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

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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.
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Chapter One - Introduction

1.1. Purpose of research

The alarming numbers of adolescents leaving our schools uneducated and ill-equipped for gainful employment continues to be a subject for debate across the educational, political and economic sectors of our society. Young people, for a variety of reasons, are failing in the conventional education system, slipping through the cracks of society towards dependency. Or, perhaps they manage to find other, less conventional ways to become successful and independent individuals, not because of their educational experience, but despite it.

The main purpose of the thesis is to investigate how we might reach these young people, and how we might re-invigorate their intellectual, social and affective development. How could we help them become the autonomous and valued members of society they might have become earlier in their lives, had they not had negative experiences of education? Moreover, what are the specific personal attributes educators need with which to generate, foster and instil the acquisition of productive knowledge, competent learning and thinking skills in young people across contexts? How do we teach core values, what should those values be and what tools should we use to teach them? It was with all these thoughts in mind that this study began.

There is a movement in educational research towards recognising that success is measured by the society in which one has to operate, and different cultures and contexts need to develop different skills and abilities (Sternberg, 2004). Moreover, society has been criticised for being too slow to respond to the kind of education people need in the increasingly complex and changing world in which we live (European Round Table, 1995). Therefore, a continuing and ongoing challenge for education in the twenty-first century is to design learning environments that acknowledge and respect cultural differences whilst fostering the acquisition of productive knowledge, competent learning and thinking skills (De Corte 2004).
However, it seems to me that whilst educational research rightly turns its attention to look at the cultural aspects of education, little dialogue looks beyond the criteria of the ideal learning environment to focus on the practical issues of how one goes about developing these personal skills within the actual learning environment. The thesis takes up these themes. As educators we need to ask ourselves what it is that we have lost in our schools and in our society that there is currently an identified need to find alternative solutions to address the development of the young; and why, after eleven years of compulsory education is it that so many of our children are growing up disengaged, de-motivated and unskilled to deal with the complexities of life in an optimistic and pro-active manner.

The thesis which developed from these initial questions explores how learning occurs by means of the informal dialogues between people within the culture of their learning environment to illuminate the complexities of learning as a social phenomenon, and asks what relevance these perspectives might have for learning in the real world. I make the case for suggesting that today, more than ever before in our rapidly changing society, we need to promote and encourage the development of learning communities in which young people can leave full-time education equipped to cope with the realities of life in the twenty-first century. I became preoccupied with the idea that if I could find an innovative learning environment that was prepared to find a way to foster meaningful learning in young people for whom conventional educational methods had failed, we could then use our understanding of such an environment to explore fresh ideas for how we might educate young people in preparation for life in twenty-first century.

It had not been my intention to use a model of apprenticeship to explore these issues, but quite by chance, and while these initial thoughts were developing, I happened to see the end of a television programme about the work of Fifteen London whilst waiting for the evening news. Fifteen London is a registered charity which was set up with the prime purpose of teaching young people how to become chefs serving the fine food industry (see Fifteen Foundation, www.fifteen.net, Registered Charity No.1094536). It combines a successful restaurant with a small bespoke apprenticeship programme for approximately twenty young people a year who either leave school with no qualifications, or have trouble getting started in apprenticeship programmes elsewhere. A brief investigation of the charity’s work suggested that this might be a fascinating environment in which to explore the many
complex issues about the process of learning which had preoccupied me for so long. I thought an investigation into what happens to a group of young apprentices in the process of becoming chefs might throw fresh light onto our knowledge about how learning takes place in the real world. I was fortunate that when I approached the organisation, they were very happy to support such an investigation.

Taking Lave and Wenger’s example of using apprenticeship as a model of education to illustrate the process of ‘becoming’, I use the dynamic setting of Fifteen London to explore the socio-cultural complexities of becoming a fully legitimate member of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Furthermore, I use the framework of Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) to understand the impact on human development of informal dialogues and communications between people within their cultural practices. It was thought that this dual focus might add to our knowledge of how learning is transmitted by means of social participation.

The thesis thus evolved: to illuminate in as much detail as possible the culture of the apprenticeship model of ‘Fifteen London’, and examine what actually takes place there in the process of novices learning to become chefs. As a major part of this illumination process, a specific research question emerged, namely, whether the two theoretical perspectives of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, op-cit) and Mediated Learning Experience, (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, op-cit) could provide useful frameworks for making sense of what was happening there, and if so, what each had to offer in terms of furthering our understanding. Thus, the research had a twin focus, of examining what was taking place in the setting for this inquiry, and of exploring the practical utility of two well-known perspectives.

1.2. Context of the thesis

My first impressions of the vocational environment of Fifteen London suggested that this would be a fascinating setting in which to explore some of the themes which had begun to form in my mind - to understand what goes on in the learning processes of people in the day-to-day activities of their community; and furthermore, to explore the theoretical
implications of these findings for learning in the real world. Research elsewhere has shown that vocational education provides many young people with the opportunity to make a fresh start after unsuccessful school experiences (Bathmaker, 2001; Postlethwaite and Maull, 2003). Therefore, it is argued here that apprenticeship and vocational education could provide a powerful vehicle for cognitive and social change. To put the apprenticeship model of Fifteen London into the wider context of apprenticeship training offered elsewhere, this section discusses other attempts to use apprenticeship as a viable model for learning in the twenty-first century.

In 2004, a report was commissioned on the state of the curriculum in schools and the range of qualifications for 14-19 year-olds (Tomlinson, 2004). The Tomlinson Report made a strong case for the need for the development of an apprenticeship model for vocational learning within a diploma framework and with the involvement of employers. It highlighted, even then, that Britain lagged far behind its European neighbours in recognising the value of such a model. Not only would such an apprenticeship model contribute skilled workers to the economy and provide opportunities for young people who find academic subjects difficult, but would also form a key feature within the educational system. Moreover, it would allow young people to complete the second part of their secondary education productively, participating in and having the opportunity to attain an advanced level of study within their chosen field (Tomlinson, 2004, p78). What was advocated in the report was an over-arching diploma system for all education which would have different streams, both academic and vocational with the opportunity to move from one to the other.

However, despite many of the well received recommendations and proposals of the Tomlinson Report of 2004, little has changed over the intervening period to allow such streamlining to take place. Its recommendations were not taken up by the government, perhaps because they feared that such streamlining would have a negative affect on the public perception of the academic pursuit of ‘A’ levels considered to be the ‘gold standard’ for qualification (Stephen, 2007).

