this is what we’re talking about again the thinking skills - so we met up together as a group, looked at what we had in place at the time in schools which was to do with drinking water, fruit, in our school for Tuesdays and Thursdays just as a matter of organisation. We need to do more than that but at least we’re paying some sort of lip service to it. Getting some structure and organisation as regards to the structure of the day the platform one maths, the jolly phonics and then taking on these learning scripts so we keep on moving, meeting together as a network under the General Teaching Council bid, seeing how things were going and report back. Then we did some cross fertilization in each others schools seeing its impact. People have now taken on their own learning scripts in the school and I have noticed especially with the performance management observing, because we always had appraisal and we always had lots and lots of observations going on but, now under this new process, when I’m going through now looking at the classroom observations, I have been delighted with the impact it has made. Children are becoming far more in charge of their own learning, far more interactive, far more involved, far more talking going on, but actually quite informed talking. Rather than chit chat about Eastenders or whatever, it’s focused. We always had a problem with activities which weren’t very much teacher directed, they weren’t independent learners but because they’d been allowed in a circle time or in a group situation or in this platform one scenario to become quite accustomed to talking about things - so it was translating in other areas of the classroom. I have definitely noticed lots and lots of interaction in the children now, it hasn’t actually resulted, unfortunately, in an improvement in our end of key stage scores but I have to say, hand on heart, that doesn’t really mean that the children haven’t progressed and haven’t improved, which is unfortunate because we are still quite conservative in our estimates where children are. We still feel that these children do need so much support and in order for them to receive support you really need to say ‘they’re not quite there’ and so it makes the next

person think 'yes I've still got to work with this at this level' — so learning scripts are very much in evidence, the children posing some really good questions and not being coy about it. Before if you said 'do you find anything difficult?' – they'd say 'no' whereas now it's 'oh yes this bit is hard' and 'you will find this bit hard' to the other children."

Nicola explains how she has found benefit from sharing ideas with other teachers. She continues and describes how her children have developed through using them:

"Not elaborate sentences but it's giving them the confidence to communicate in this way. I think the learning scripts have definitely had an impact but I think it's been a gradual --- I think if we just relied on learning scripts, I don't know if we would have got to this point so quickly because we only really started to produce learning scripts this Spring. We talked about it but actually doing it took longer so I think it's come about because of all the other things that have been happening. The teachers had a lot more commercial games, for example, the party games where you have to put a hat on and you're a character or you're an object and people have to ask questions. Those type of things were brought in and they've been effective and the hot seating has. I did a classroom observation in year 2. Their topic is Wales, Knights and Castles and they'd been talking about Owain Glyndwr and how he felt when his castle was under siege in Harlech. One boy, who's quite a bright spark, was taking on the characterisation of Owain Glyndwr and another one, quite a straight laced child, was Edward the First and the children were questioning them and they came out with such really positive, no, not positive, just quite emotional aspects of the scenario that they'd discussed. Things like 'well I needed to run away, I know it was wrong but if I didn't then my army wouldn't have me in the future' Quite emotional and the children's questions were very pertinent. I was quite pleased with that. I know they say that these children are quite articulate, I don't think they would have been so articulate had we not started this."

Emerging Themes

In learning about Multiple Intelligences teachers have found that the theory supports a large proportion of what they were doing either instinctively or because

from experience, they had found it to work. Through further reading or training, the teachers are broadening their style and learning about their own intelligences and styles. When applying the model, though, they are aiming to harness individual's intelligences and strengths to develop them as successful learners. There is a drive not only to become aware of the skills of the children in their classes but also to help the children to understand their own learning strengths. This aims to help children to see themselves as 'positive learners', a vital component in preventing children from becoming disillusioned with education. It also helps children to use their strengths to overcome the areas of the curriculum that they find difficult. It is definitely not about avoiding those areas.

There is a flexibility in all of the teachers' approaches to help children reach their potential by planning to meet individuals needs. Again this is one of the first steps on the journey to an inclusive school.

