**Mediated Learning Experience**

**in a**

**Community of Practice: A case study**

Submitted by Judy Silver to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, August, 2009.

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.

(Signature).....

Abstract

*This study describes an attempt to understand the quality of mediation between people within a community of practice. An innovative chefs' apprenticeship in a dedicated restaurant provides a setting in which to explore what happens when a group of young people are learning to become fully accepted members of a community of practice. The setting, the social enterprise of Fifteen London, is founded on a passionate belief in the learning potential of all individuals, regardless of background. Conducted over a period of five years this ethnographic study tells the stories of the apprentices; the story of the community; and the story of conducting the investigation. A pilot study completed in 2005 revealed that apprentices felt their experience of the culture of the learning environment had as much impact on their development as the mediation observed between individuals.*

*The thesis explores the theoretical implications of these findings. Drawn from a sociocultural perspective, two theoretical frameworks are applied: Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Miller and Tannenbaum, 1994) concerned with the mediation between people and its effect on human development; and Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) concerned with participation in a community of practice. These frameworks were felt to be useful to an analysis which demonstrates that a community of practice can be analysed according to the framework for Mediated Learning Experience. The symbiosis of these two approaches creates a coherent framework for discourse in which to analyse the learning process itself. A description of the community highlights the complexities of learning and the challenges of attempting to change the course of human development by means of cultural transmission and social enterprise. I conclude that this learning environment serves as a good example of what can be achieved when innovation works hand in hand with moral purpose.*

Acknowledgements

One of the many surprises and delights of conducting educational research is the personal and professional relationships developed in the process. I thank the many individuals who have contributed to this study, either through their own research or through sharing this adventure with me.

My special thanks go to my supervisor, Professor Bob Burden: for his friendship, wisdom, patience and guidance, and for sharing my enthusiasm for this inquiry. His unwavering belief in me has been a constant reminder of the power of a good teacher. I also thank Andrew Richards, my second supervisor, for his constant encouragement, interest and sound advice.

My heartfelt thanks go to everyone at Fifteen London, past and present, for allowing me to become part of their lives for the past five years. Their generosity and friendship made this episode in my life a profound joy. In particular, my deepest thanks and gratitude go to the many individuals who shared their hopes and dreams with me and whose stories I have attempted to tell.

Finally, my thanks go to my family and friends, for their encouragement and support, and to my husband Paul, who held my hand every step of the way.

List of Contents


| | *Page* |
|---|---|
| Title page and Declaration | 1 |
| Abstract | 2 |
| Acknowledgements | 3 |
| Contents | 4 |
| List of Tables and Figures | 8 |
| **Chapter One - Introduction** | **9** |
| 1.1. Purpose of research | 9 |
| 1.2. Context of the thesis | 11 |
| 1.3. Rationale | 15 |
| 1.4. Structure of thesis | 17 |
| **Chapter Two - Methodology** | **27** |
| 2.1. The nature of interpretive research | 27 |
| 2.2. Questions and metaphors | 27 |
| 2.3. Intimacy in narrative research | 29 |
| 2.4. Reflexivity in narrative research | 31 |
| 2.5. Concepts of narrative research | 33 |
| 2.6. Summary of chapter | 35 |
| **Chapter Three - The Social-cultural Movement in Education** | **36** |
| 3.1. Introduction | 36 |
| 3.2. Learning and humanistics | 37 |
| 3.3. The thinking skills movement in the UK | 39 |
| 3.4. Learning to learn | 41 |
| 3.5. Cognitive education | 43 |

3.6. Culture and identity 47
3.7. Cultural transmission 49
3.8. Summary of chapter 50

**Chapter Four - Mediated Learning Experience 53**
4.1. Introduction 53
4.2. The historical development of Mediated Learning Experience 54
4.3. Structural Cognitive Modifiability 56
4.4. Feuerstein's system of theories 58
4.5. The Belief System 61
4.6. Mediated Learning Experience 63
4.7. Concepts and metaphors 64
4.8. The twelve parameters of mediated learning experience 66
4.9. Summary of chapter 82