In 2009, The National Apprenticeship Service (NAS), was launched by the Government through the Learning Skills Council, to replace Modern Apprenticeships, and become the
standard form of delivery of apprenticeship training across industries, demonstrating the
Government’s renewed commitment to rebuilding apprentice schemes in the United
However, in their review of this initiative, the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee
published its most recent findings concerning the real state of apprenticeships in the UK at
the time, in which they welcomed the creation of the new National Apprenticeship Service
(NAS) (House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee Report, 2007/8), and the
Government’s increased commitment to providing opportunities for young people to enter
formal apprenticeship training, but concluded that a huge increase in apprenticeship places
in the workplace across industries were needed to meet current demand. For example, they
cited an example of a pilot scheme in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight which claimed that
17,000 applicants registered for apprenticeship schemes every year, but only 6,000 places
were offered by businesses in the same area each year.

Nevertheless, the Government claimed they were further committed to guaranteeing
apprenticeship places for every ‘suitably qualified young person’ who wanted one by 2013
(House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, 2007/8). The Committee applauded what
they called this laudable objective but were sceptical that funding would be made available
for such a scheme (House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee, op-cit). They concluded
that a number of important issues needed to be urgently addressed if the NAS was to reach
its targets, and recommended that the NAS should have the responsibility to contact
employers directly to encourage them to offer apprenticeship schemes for young people.
Indeed, in their earlier report of 2006/7 the Committee had recommended that funding for
apprentice places should go directly to the employers instead of training providers, so that
employers would be placed at the heart of the apprentices’ provision and therefore have
ownership of their training. Moreover, it was assumed that the effects of the recent
economic recession on many of the country’s industries (car manufacturing, engineering,
and related industries, for example), and the consequent reduction of the nation’s
workforce, had also had a detrimental effect on the numbers of apprenticeships offered by
small and medium-sized businesses (House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee,
2007/8).
Nevertheless, despite the economic challenges of 2009, there are many successful social
enterprise projects up and down the country whose prime goal, like Fifteen London, is
social change. For example, a major charity, the Prince’s Trust, provides practical and
financial support for young people to develop skills and creativity to become independent
on 02/06/09). Similarly, the Hoxton Apprenticeship, aims at what they call, ‘Training for
Life’. It is partnered by both private enterprise and Government initiatives, these being the
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; the Corporation of London; and the London
Development Agency (Hoxton Apprentice, (2009), www.hoxtonapprentice.com, accessed
on 2/06/09). Many other philanthropic organisations support smaller projects which they
feel meet their criteria for social change; for example, Edge, (http://www.edge.co.uk/revolution); and Learning Launchpad
(http://www.learninglaunchpad.org/).

In the case of the small bespoke model for apprenticeship described here, most of the young
people selected for apprenticeship have had trouble getting started in apprenticeship
programmes elsewhere; or left school with too few qualifications to apply for training
elsewhere; or been directly referred to Fifteen Foundation via probation or prison services.
By combining a powerful welfare support programme within an accelerated apprenticeship
for chefs, and the demands of a busy and a successful commercial restaurant, Fifteen
London has developed a bespoke model of apprenticeship with a strong ethos of social
enterprise and moral purpose. It was felt that an exploration of the learning experiences of
the apprentices at Fifteen Foundation might throw fresh light onto our understanding of
complex issues related to learning in the real world, that could be made relevant and
meaningful for all children, regardless of experience or ability.

But the themes which preoccupied me at the beginning of the thesis did not develop in a
vacuum. I had brought to the study a passionate belief in the modifiability of the human
condition and the role of the human mediator in that process to effect cognitive, social and
affective development of the human condition. These are the underlying principles of
cognitive education. It was through my formal training to become a mediator in cognitive
education that I had learnt the theoretical principles and didactical methods of this
approach, and it was through my clinical experience that I had learnt the potential and propensity of the human condition for change.

1.3. Rationale

Of course, the debate regarding the need to develop children’s learning potential is not new. It has long been established that teaching children to learn how to learn is the way forward to unlock human potential in the new millennium (Nichols and Burden, 2000). The only debate now is how to do it.

There are many successful programmes for intervention which have been developed to accelerate the learning processes of children in schools and clinical environments. These include Bright Start, (Haywood, Brooks, & Burns, 1986) and Cognitive Enrichment Advantage (CEA) formerly Cognet, (Greenberg, 2000) developed in the US, Dynamic Assessment Instruments for Young Children used for both assessment and intervention, (Tzuriel, 2001) developed in Israel; and Somerset Thinking Skills (Blagg, 1991) and Building Learning Power (Claxton, 2002); Cognitive Acceleration through Science Education (CASE), (Shayer, and Adey, 1994) developed in England. All these programmes apply similar principles of cognitive education using different tools and tasks for classroom and clinical intervention to accelerate cognitive growth. One of the earliest and most influential of these is Instrumental Enrichment, (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman, and Miller, 1980).

At the time the ideas for this thesis were percolating at the back of my mind, I was pursuing a busy career as a specialist teacher. It had been after my training in Instrumental Enrichment more than fifteen years earlier that I became so fascinated by these methods and the theoretical principles underpinning this approach, that I left classroom practice to become a trainer and specialist in cognitive education. I used Feuerstein’s holistic methods of education and those developed by his students (see Klein and Hundeide, 1989; Tzuriel, 2001; Silver and Burden, 2004, for example), in classroom intervention, teacher training and clinical intervention. Moreover, I came to realise that beyond Feuerstein’s programme for intervention, the philosophical and didactical methods underlying this approach, are of
greater significance to learning and cultural transmission; and therefore form the epistemology underlying this thesis.

Feuerstein draws our attention to the cultural aspects of cognitive education in a description of the specific conditions of the modifying environment (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997) and the quality of mediation between people in their social interactions to affect changes in the human condition. A socio-cultural perspective of education is therefore concerned with the dynamic interdependency of a number of related elements, primarily the child, the more experienced other, and the context for learning (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller, 2003). This school of thought began in Russia at the beginning of the last century against a backdrop of revolution, when many individuals were dislocated from their own cultural heritage and had to make their way in a changed world (Kozulin, 1999). In the decades which followed, students of this approach expanded Vygotsky’s ideas for exploring the relationship between the child, the more significant other, and the activity (Kozulin, op-cit). In post-war Europe, Feuerstein and others further expanded Vygotsky’s original ideas about human mediation, arguing that cultural transmission, or the quality of the interaction between the child and a more significant other within the context for learning has a profound effect on human development (Feuerstein and Rand, 1997).