The structure of the model itself is mentioned as being useful in remaining focused when developing these techniques. There is also a need for reflection and support from colleagues. It is noted that it is a brave step to take on some of the techniques, including allowing children to choose for themselves how they want to demonstrate their understanding or organise themselves into groups. But, if it is persevered with, the results are both encouraging and sometimes surprising. It is interesting to listen to the co-researchers who feel that their expectations of certain children are challenged by the children's own decisions. This links with the theory of the "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968) and is always something we need to be conscious of when working in education. We must be flexible enough to allow ourselves not only to let the boundaries be challenged, but also to challenge them ourselves.

Chapter 8

Retaining the Knowledge

The final two stages of the Accelerated Learning model draw on the comprehensive literature around memory and forgetting. These stages focus on children being able to demonstrate their understanding of what they have learned and reviewing it before moving on to learn something new. The co-researchers identify the changes they have observed within themselves and in the children with whom they work as a result of implementing the Accelerated Learning model. They also look forward to where their journey may take them.

Stage 6 – Demonstrating Knowledge

Learning is not the same as remembering...in real learning the facts are merely the building blocks with which one constructs a meaning that helps one to understand the world

Sotto (1994, p44)

Several of the co-researchers are reaching a point of evaluating what they have done so far and the impact it has had. They are also looking forward to the next steps. They are going through the process that the model highlights as useful for active learning to take place.

Rosemary explains that the basic skills may be developing but higher order thinking still needs development:

"We've only got 35% in English at level 4 this year, we got 69 last year 28 children, 6 of them were in resourced provision for moderate learning difficulties, 2 of them have dyslexia in the mainstream and that's without the problems, who I could also name, so that is reflective of the sort of thing we're up against. We got 85 in Science and 60 in Maths so you can see what I mean the potential is there but it still needs to be unlocked. We've got over the problem of 'this child's naughty', actually this child hadn't been able to access the curriculum at the level which it was needed. Now the next drive is still on this literacy thing and it's all to do with

lateral thinking and the whys --- Not being afraid of doing the Schnell, they really enjoy reading which they didn't before. I've got business coming in, I've got other volunteers coming in to listen to the children read, which is fine as long as it's straight comprehension 'what is the name of the dog?' That's fine, but the minute you ask 'why do you think such and such?' it could be either or, we've still got problems which is obviously why accelerating achievement is a facet of it. I've bought one or two bits and pieces to develop thinking skills which I'm hoping I can get into place next year so that's the main context behind it."

The benefits of the Accelerated Learning are evident for Elizabeth and she stresses the importance of continued support to develop the model:

"I'm certainly going to carry on with the ideas that we've done this year. I don't know really where else there is to go on it, but I shall certainly be coming to the meetings and getting ideas from other teachers. I know other schools have done different things. I know there are more people involved in the other schools aren't there? I think that would be great really if we had more than one class but I don't know whether that will happen here really I'm not sure, perhaps I should try preaching a bit louder and convert my colleagues! For the children I think because we tend to get --- you've got such a lot of literacy and numeracy to get through you tend to get a bit bogged down with that and I think it's so refreshing for the children to do something totally different and new. Where they're expected to take the lead rather than me, because it is very much their ideas and their way of organising things in these rainbow groups. I feel it's of particular benefit to them, a new approach totally for them and they've responded so positively to that. They look forward to it, they get so excited and they're learning without realising. I think that's the greatest benefit to them and to me, because it keeps me fresh, it gives me new ideas. That's why I like coming to the meetings because then you get to hear what other people are doing and that gives you new ideas. That's valuable I think because you need to interact with other colleagues in other schools to get fresh ideas. I think that's so important as well it saves me getting stale and too bogged down with --- It's refreshing all round, it really is."

Nicola explains how including questioning in lessons has helped to develop the plenary session:

“I’m just thinking, something just leapt into my mind and I’ve just forgotten what I was going to say to you, all about the other aspects, oh I know the other bit was, the plenary sessions we always felt that we were quite good at doing introductions into lessons and giving children’s understanding of their aim, before we had learning scripts, but the plenary session at the end was --- I always joke it’s a bit like a bidet, what do you do with it? It was ‘oh it’s two minutes to twelve, there’s nothing to do now but tidy up’, so for the recall we haven’t done anything at all. We certainly hadn’t used the learning scripts. The learning scripts are now coming in to it which is good but again what the nurseries had done was use the digital cameras to actually do the recalls and then discuss about who was doing what and why and what was the most interesting part That’s another part of our development, just to use it as a memory prompt and to celebrate the work, of course. So you can see there’s lots still to work on so that was why I was a bit hesitant with mindmapping.”