**Chapter Five - The Pilot Study 83**
5.1. Introduction 83
5.2. Background to the pilot study 84
5.3. The focus for research in the pilot study 89
5.4. The setting 90
5.5. The study 91
5.6. Methods 91
5.7. The selection process 93
5.8. College 95
5.9. The kitchen 96
5.10. Welfare support 99
5.11. Sourcing trips 101
5.12. Autobiographical reflections 101
5.13. Discussion 107
5.14. Summary of chapter 112

**Chapter Six - Literature Review 114**
6.1. Introduction 114

6.2. Socio-cultural theory 118
6.3. Vygotsky, Dewey and action 121
6.4. Situated Learning 125
6.5. Learning and knowing 126
6.6. Apprenticeship 129
6.7. Four Essential Questions for a Community of Practice 132
6.8. Summary of chapter 139

**Chapter Seven - The Research Design 141**
7.1. Introduction 141
7.2. Methodology 143
7.3. Methods 148
7.4. Ethics 154
7.5. The setting 156
7.6. The five micro-settings 157

**Chapter Eight - The Study 159**
8.1. Micro-setting one: the selection process 159
8.2. Micro-setting two: vocational college 172
8.3. Micro-setting three: the kitchen 180
8.4. Micro-setting four: the sourcing trip 192
8.5. Micro-setting five: the foundation office 205

**Chapter Nine - Discussion of Data 221**
9.1. Introduction 221
9.2. Situated Learning in the Community of Practice 224
9.3. Transformative learning and Cultural Transmission 225
9.4. The goals of Mediated Learning Experience 229
9.5. The framework of Mediated Learning Experience 231
9.6. Interpersonal and intrapersonal mediation 232
9.7. Developing an internal locus of control 235
9.8. The nature of mediation 237
9.9. Becoming a person 239

9.10. Critical reflections on MLE 240
9.11. Summary 248

**Chapter Ten - The Organisation: *the distance travelled*** **253**
10.1. Introduction 253
10.2. Two stories 255
10.3. The Modifying Environment 263
10.4. Organisational change 266
10.5. Entering the third phase 268
10.6. Changes in the micro-settings 271
10.7. Summary of chapter 279

**Chapter Eleven - Summary of thesis** **282**
11.1. Summary of thesis 282
11.2. Research findings 284
11.3. Apprenticeship as a vehicle for change 290
11.4. Personal reflections 295
11.5. Conclusions 302

**Appendices** **303**
Appendix (I) Certificate of ethical research approval 303
Appendix (II) Confidentiality Agreement 306
Appendix (III) Individual Ethical Agreement 309
Appendix (IV) Field Notes: Excerpt 1, in the restaurant 310
Field Notes: Excerpt 2, the sourcing trip, Tuscany 311
Field Notes: Excerpt 3, the sourcing trip, Tuscany 312
Field Notes: Excerpt 4, the kitchen 314
Appendix (V) Data: Excerpt 1, recruitment, the tasting test 315
Data: Excerpt 2, in the working kitchen 317
Date: Excerpt 3, *'The distance travelled'* interview 319
Data: Excerpt 4, bread making demonstration 320

**Bibliography** **322**

List of Tables and Figures

*Page*

***Table (1)**:* The hierarchy of the brigade on 01.04.04 184

***Figure (1)***: Feuerstein's theories represented as an iceberg 46

***Figure (2)***: Feuerstein's theoretical basis and applied systems 60

***Figure (3)***: The five micro-settings in the community of practice of Fifteen London 222

***Figure (4)**:* A graphic showing the individual's process of becoming 228

***Figure (5)**:* Situated learning in a community of practice 241

***Figure (6)***: The symbiosis of mediated learning experience and learning in a community of practice 250