This thesis takes up these themes, and argues that a socio-cultural perspective of education is as relevant today as it was when it was developed in the last century, as modern society struggles with knowing how to educate children in a rapidly changing world. It is therefore firmly rooted within a socio-cultural framework, and began with a preoccupation concerned with the notion that educators should therefore be primarily concerned with the quality of their interaction within the learning experience to affect human development.

In summary, educational research concerned with the culture of the learning environment in the past has mainly focussed on developing theoretical frameworks which describe the conditions of the ideal learning environment, but with very little reference to the didactical methods of how one goes about constructing such ideal conditions. Similarly, research elsewhere into the application of the didactical methods of Mediated Learning Experience has mainly focussed on a clinical, individualised perspective of changes in the human
condition, but with very little reference to the social dynamics of the learning environment in which these experiences take place.

The thesis aims to provide another perspective, one in which we can illuminate and analyse what is going on in the informal dialogues and relationships between people within the day-to-day activities of their learning environment. The thesis therefore takes a socio-cultural perspective of human development to illuminate the notion that meaningful learning occurs both as a consequence of the informal dialogues between people, and as participation in social practices. Given this starting point, the thesis is constructed in such a way as to reflect the complexities of the issues involved rather than provide a longitudinal analysis.

1.4. Structure of thesis

In order to put what follows into chronological order of how this anthropological study developed, chapter two begins by making the case for using a narrative approach throughout the thesis, and argues that we can only really understand other people’s lives by listening to their stories (Bruner, 1990). The thesis tells three stories: a description of the setting used in this anthropological case-study; the learning experiences of apprentices as they complete their training to become chefs; and my own experience of conducting this investigation. Whilst recognising that autoethnography has its critics I attempt to make the case for credibility in this genre (Neumann, 1996; Elliot, 2005), and suggest that the researcher is always the instrument of the inquiry as we choose to illuminate some aspect of what we come to know through our own experience (Richardson, 2003).

To place the thesis firmly within the socio-cultural genre, and introduce Feuerstein’s complex theoretical framework for structural cognitive modifiability (Feuerstein and Rand, 1997), chapter three begins by discussing the development of the thinking skills movement in English schools since the early eighties. I argue that perhaps the cultural strength of cognitive education has been largely overlooked in this development, and make the case for suggesting that the quality of the relationships between people within their learning environment is essential for meaningful learning. I describe welcome changes in the current thinking skills movement in the UK, but challenge its direction which seems, in the main, to still focus on teaching thinking skills for enhancing academic excellence rather
than developing the whole child as propounded by Carl Rogers and others (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). Feuerstein has made many of these more holistic ideas for human development his life’s work by developing a complex system for the structural cognitive modifiability of the human condition which is the subject of the following chapter.

Chapter four describes the historical development of Feuerstein’s philosophy which grew out of his personal experience as a young psychologist working with children in war-torn Europe at the end of second world war (Feuerstein and Richelle, 1963). This philosophy is governed by a passionate belief in the potential modifiability of the human condition and the role of the human mediator to initiate that change (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979). Thus from the outset, Feuerstein acknowledged the complex interrelationships between society, cultural transmission and cognitive development.

This thesis takes up these themes. It is argued here, that in the multicultural society of today’s Britain, the potential talents of our diverse population are this country’s greatest natural resource. It is further argued that the same problems of dislocation and educational deprivation of previous generations, and identified in the work of Vygitsky (Vygotsky, 1978) and later Feuerstein, and others (Kozulin, 1998), are just as relevant to our own generation, and it is argued here, just as pressing, as a huge migration and movement of peoples from diverse cultures move across the globe, producing as they do so a younger generation dislocated from its cultural roots (Kozulin and Gindis, op-cit). To address these challenges for education, I make the case for suggesting that we need to foster learning environments where ethical values are promoted through shared goals and shared meanings; where people can grow, and learn and live together to create strong, vibrant and optimistic communities.

This discussion is followed by an explanation of the overarching gestalt of Feuerstien’s major theories, the twelve parameters of Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994), and their relationship to other major aspects of this approach. In discussing these parameters, I suggest that although other well-known theorists have explored many of the themes within Feuerstein’s approach, few have developed such an over-arching framework that also encompasses didactical methods for intervention, and
argue that it is this dimension of Feuerstein’s work that would seem to set it apart from others in the field.

Having made my epistemological position clear, chapter five describes the pilot study for the thesis. Completed in 2004, this ethnographic study, conducted in the same setting, explores the learning process of a group of apprentice chefs, and the quality of mediated learning observed in the social interactions of people to affect cognitive change. The study followed their apprenticeship over eighteen months, and one complete cycle of training from selection for the programme through to their graduation, and employment in the industry. My prime focus of interest here was not exclusively confined to cognitive development, but to understand those qualitative elements within the environment which seemed to be instrumental in developing changed attitudes, motivation, self-efficacy and optimism. Thus, the holistic aspects of the theory of mediated learning experience, mainly concerned with the interwoven complexities of cognitive, social and affective development, are emphasised.

Research revealed that apprentices felt themselves changed as a result of this experience. However, beyond the specific mediation observed between individuals, the study also revealed that it was the rich culture of environment which had a greater impact. These findings led me to question whether mediation needs always to be consciously targeted towards a specific cognitive weakness, or if such mediated learning experiences are embedded naturally within the cultural practices of the community.

This perspective led to this present and in-depth anthropological study, which asks whether it is possible to analyse a seemingly successful learning environment, such as the one described here, according to the framework for mediated learning experience, and asks what we, as educators, could learn from this process. Although I am not going to focus primarily on the trainees’ perspective in the thesis, I will draw from the findings of the pilot study from time to time, to illustrate various aspects of the dynamic interactions witnessed over the course of the investigation. The main focus of the thesis is to understand the various qualities of social interaction between people as they go about their day-to-day activities, and to understanding specific behaviours of masters and old-timers (the mediators) towards the mediatees, and furthermore, to illuminate in as much detail as possible what is going on in the social interactions of people within their community of practice. It was hoped that
such an illumination might be made relevant for practice elsewhere on a number of levels. Firstly, that such an inquiry might throw fresh light onto our understanding of learning as social participation, and secondly, emphasise the relevance and applicability of Feuerstein’s theoretical framework to learning in the real world.