Stage 7 – Review and Recall

The final stage of the Accelerated Learning model is aimed at ensuring that children consolidate their learning so that they will be able to build on it in the future.

Unfortunately, the experience of going to school makes many people equate learning with remembering.... This is not to say that there is no room at all for rote learning...but such remembering constitutes no more than a small fraction of what we need to learn, and it is useful only to the extent that it enables us to understand a ‘whole’

Sotto 1994 (p52)

The co-researchers took time to consider the merits of the Accelerated Learning model and why they are committed to it.

Susan explains that introducing Accelerated Learning has been a personal journey and it has been beneficial to learn about new techniques:

“I think looking at teachers’ questioning what their – teaching styles are and their learning styles and their preferences, it just opened up a whole host of questioning for us. There’s no excuse for anybody going stale anymore. You might have taught

in one way for a long, long time. It might be what they need in terms of, somebody's giving them the opportunity, 'it's ok to try this'. But I think unless--- until someone brings this to you, you do carry on with what you like and not just in teaching but in your life. Until somebody thinks I might like --- certainly from that point of view it's kind of refreshed people as well, it's been good."

Marie's excitement for the techniques is evident in her closing statement:

"What else? Is there anything else that we should talk about? I tell you I can go on for hours and that's not --- Yeah I can talk, most people can talk, but the difference to me is actually, what's different about mind-friendly framework. I can stand up and talk to parents, I can stand up and talk to teachers, I can talk to you and talk to advisers and not feel threatened because I'm enthusiastic. I can't help being, it's just there's something about this, because it does have such an effect and it is different it's not --- the reason is not because it is different, the reason is because it works and it has such an effect, a positive effect on children as learners. That's why I can stand up and talk to different people and not feel threatened and not feel 'oh I don't know what I'm talking about'. I've still got masses to learn and I will continue to and I'm really keen to and that's why I like to keep going. I'm part of a team. We have a day each year where we learn new things together and we go off and work in groups and find out more, so we're all building on our practice as well. It's not something 'well you do this and that's it, that's mind-friendly learning', it is a whole learning journey so in this school we're all together and some of us are at different stages and some of us are going different ways with it, but we're all going on this journey and it's all for the positive benefit of the children, the parents, the community so it's brilliant!"

And Alison encapsulates what everyone in education should continue to strive for and reminds us why we do the jobs we have chosen:

"There's a lot more things we can take on board. We've made a start but we keep moving on. It's got to be one step at a time, keep moving forward. We'll never get there, because if you ever say 'that's it', 'we've cracked it', 'we're there', then as far as I'm concerned that's the time to get out of teaching. You should never say 'I

know it all', every child who comes in is different and every child can teach us something and there's always something, there's got to be improvement in everything you do and at the end of the day that's what we're all about. The continued cycle of improvement and development, that's what we're about, continually seeking to make things better for the children. They only get one life chance don't they? and you've got to give them the best you can possibly give them"

This thesis has been enlightening both on a personal and professional level. It has taken time to allow this story to develop and being able to use the EdD for this process has been a luxury. This work is invaluable when applied to the project work we are undertaking in the Local Education Authority and I feel it is essential that it is shared beyond the pages of this thesis. What has fascinated me is the quality of the stories told with no formal structure being imposed. Each co-researcher became totally focused on sharing their experiences. I feel a duty to them all to take their stories further and I want this thesis to be accessible to anyone interested in developing the Accelerated Learning model.

Central Themes

The Accelerated Learning model encourages teachers to develop a strong foundation for learning and co-researchers reflect the importance of having a whole school ethos which encourages learners to become independent. There is a drive to provide child-centred education, meeting all individual needs. Relationships between how children learn and their intelligence profiles were identified as being no different regardless of labels attached to them eg. SEN or gifted and talented.

There is a true commitment from the co-researchers to develop their skills and the analogy of a journey is evident throughout. The end point may be a long way away and all are striving for a more inclusive environment but they recognise the need for support to ensure they keep developing. This support can be provided from literature, school-based colleagues or outside agencies but it is vital to ensure the momentum continues. The recognition that the Accelerated Learning model is not only interesting but useful is the first step that many of the co-researchers took.