Chapter six tells the story of my own journey of discovery as I reviewed historic and current literature concerned with both the learning environment and particular aspects of mediated learning experience. This narrative is drawn from a reflexive journal kept over the course of this investigation. See Appendix (V) for excerpts of the reflexive journal. In exploring the relationship between activity, culture and learning, my reading led me to the work of Lev Vygotsky and his colleagues, and recent discussants of John Dewey’s pragmatism. I found that these two giants’ philosophies had more in common than I had initially understood, which led me to consider more complex issues about the culture and nature of learning itself.

The generations of thinkers who came after Vygotsky developed many of his innovative ideas for human development in a socio-cultural model for learning. In my exploration of some of these ideas, it was Lave and Wenger’s ‘Situated’ Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which seemed to resonate with the cultural and dynamic aspects of learning and human development that I wanted to emphasise in the thesis (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It was their notion of ‘becoming’ a fully legitimate member of the community of practice which seemed to resonate with what I had learnt in the pilot study, in the education and training of apprentice chefs within the learning environment that provides the setting for this inquiry. The literature review offers a critical analysis of some aspects of the theory of Situated Learning. In particular, its four essential questions for learning in a community of practice: access into the community; conflicts and tensions of everyday practice; motivation; and personal identity (Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp100-101), in relation to the theory of Mediated Learning Experience. In considering both these perspectives, a discussion follows that considers these broad concepts within other theoretical frameworks for learning, supporting the argument that human development relies on a number of complex and interrelated factors of a social, intellectual and affective nature.
Chapter seven begins with a clarification of the purpose of this inquiry. That is, to illuminate in as much detail as possible, the culture of the apprenticeship model of ‘Fifteen London’, and what actually takes place there in the processes of novices learning to become chefs; and furthermore, to illuminate the specific research question that emerged from this line of inquiry, which is whether the two theoretical perspectives of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) could provide useful frameworks for making sense of what was happening there, and if so, what each theoretical perspective had to offer in terms of furthering our understanding of learning as social participation. In this manner, the thesis has a twin focus: of examining what is happening in the cultural practices of Fifteen London, and exploring the practical utility of two well-known theoretical frameworks for practice elsewhere. The main purpose for research is therefore not a developmental or longitudinal study of a group of individuals, nor is it a study of a model of apprenticeship, although these two perspectives inform my understanding. I then outline the ethical obligations of conducting educational research, and make clear my responsibilities as researcher according to the ethical policy of The School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter (Appendix I).

This anthropological case-study uses a symbolic interactionist perspective to understand peoples’ lives and cultural practices ((Mead, 1934; Crotty, 1998). I argue that an ethnographic approach allows the researcher to enter into a close and relatively long engagement with people in their daily practices, and so gain a better understanding of their beliefs, motivations and specific behaviours than possibly any other method (Hammersley, 1992; Tedlock, 2003). Whilst acknowledging that all interpretive research is partial and subjective, I make the case for suggesting that reliability in qualitative research comes from repeated observations; and whether other researchers using a similar methodology might make similar observations and come to similar conclusions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

I then go on to describe the dynamic environment of Fifteen London which provides the setting for the study. Data is collected over three cycles of training by means of simple observations and participant-observations of five different aspects of the apprenticeship, and tells the story of one complete cycle of training. This data is recorded by hand as field notes, excerpts of which can be found in Appendix IV.
I describe the methods used to present five key aspects of the training programme: the selection process; vocational college; the professional kitchen; sourcing trips; and pastoral support in the Foundation office, to illuminate the diverse nature of this multi-faceted apprenticeship programme. Drawing on dense research data accumulated over the five years of this investigation, I have called these aspects or environments, *micro-settings*, since they each describe one part of the rich and complex culture I had come to know through my own experiences. In addition to this, I have selected one or two *critical incidents* within each of these micro-settings, which would seem to illustrate the quality of the mediation observed between people. Furthermore, I use my personal interpretations of these incidents as participant-observer to illuminate the story I choose to tell, identifying aspects of MLE throughout, to demonstrate how the learning environment and the mediation between people work together to support, generate and sustain changes in the human condition.

Chapter eight presents the study itself as five micro-settings. It starts at the beginning of the training cycle with the selection process, and follows the trainees’ experiences, as it does my own. The first micro-setting presents my observations of the three stages of the selection process. The second describes the trainees’ formal training at college, and tells the story of one group of trainees at the stage in their training when they are learning to balance the expectations of college with the expectations of the professional kitchen. The third describes ‘service’ shifts in the professional kitchen, and the structure of the ‘*brigade*’, or hierarchy of the master/apprentice relationships in this environment. The fourth micro-setting presents one sourcing trip, to illustrate what is considered to be an important aspect of training where trainees learn the provenance of produce used in the kitchen. The last describes the environment of the general office where practical and welfare issues are administered, to demonstrate that even though no formal learning takes place in the community of practice of the general office, its participants and their social interactions nevertheless appear to have an impact on apprentices’ development.

Chapter nine then presents a discussion of the data according to the framework for a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Meaning; practice; community; and identity, together with the objectives and goals of the framework of Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) provide a clear frame of reference in which to discuss cultural transference from old-timers to newcomers in the field of the expert, and
throw fresh light onto our understanding of the learning process itself. The study revealed that participation in the cultural practices of the community had an impact on the development of its novice participants, the apprentices; but furthermore, illuminated that the specific behaviours of old-timers towards newcomers within the context of the task affects the pace and direction of the newcomers’ development.

It would seem from this analysis that both MLE and Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) work together to provide a coherent and robust framework for discourse in which to consider the relationships between people within their community of practice. I suggest that these two theoretical perspectives rely on one another, forming a carefully balanced symbiosis. I conclude that any social theory of learning needs to carefully consider the impact of the personal relationships that develop between people as they participate in the routines and activities of a community of practice, and perhaps therefore, MLE could usefully provide educators with a framework in which to consider this specific aspect of situated learning.

I conclude that, in order to develop a cohesive framework for learning elsewhere, a consideration of the various parameters of MLE, without a consideration of the context of learning in which these experiences take place cannot affect the structural cognitive modifiability of the human condition; but together, with the specific conditions for a Modifying Environment and the four essential questions for a community of practice, MLE can affect the pace and direction of its progress; and this would seem to be the unique contribution of this approach for all models of learning across contexts. It would therefore seem that once we depart from using a prescribed set of tools for intervention (such as Instrumental Enrichment), or even the more structured approaches of Lidz (Lidz, 1987) or Kaufman (Kaufman, 2001) we can begin to see the true potential of considering all instruction as the agency of learning; and the central role played by mediation in that endeavour (Kozulin, 2002).

Before introducing the following chapter, I make the case for suggesting that as educators we learn best by observing the very best of practice; and by deliberately presenting a very positive interpretation of the organisation of Fifteen Foundation, I am demonstrating what
is possible to achieve when a group of like-minded people set out to change the course of human potential.

Chapter ten therefore offers a critical reflection on the development of the community of practice of Fifteen Foundation, for like any other organisation this one has had its share of disappointments as well as successes. This chapter considers some of the lessons learned by the organisation since this study began in 2004 and how the organisation has changed and grown since its beginning in 2002. ‘The distance travelled’ in the name given to a simple tool used by the organisation to stimulate discussion between key participants and trainee apprentices, and reflect on where their personal journey of learning might be taking them at a particular moment in time, and in relation to different aspects of their growing expertise, relationships, feelings, and personal development. This chapter uses the same concept to consider different aspects of organisational change in Fifteen London observed over the five years of the study, and how these changes might have affected the lives of its participants.

Chapter eleven presents a summary of the thesis. The findings suggest that whilst the masters’ ultimate goal for their apprentices in the workplace was to impart the skills and technical expertise of a chef, there was something far more significant being learned by the apprentices in the five micro-settings of the community of practice of Fifteen London. The framework of the modifying environment was helpful to my understanding of these complex issues, particularly the notion of ‘proximal processes’ in mediated interactions to affect human development; and ‘distal factors’ which may have affected cognitive development in the past. I suggest that the process of learning occurs in a community of practice within the dynamic relationships of Mediated Learning Experience - the quality of relationships between people (Freeman, 1994; Tzuriel, 2004; Hadji, 1998); the Zone of Proximal Development - the hierarchy of the apprenticeship model (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Rogoff, 1990); and Psychological Tools - the expertise of the master in the field of the expert (Kozulin, 1998). Moreover, specific aspects of the modifying environment were helpful to understand what was going on explicitly in the social interactions of participants within the community of practice of Fifteen London, and in the process of apprentices learning to become chefs.
In this manner, it would seem that taking a socio-cultural perspective of the MLE framework, together with a specific consideration of legitimate peripheral participation of the newcomer in the field of the expert, highlighted the relevance and applicability of a fusion of both these perspectives for a deeper understanding of learning in the real world.

I conclude that in this construction, knowledge can be seen to be on two levels: *what we do*, in terms of our technical know-how; and, *who we are*, in terms of our sense of identity and ethical values. As a consequence of this assumption, I suggest that a community of practice could be shaped in such a way as to foster all aspects of human potential.

I compare industrial apprenticeships elsewhere with the small traditional apprenticeship programme described in this case study. I conclude that although all learning communities have their own unique way of doing things, there are certain conditions which are common to all. These are identified as six essential considerations for developing a modifying environment. In this manner I suggest that any organisation that makes a commitment to such an approach needs in the first instant to set up, or create a modifying environment that deliberately fosters the modifying conditions necessary for all aspects of human development in its participants, and in the working practices of its community.

I reflect on my personal journey of conducting the thesis, and describe some of the lessons learnt along the way. I point out the advantages of using a naturalistic methodology such as this to explore learning in the real world, but that my experience taught me that there are limitations in using only one methodology; and although it seemed that an ethnographic approach is the most effective way to explore the *natural* interactions of people in the daily activities of their culture with as little disruption as possible, I acknowledge that further research might benefit from employing additional methods. I suggest that in this post-modernistic era we now need to adopt a more open mind to what different perspectives in educational research might have to say about what we strive to understand in our own methodology (Bruner, 2002; Saljo, 2007).

Finally, I conclude that by taking a socio-cultural and naturalistic perspective of learning as social participation, this case-study has highlighted two important aspects of the theoretical framework of MLE relevant to learning elsewhere. Firstly, it emphasised the powerful philosophy underlying this approach, and secondly, illuminates the notion that the
various qualities and intensity of mediation offered by old-timers towards apprentices were
governed by the individual needs of the learner, and the nature of the task. Therefore, any
learning community which seeks to use a holistic approach to education, needs to
understand the impact that mediation between people within their community of practice
has on the modifiability of the human condition. It is hoped therefore that the findings from
this case study informs others who choose to take the initiative of Fifteen Foundation, and
provides fresh insights into the complexities of learning in the real world.
Chapter Two - Methodology

2.1. The nature of interpretive research

We can only really understand other people’s lives by listening to their stories and trying to share some accessible parts of their lives. We then interpret these experiences to illuminate some aspect of human nature we choose to represent in our description and hope that in doing so, we are equally credible, truthful and honest to both those people whose stories we tell and to the nature of the study itself.

In order to learn about each other, and understand each other’s experiences, human beings need dialogue, a common language for meaningful communication (Bruner, 1990). It is only by listening to stories that we can really understand the rich texture of other peoples’ lives, their experiences, their aspirations and dreams. We negotiate and renegotiate meaning in the narrative interpretations of other peoples’ stories (Bruner, op-cit; McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich, 2001). Thus, meaning evolves in the ‘art and politics of interpretation’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p37).

Indeed, it would be very easy to assume that the educational research process is linear, that a researcher selects a broad area for study, then establishes methods by which she conducts research to collect data, analyses that data and then writes up her findings as a sequence of events. In reality, this is not what happens (Wellington, 2000). Qualitative research can be a complicated and messy process, full of blind alleys and false starts. The researcher returns again and again to the research questions and the themes which emerge in the data as she comes to know the world which is the subject of the study. The researcher’s perspective is therefore central to the inquiry in the specific aspect of human development she chooses to represent.

2.2. Questions and metaphors

In the early days of the study, although I had brought my own theoretical assumptions to the inquiry, I had no clear plan for how I was to go about addressing it within a coherent methodological framework. A ‘chaotic mixture of intuition, first ideas and personal
interests’ (Hunt, 2001, p 351) abounded as I struggled to find a way to communicate my growing ideas within an appropriate conceptual framework. I use the analogy of attempting to jump onto a moving carousel to describe the act of trying to understand the rich and ever-changing culture I observed. I decided that the only way to learn about the environment was indeed to jump onto the carousel, to ‘get inside’ the world and actions of its participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p 152). Field notes and ideas accumulated ad hoc (Geertz, 1995; Burgess, 1981) as I came naturally to the three-dimensional space of a narrative style to tell the story of the learning environment, the stories of its participants and the story of conducting the study.

An easy relationship developed between myself and key participants; and it was their immediate generosity and openness towards me which encouraged me to feel that I was part of something, what I learnt later participants refer to as ‘the family’ of the organisation. As they shared their stories and experiences with me I began to record my observations in a research journal which rapidly expanded to form the beginning of what became this ethnographic narrative.