There is also a shared agreement that change needs to be undertaken in small steps so that no-one feels it is too radical or that they are moving 'faster' than they can manage. This idea is embedded within the model in that several stages involve internalising learning and reviewing knowledge to aid retention. Gardner (2004) identifies similar elements essential to making it work:

Schools... where a lot of time had been devoted to teachers working together on issues of curriculum and assessment and the like, where the message has gone out, or the teachers have insisted on being given time to prepare things, these things have been tried out, if they aren't good, they're corrected, there's a kind of responsibility and accountability, but there's not insistence that you get it right the first time. Because what you need to do is go beyond the charisma of an individual teacher or superintendent or a principal to a situation where people, even if the teacher, or superintendent, or principal were to drop dead, the people still keep on going. (p3)

Several of the co-researchers have recognised these needs and work hard to ensure that the chosen element of the Accelerated Learning model is embedded firmly before moving on to introducing something else new. There needs to be a belief that we 'can-do', a willingness to revise and revisit if things do not work immediately. However there is also a recognition that all of the elements are worthwhile and the benefits to the children are seen almost immediately.

"Confidence", "enthusiasm", "safe" and "secure" are words used to describe the benefits to the children. Although this thesis was not addressing the impact on the children it is obviously an important factor for the teachers implementing the model. For them to become committed to it, they need to see a benefit for the children they are teaching. The co-researchers also identified the need to develop their role of a facilitator for learning. This need, to take a 'step back', and allow the children to discover for themselves, was sometimes difficult to undertake but once it had been tried the benefits were evident. The benefits of children understanding their own learning styles was also seen as a positive development from the Accelerated Learning model. There was a shared belief that the children were beginning to develop a 'love of learning' and an acknowledgement that the co-researchers play a key role in helping children to become 'switched on'.

The Accelerated Learning model is recognised by the co-researchers as not being 'just a trend', although some needed reassurance initially that it was worth investing in. There is an agreement that the model reflects a large amount of good practice and for some provided reassurance that what they were currently doing was beneficial to children and based on a strong theoretical base. Many of the co-researchers were not initially aware that their practice was reflecting theory but several comments provide practical examples of theoretical concepts eg. reflecting Vygotsky's links between language and thought.

For me one of the most powerful messages from the research has been the inseparable nature of the co-researchers' perspectives of the model and the elements of the model itself. It is a combined approach that is needed, a reflective teacher and a thorough model of teaching and learning techniques. In the words of the co-researchers "it can encapsulate all we do" and encourages us to ask "how I teach, why I'm teaching and what I'm teaching."

Chapter 9

Conclusion

There were four main aims within this research;

- To explore teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching
- To see how the Accelerated Learning model was being implemented in classrooms
- To encourage evaluation and exploration of the practical applications of the Accelerated Learning model

and methodologically:

- To create a joint story by allowing teachers time to reflect and share thoughts and experiences which may be known but have not been articulated before.

Exploring Teachers' beliefs

This research has shown that all of the co-researchers share a personal determination and belief that they play a large role in whether children become successful learners. They do not believe that it is the child's fault if they are unable to learn. They are flexible in all of their approaches to help children reach their potential by planning to meet individuals' needs. There is also a shared agreement that teachers need to reflect on their practice and in doing so establish a positive attitude within themselves and in the schools where they work. They are continually developing their own knowledge and accept that they can influence the learning experiences of children in a positive way and that the control remains with the teachers. They all share a deep commitment and excitement to what they are doing and see that they have had to learn about themselves to be able to adjust their teaching methods.

My co-researchers have shown that if it is accepted that education is primarily about learning, an individual process driven by individual strengths, then we may need to be guided by models. Teaching is a continuing journey which should challenge our thinking and accept individuality. I feel that the Accelerated Learning techniques encourage us to do that.

Implementing the Model

The structure of the model itself provides part of its strength but it also allows teachers to adopt the philosophies without being restrictive. From a psychologist's point of view I feel that it is allowing cognitive psychology theory to enter directly into classrooms to inform teaching. Although a number of the co-researchers spoke about the need for the model to have some credibility with inspectors or an established evidence base before some staff became totally convinced, once the teachers started to use the ideas it soon became clear that they worked very effectively within classrooms. They found that the theory supports a large amount of what they were doing either instinctively or because, from experience, they had found it to work.