Berteaux points out that more attention should be given to individual stories both as evidence in sociology and as a means of presenting insights about the social world (Berteaux, in Elliott, 2005, p5). Indeed, the pilot study completed in 2005 revealed through the stories of the trainees that in the process of their training, they felt themselves changed. Not only had they changed their lifestyle and occupations, but they felt themselves changed in their attitudes, levels of motivation and optimism about the future. However, these stories also revealed that beyond the interpersonal mediation between participants there were aspects of the learning environment which appeared to contribute to the life changes as they were described to me. What was still to be explored was what it was specifically which had been responsible for such changes to occur. Therefore, the question for research in this further and more detailed study is concerned with an exploration and an analysis of the specific quality or qualities of interpersonal mediation between participants within the learning environment framework.
2.3. Intimacy in narrative research

In order to learn about a culture, one needs to get inside it, to walk around in it, to learn how it feels to be there. While working hard to understand the perspectives of participants in this environment, I became very aware how sensitivity in the field must encompass an attempt by the researcher to establish relationships with participants without either establishing an allegiance to one group of participants or, any individual participant (Ball, 1993). Such a fine balance requires vigilance, integrity and clarity of purpose. Qualitative research requires a great amount of methodological knowledge and intellectual competence (Tesch, in Wellington, 2000). The researcher is the instrument of the inquiry (Ball, 1993) and what we choose to illuminate poses challenges for how we should represent knowledge in the educational worlds we wish to understand (Eisner, 1997).

‘Researchers are expected to ask participants to reveal their vulnerabilities, but reveal nothing or little of themselves’ (Sparkes, 2002, p 91).

Gergen, argues however, that every action, every performance - of which autoethnography is an example - is manifested in our immersion in past relationships and, simultaneously, the stamp of the relationships into which we move (Gergen, 1999).

‘When I perform I am carrying a history of relationships, manifesting them, expressing them. They inhabit my every motion...we are always addressing someone - either explicitly or implicitly - within some kind of relationship.’ (Gergen in Sparkes, 2002, p 92).

The following paragraph from my research journal describes my growing intimacy within the culture of the organization (Denzin, 2001) in the early days of the study.

‘These early morning meetings, over steaming cappuccino and perfect almond brioche and before the ‘service’ of lunch in the restaurant, allowed me to observe the environment and learn the shared language of the culture I was entering: preparing food, discussing menus and dishes; participants moving about and occupied in the many activities of a busy working restaurant. I found myself, in this early phase of the study becoming seduced by the culture I was observing.’ (Research Journal, November, 2003)
As I became more intimate with the participants and their stories, I felt increasingly responsible for the task I had undertaken, for interpreting and re-telling the rich texture of the human narratives I had the privilege of hearing (Pring, 2000; see also Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

This issue of intimacy is emphasised by Harrison when she describes her own developing intimacy with participants in her study of researching marital relationships whilst experiencing the break-up of her own marriage. She claims that having a multiplicity of sites and dimensions helped her analysis and construction of meaning in her scholarship.

‘I am left wondering however, if Penny had any idea that we were constructing data for my study when she comforted me on the steps of the fountain at the local mall. When she reached out to me in friendship she probably had no idea that I would take her words into my analysis, which I inevitably do. Although I may not put her words from our private conversation into the pages of my thesis, I carry a sense of the meanings she attaches to her marriage break-up, and the emotionality we explored in our conversation with me when I write about these things.’ (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, 2001, p 335).

In interpretive research we cannot ignore the reciprocal and affective dimensions of the situation on both participants and the researcher (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). In the course of conducting this study many conversations and dialogues undoubtedly added to the construction of meaning I placed on various incidents I witnessed (Ropiers-Huilman, 1999). Power exists everywhere and is constantly negotiated between researcher and researched (Harrison et al, op-cit).

However, the ‘examination of one’s own frailty surely makes one more careful about the inscription of others’ (St. Pierre, in Harrison et al, 2001, p 332). Therefore, The path trodden by the researcher must be sensitive to the intimacy developed in the personal relationships in the situation and honesty to the study itself (Busier et al, 1997).
2.4. Reflexivity in narrative research

In reflexive ethnography authors primarily use their own experience to illuminate the culture under study. The need for placing the ‘self’ in qualitative research is skilfully discussed by Ellis and Bochner in the form of a discourse between the authors where they describe the need to write reflexively in qualitative research. In the following extract they complain about the use of the third person in research rhetoric in a number of studies which claimed to be qualitative but still adhered to the conventions of other genres.

‘It’s as if they’re written from nowhere by nobody. The conventions militate against personal and passionate writing’... ‘after all, who is the person collecting the evidence, drawing the inferences, and reaching the conclusions?’ (Ellis and Bochner, 2003, p154).

However, I am mindful that an ethnographic approach requires a cautious positioning by the researcher (Neumann, 1996; Elliot, 2005). Autoethnography has its critics (Ellis and Bochner, op-cit; Denzin, 1997) and carries with it a danger of being accused of self-indulgence (Sparkes, 2002).

There is therefore a need to be rigorous about how data is first gathered, then analysed and then presented. There are ethical and moral implications of listening to other people’s stories and in the relationships which develop and grow naturally between the researcher and the participants during in the course of conducting an inquiry (Pring, 2000; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The researcher must remain sensitive to the power bases of relationships between participants which combine to make the research process such a fascinating and rewarding experience.

In the course of conducting this study a number of email discussions took place with research colleagues who were also battling with the rigour required in conducting trustworthy qualitative research. This process was helpful as our discourse became the vehicle for reflexivity. The following is an example of one such message. Names of colleagues have been changed to protect their identity.

‘Hi Sarah,'
What you said in your last message about 'accuracy' of recording participants' personal accounts has been much on my mind the last few weeks. Again, I am reminded of a comment Andy made some time ago which struck a chord with me at the time, about the researcher's need to be disciplined.

Recently, I have begun my own observations, looking at the quality of the interaction between trainees and trainers, in a vocational project. It is proving to be a fascinating experience. The advantages and disadvantages of being the main instrument of research in this study is becoming very real for me.

When I began data collection for this study, I was so concerned about my need to understand the setting and get as much information as possible within the time available to me, that I had not taken into account the dynamics of my own development in this process. I had been fully expecting my interpretations and reinterpretations to change as the situation became clearer. But the more time I spend in observation, the more my personal responses to the subjects within the study change, and my relationship(s) with the participants becomes more intimate. This serves as a reminder of my responsibilities as researcher.

For instance, the more open and comfortable subjects are with having me around while they work, the more intimate we become and the more they gossip to me about each other. But I know I have ethical responsibilities to respect both what is confided to me and the feelings of the subjects discussed. In this, trust and reciprocity in the researcher/participant relationship must carry the same weight as the trust and reciprocity in any other relationship. But in the research process there are so many inferences which can be drawn from these exchanges which help our understanding. I am fortunate that I have enormous support and openness from all the participants but I am very aware that I have sole responsibility for data collection. I love the independence this gives me to decide how to conduct the research and convey what I come to know. But such independence carries huge responsibility. It implies I must be rigorous in how I behave. No one is watching or guiding me on a point by point basis, either technically regarding methods or ethically regarding conduct. And the scary part is, participants think I know what I am talking about! Kind regards, Judy’
Thus, writing, thinking and ideas all develop simultaneously in the narrative of ethnographic research. ‘A theory of the social is also a theory of writing. A theory of writing is also a theory of interpretive (ethnographic) work. Theory, writing and ethnography are inseparable material practices. Together they create the conditions that locate the social inside the text’ (Denzin, 1997, pxii).

2.5. Concepts of narrative research

Words and their meaning are the main tools of narrative research, and so the terms, concepts and metaphors we select to express our ideas must be carefully selected to resonate in the reader the required response. Without this level of communication through shared meaning, the study’s impact is lost and so too is its credibility. As the thesis developed I struggled to find those specific concepts and metaphors which I felt could frame what I wanted to convey to the reader.

Interestingly, terms ‘borrowed’ from a scientific world-view no longer seem appropriate in the postmodernist ‘sixth’ or even ‘seventh moment’ of qualitative research literature and commonly terms such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability have come to replace the usual positivist terms of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p24). Objective reality can never be captured in ‘the proper study of man’ (Bruner, 1990) but triangulation reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. We know a thing only through its representations but, Flick argues, triangulation is not a tool or a strategy of validation, but an alternative to validation (Flick in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005 page 5). Richardson takes this argument further by suggesting that the central image for qualitative inquiry should be the crystal, not the triangle. Mixed genre texts in the post-experimental moment have more than three sides. The interpretation of the situation is viewed through the eyes of the researcher; as she becomes a bricoleur, a maker of quilts or montage, as if placing patches of different fabrics together to create a picture, (Richardson, 2003).
'Like crystals,’ ... ‘a mixed genre text combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances transmutations’... ‘crystals grow, change, alter’... ‘crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions.’ (Richardson in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p8).

Such metaphors are the backbone of social research (Elliott, 2005). They are a literary device rooted in the traditions of story telling which provide the reader with a representation of an idea that the narrator is attempting to convey (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). For example, the image of research data referred to as, ‘the clay in the hands of the potter,’ suggests that stories are moulded and created in the hands of the researcher from the rich textures of layers of texts and images that evoke a whole picture or montage to tell a story (Richardson, 2003).

However, ‘While acknowledging that all research accounts will be partial and will be shaped by the intellectual biography of the author, there is a desire to make these accounts as informative as possible and provide insights into the means and circumstances of their production. An approach to conducting and writing up research which makes clear the perspective of the author and describes the practicalities of how the research is conducted is therefore advocated.’.... ‘the aim is therefore for researchers not simply to provide their readers with detailed confessional accounts of their experience by conducting research, but rather produce an analytic discussion of how their own theoretical and biographical perspective may impact on their relationships with research subjects, their interpretation of research evidence, and the form in which the research is presented’ (Elliott, 2005, p154).

Therefore, the process by which we make claims for the trustworthiness of our interpretations is the critical issue, not the search for an objective truth (Riessman, 1993). ‘Validity’, Bruner tells us, ‘is an interpretive concept, not an exercise in research design’ (Bruner, 1990, p 108; also see Janesick, 2003). Perhaps all one can do in this post-positivist era of social research is to claim that there is no single standard of truth.
Therefore, a chosen methodology should give serious consideration to the dimensions of the study the researcher chooses to illuminate, whilst also reflecting upon the diverse range of complexities of the human condition and experiences, and the complicated process of interpreting and re-telling other peoples’ stories. I am mindful that as communicators we need to keep our narrative relevant and meaningful but furthermore, keep the reader interested in our thesis by producing a ‘page-turner’ that both conveys what we want them to know and gives a credible account of a world which seduced us into exploring it in the first place.

2.6. Summary

This chapter has discussed the development of using a narrative approach in which to frame this inquiry, by making a case for accepting that the interpretations and reinterpretations of other peoples’ stories and experiences are partial, subjective and temporal. The crystal is used as a metaphor to describe our understanding in qualitative research as a shifting and refracted light visible only from a particular perspective (Richardson, 2003), and constantly changing within the dynamics of changing worlds. I passionately want the reader to be drawn into a representation of the world I came to know through the narrative of my own experience and the stories of the participants, but this must be balanced with presenting my research in such a way that it is considered credible, reliable and trustworthy, to ‘evoke in the reader that the experience described is ‘lifelike, believable, and possible’ (Ellis and Bochner, 1993) for like other researchers in this genre, I seek verisimilitude. The important issue of trustworthiness is discussed more fully in chapter seven.

Having made my methodological perspective clear, I have set the stage for the events and stories which follow. These describe the journey on which the thesis has taken me from its beginning, and are therefore told chronologically and as they happened. To first put these events into context, the following chapters describe the thinking skills movement in the UK, the historical development of cognitive education and the deeper implications of its philosophy which, it is argued, is as relevant for our own generation as it was when it was developed more than sixty years ago, and therefore forms the epistemology underpinning the thesis.
Chapter Three - The Social-cultural Movement in Education

3.1. Introduction

The thesis began with a discussion about an important shift in current educational research literature towards a recognition that learning is a social activity (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, and Miller 2003). Moreover, in order to sustain a competent, productive and optimistic society, there is now an identified need to find ways to build learning communities which reflect this social phenomenon; communities which are based on trust, mutual respect and sound ethical principles. It would therefore seem logical to expect these needs to be reflected in how we organise our school and vocational environments, where young people can develop the social, intellectual and affective skills they need to live meaningful, fulfilling and productive lives.