It has widened the range of 'tools for learning' that they can use including mindmapping, music, brain gym and questioning. It was suggested that encouraging spoken language and sharing ideas is an important part of developing a learning culture. This view is obviously supported by Vygotsky's research but the concept of 'stickability' gives it a real child centred focus. It was also argued that by developing children as active learners it challenges their ideas that the teacher is the 'fount of all knowledge' and that their role is just to listen.

The role of the teacher was also considered and it was felt that, when using the model, there was a move towards acting as a facilitator within the learning environment. Mercer (2000) states:

We can redefine the role of teacher. Think of a teacher not simply as the instructor or facilitator of the learning of a large and disparate set of individuals, but rather as the potential creator of a "community of enquiry" in a classroom, in which individual students can take a shared, active and reflective role in the development of their own understanding. (p74)

The co-researchers had seen a positive effect on children's behaviour, this strengthens the argument that some behaviours can be reduced if the learning is matched to the learners needs.

Our evidence suggests that many children who behave badly in school are those whose self-esteem is threatened by failure. They

see academic work as “unwinnable”. They soon realise that the best way to avoid losing in such a competition is not to enter it.

Elton Report 1989 (p26)

Evaluating Practice

One shared view was that for Accelerated Learning to be really successful there was need for a whole school strategy. It was felt that it ensures that teachers are able to share ideas and work together to plan the curriculum. This allows for both reflection and support. The co-researchers commented on the pressure and restrictions imposed by a National Curriculum, but it was acknowledged that even within these constraints the model could be of great benefit. There was a recognised need and desire for continued training and development and it was felt that this should be linked to reviewing what was already being done and working to change small parts of their teaching.

Adey (2003) proposes:

The whole emphasis of the school curriculum, at least from ages 4 to 14, needs to be significantly restructured in the light of an overall aim far wider and deeper than is currently apparent: that is, education needs to be seen primarily as an opportunity to maximise intellectual growth. (p29)

The co-researchers suggested that the model’s philosophies could challenge the current view of Special Educational Needs and it had certainly changed their own expectations of certain children and these could be further challenged by the children’s own decisions. This links with the theory of the “self-fulfilling prophecy” (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968) and is always something we need to be conscious of when working in education.

One area that was evident from the stories was the impact the approaches had on children themselves. By choosing and valuing a child-centred approach the co-researchers found that in developing children’s skills for learning it both provided self-belief and developed children’s confidence. Sutcliffe (2003) states:

Everybody, of course, lives and thinks ‘in their own world’. Part of what cognitive enhancement must involve is the developing

capacity to extend your own world, practically and conceptually.
(p78)

The work undertaken in the classroom aims to harness an individual's intelligences and strengths in order to develop them as successful learners. This is a vital component in preventing children from becoming disillusioned with education. As one co-researcher states the aim is to "To develop a love of learning". The use of multi-intelligences helps children to use their strengths to overcome the areas of the curriculum that they find difficult. It is definitely not about avoiding those areas. As Smith (1997) reminds us:

Positive-self esteem and self-belief lie at the core of Accelerated Learning. The learner must believe there is value in the learning and that he or she is capable of learning and applying it in some meaningful way. (p25)

There is also value in including parents into the learning experience and several co-researchers highlighted this.

Creating a Joint Story

Sotto (1994) states:

I discovered that most teachers are concerned about how they teach, but only that they seldom express that concern. I believe that the reason for this is related to the fact that one's teaching also involves who one is as a person, and that is not so easy to talk about. (p8)

The aim of using the chosen methodology was to allow a freedom of expression that was not restricted by asking questions. From the stories collected there are experiences and views that may have been missed in a more formalised structure. One co-researcher has commented, since taking part, how "clever" the data collection was. She felt that she had been able to truly express what her views were and how she used techniques to support them. She also commented how she liked the idea that she could form the 'agenda' and that nothing she wanted to share would be lost. Hollway and Jefferson (2002) explain that although this approach may not be appropriate for all research questions:

It is most powerful when the research question involves understanding people's experiences through their own meaning-frame and when the area that needs to be tapped to address the research question implicates a person's sense of self. (p155)

They continue by stating:

In capturing something of the complexity of our subjects, we offer something true about them (p156).

I hope that our joint story has remained true.

Continuing to Change

Adey (2003) suggests:

As long as you are conscious you are engaged in mental activity and, importantly, mental activity leads to change. (p19)

And Bateson (1991) proposes that:

Change can happen if we keep re-circulating the vision (p3)

If we truly want an inclusive education system and we want to meet the needs of all children who are part of it, then we need to continue to challenge our views and practices. We need to ensure that what is devised goes far enough in that it will allow all children to succeed and not just try to contain more children within the current system, often to their detriment and that of others.

The ways in which schools promote inclusion and prevent exclusion go to the heart of the quality of living and learning experienced by all children. The process of education exclusion begins when children do not understand what a teacher is saying or what they are supposed to do. Teachers know this and try to ensure it does not happen. Children who feel educationally excluded are more likely to feel socially isolated. They can also experience loss of confidence in themselves not only as learners but as individuals. This may be disguised by bravado or disruptive behaviour, which in turn can trigger punitive measures from the school or from peers and isolate the pupil even further, possibly to the point of formal exclusion. There is need to plan an accessible curriculum and to ensure that teaching is planned in ways which ensure successful learning. The Accelerated Learning model provides teachers with a structure to allow this to happen.

“Including all students in a mainstream that is sensitive, flexible and adaptive to unique needs where all students can receive whatever support and assistance they may need to fulfil their potential and develop friendships with their peers.”

(Stainback and Stainback 1990, p20)

An inclusive school is dependent on different thinking. It needs to challenge accepted practices, build strong committed teams and be willing continually to adapt to face new situations. Ainscow (1994) stated that inclusive schools need to consider leadership styles, involving individuals, planning, co-ordination of resources, developing enquiring and reflective practice and staff development. He believes there is a need for a clear vision that promotes joint working without sacrificing critical thinking. It is necessary to involve the local community and create an open approach to joint problem solving. It is important to have appropriate educational plans which link to the overall vision of inclusion and give details for inclusive practice. It is also important that these can be modified if and when the need arises. It is evident from the stories of my co-researchers that they are incorporating many of these features into their working practices.

Personal reflection

I believe educational psychology is about helping children achieve success within their learning environments, by applying the psychology of learning directly to classroom practice. To be able to do this there needs to be a shared agreement between teachers and psychologists. The Accelerated Learning model provides that common language which makes psychological theory accessible and practical for use within classrooms. It is evident from my co-researchers that the Accelerated Learning model is applicable to their own classroom practice and that the psychological theory within it resonates with some of their own experiences.

This thesis has linked directly with my involvement in our LEA project, but it has provided me with new opportunities. It has allowed me to use research to engage in different kinds of relationships with the teachers involved in the project. The data collection for the thesis has provided an opportunity, for myself and the teachers, to

reflect on our practice and informally evaluate the strengths of the Accelerated Learning model.

The methodology that was used to allow the teachers to create their stories aimed to give them freedom to include what they felt was important. Although feedback was not sought directly from the teachers, several commented that it had been a 'very clever' way of collecting data. The reasons given were that they had not felt like they were providing answers to research questions and had clarified their own views and made connections they had not thought of before.

I feel that being a reflective practitioner is very important in education and the chosen methodology allowed this to take place within a research framework. The stories demonstrate shared beliefs and the importance of evaluating our practice. The data collection was a 'snapshot' of teaching practice but the power of the stories is that they are no less relevant or inspiring almost 12 months on. I feel it has given the LEA project a depth that would not have been there without the thesis. Although the rigour of the thesis research may not be possible to repeat regularly, the idea of using the methodology to influence future project work is very appealing. As a practicing educational psychologist I feel it would be beneficial for our work to include opportunities to reflect with teachers on our joint work and to plan the next steps of the journey together. Linking research directly with working practice helps to re-establish our roles and define what we do. It may influence teacher's perspectives of what support services can provide and move us away from labelling individual children. Together we should work at a systems level to ensure success for all.

Chapter 10

Critical Reflections

This research has been developed following an LEA project, and its purpose is to act as a working tool which can be used by teachers to support and encourage them while experimenting with the Accelerated Learning model. As the purpose is to provide a working tool for teachers this has an effect on not only how the co-researchers were chosen but the positive description of the model and the interpretation of the results.

The overall aim of the project is to raise teachers' awareness of new approaches which can be developed to improve their teaching and the ways in which children learn. It is the underlying concepts of the model that need most consideration even if the specific elements are not applied. The role of the model in this process, therefore, is to act as a framework to aid the implementation of techniques and discussion around learning and teaching issues. Some of the criticisms against the Accelerated Learning model are discussed below and the reasons why the current research remains valid are explained.

The model consists of seven stages which guide the teacher and the learner to an effective learning experience. It draws on a range of psychological and educational research to support its stages. The effect of physical wellbeing on learning, visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning styles and Gardner's Multiple Intelligence theory are key elements within the model.

One criticism of the supportive learning environment stage is that it includes suggestions such as having water and healthy food available for children. As stated by Wilce (2002) these alone will not produce significant learning benefits. However, the concept that children will benefit from healthy diets, being given regular breaks and feeling relaxed when learning are supported throughout the literature (Ball, 1994, Dryden and Vos, 2001, Ginnis, 2002). It is this concept that

the project wanted teachers to be aware of and apply in their daily work rather than the individual components eg. Bottles of water.

Similarly the Accelerated Learning model proposes that all learners have a strength in either visual, auditory or kinaesthetic skills. It suggest that teachers need to include all of these elements to ensure learners needs are met. There are other theories of learning styles eg. Sternberg (1997) and these could be argued to be as valid as the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic (VAK) approach. However, as the LEA project's aim was to develop teaching techniques it is the underlying concept that again remains important. VAK encourages the adaptation of the teaching methods to incorporate a range of experiences for children and therefore improve the chances of effective learning to take place.

Finally the model uses Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner's work, again is not without its critics, partly due to the addition of new intelligences since proposing the theory. However what Multiple Intelligence theory brings to the Accelerated Learning model is that IQ is not fixed and can be developed. This is the concept that is vital for us as educational professionals to believe in, if, we are to successfully include and stop 'labelling' children in the education system.

It is these foundations that underpin the Accelerated Learning model that I feel ensure that despite the criticisms the model remains a valid and sound one. It is also for this reason that the collection of teachers experiences remains a beneficial research project. It is evident from the transcripts that these underlying concepts are supported by the teachers' experiences and this is where their focus remains.

The selection of co-researchers

As this research was part of the LEA project, it aimed to provide a sample of positive teacher experiences, therefore teachers who were trained but who chose not to implement the techniques were not contacted to take part. This has implications of the interpretation of the findings of this thesis. It suggests that Accelerated Learning is undoubtedly a good model to adopt. Although in some of the transcripts individual teachers raise minor reservations, the overall result is positive. One aim

of the thesis included 'evaluation' this was intended to be personal evaluation on behalf of the participants rather than a critical evaluation of the Accelerated Learning model. Had this been the aim, then those teachers who had not adopted the model would have needed to be included.

Using a narrative approach

The aims of this research considered exploring teachers beliefs of learning and teaching and the use of the Accelerated Learning model. These could have been addressed using a structured interview and the findings would have been equally valid in respect of the aims. However, as discussed in the methodology, the aim was to encourage the co-researchers to set their own agenda. The breadth of experiences and views that were gathered, I feel, could not have been achieved through a list of questions. However open ended the questions might have been, the interviewee would have been conscious when answering that another question was to follow. This would have undoubtedly affected the information that was shared. The value of the narrative approach in gathering information that could not have been predicted is a strength of this methodology. For example, to capture the information shared by Marie about a child's learning experience on one occasion that manifested itself months later with the connection that "igloos are detached", the question devised by the researcher would have had to be extraordinary.

Another methodology that could have been used along with the transcripts would have been grounded theory. It would be fascinating to see if the common themes shared by the co-researchers reflected the underlying concepts of the Accelerated Learning model rather than simply mapping their stories directly to it. If this approach had been used, it may have supported the Accelerated Learning model in a unique way and the criticisms of the model may have been countered.

Overall I feel that the chosen methodology and the choice of co-researchers resulted in a valuable research project that will help to enthuse those setting out on their journey with Accelerated Learning and result in more inclusive teaching.

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