This chapter takes up these themes. It begins by suggesting that the quality of the relationships between people within their learning environment is an essential factor for facilitating meaningful learning. To support this argument, and place the thesis in the context of this ongoing debate, I describe the historical development of the thinking skills movement in British schools, and Feuerstein’s part in it. The movement aims to teach children to learn how to learn, but I challenge the nature of this initiative which seemed in the past to focus on teaching thinking as a technical tool for enhancing intellectual potential for academic excellence, rather than focussing on the more holistic goals of ‘whole-person learning’ propounded by Carl Rogers (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994). Happily this is now changing, but the psychologist Reuven Feuerstein has made these holistic ideas for human development his life’s work by developing a complex system of theories for the enhancement and modifiability of the human condition (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979). I describe the philosophical basis for this perspective to demonstrate how this approach has guided my own professional development.

Chapter Four then goes on to describe the historical development of Feuerstein’s methods, and his major theories: Structural Cognitive Modifiability (Feuerstein and Rand, 1975) and Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) which
together with the interrelated didactical methods underlying this approach, form the epistemological basis for the thesis.

3.2. Learning and humanistics

Western society is a fluid, dynamic world compounded by rapidly changing international and cross-cultural influences. Research suggests that education has been slow to respond to these rapid changes, and that we desperately need to rethink the kind of education we should be offering the younger generation in preparation for meeting the challenges of the twenty-first century (Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008).

Humanistic psychology, which considers the psycho-social aspects of learning, has had a strong influence on current educational psychology, suggesting that teaching children to learn how to learn is the way forward in our increasingly complex world (Rogers, 1990; Claxton, 2008), and educating children in social competence has a cognitive dimension (Slavin, 2006; Hanko, 1998). Moreover, the interactive nature of emotional, social and cognitive development permits us to recognise the limits of any one ideology and work with multiple concepts (Norwich, 1996a). A humanistic approach in educational psychology therefore emphasises the development of the whole person rather than focusing solely on intellectual competence. Indeed, Freire highlights the difficulty of conceptualising learning as anything other than multi-faceted when he says:

‘To be human is to engage in relationships with others and with the world’...
‘as man discover(s) temporality, and frees (him)self from “today”...’ (Inverted commas in the original) ‘...their relations with the world become impregnated with consequence’... ‘Inheriting acquired experience, creating and re-creating, integrating themselves into context, responding to its challenges, objectifying themselves, discerning, transcending, men enter into the domain which is theirs exclusively - that of history and of culture.’ (Freire, 1973, pp 3 - 4).

To reflect the multi-faceted complexity of learning in a cultural and social context, the language and concepts used in educational research literature have changed, and words like
‘coping strategies’, ‘resilience’, ‘adaptability’, ‘problem solving’ and ‘optimism’ have come to be common parlance in educational psychology literature (Seligman, 1991; Claxton, 2006b; Hanko, 1998; Sternberg, 1994; Schunk, 1989).

Interestingly however, the most well-known proponent of a psychic viewpoint, Sigmund Freud, had a profound impact on the development of clinical and therapeutic psychology and psychiatry, but less of an impact on educational psychology (Williams and Burden, 1998). Freud held the view that human nature is basically lustful, selfish and aggressive, only inhibited by social constraints; and we are driven to act in particular ways to meet these basic needs. Abraham Maslow however, takes the opposite position by suggesting that all human beings are inherently good and decent and it is only when their basic needs are not met that they become aggressive, as a cornered animal might and as reaction to the circumstances or situation which threaten them (Maslow, 1970; 1968).

Individualism, competition and the notion of self has had a huge impact on education and modern society. To reverse this trend, Pearson and Podeschi suggest that in this postmodern era of humanistic theory, we now need to separate out our conceptualization of individualism and individuality, and our understanding of both for individual and social learning in the twenty-first century (Pearson and Podeschi, 1999, p 49).

However, long before this more recent debate, Feuerstein held quite a different perspective suggesting that we can never achieve our full potential, since the human capacity for learning lasts a lifetime and therefore the propensity to learn or the capacity to change is infinite (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979). His ideas suggest that the social context for learning - the modifying environment - together with the human mediator or more significant other, can be instrumental in intercepting what Maslow terms as a downward regression, thus reversing the process. Feuerstein’s philosophy and methodology therefore suggest that by fostering through cognitive processes a more optimistic and higher level of self-actualization need, basic negative emotional or physiological responses can be alleviated. In other words, we can by-pass or overcome our baser needs to transcend to the deeper significance of what we experience. Indeed, stories of people managing to overcome extreme deprivation during the Holocaust would seem to support his argument (Rudolf, 1991; Gryn, 2001).
As discussed above, education has been criticised for being too slow to respond to the many changes in our society (Sternberg, 2005); and as the social world changes, so too must the systems by which we organise our lives. Nothing stays the same for long, and we are reminded that change is normal (Fullan, 1993). Moreover, we live in a generation of migrant populations, where economical and political forces drive vast numbers of people from one part of the globe to another - to migrate from one ‘social world’ or one culture to another - and this leads to the need for these same people to learn how to adapt to different cultures and social practices. Nevertheless, despite these rapid changes in our society, there are some human needs that remain constant: people’s need for ‘folk psychology’ - to have shared meaning of the culture in which they find themselves, local knowledge, common values and a feeling of belonging. It would seem therefore that it is imperative that all these needs should be fostered through shared practice. A humanistic approach in education would therefore seem to address the most human of cultural aspects of man’s frailty, and reflect Bruner’s recognition of people’s overriding need for meaningful communication with one another to achieve these ends (Bruner, 2002).

The following section describes the historical development of the thinking skills movement in the UK, and Feuerstein’s part in it, and describes how the epistemological basis for this study grew out of my personal experience of using these methods.

3.3. The thinking skills movement in the UK

My earliest introduction to Feuerstein’s methods was as a novice practitioner of Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980). Instrumental Enrichment is a practical programme of intervention for the development of thinking skills. It comprises approximately two hundred and forty paper and pencil non-contextual tasks, divided into fourteen booklets addressing a number of different cognitive skills of increasing complexity, such as perceptual organisation, sequencing, spatial orientation, categorisation, comparison, planning, and so on. The goal of each task is to develop a principle or rule which can then be applied in a variety of situations - in curricular activities, in human relationships, and personal development (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, op-cit).
As my understanding of both the programme and its didactical methods deepened, I learnt how these methods can become a powerful tool for helping to unlock human potential. I also learnt however, that the major strength of Feuerstein’s complex theories is not its practical programme for intervention but its underlying philosophy and mode of delivery, namely, Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994). This section attempts to make the case for saying that it is this cultural aspect of this approach which is its greatest strength and relevance to our generation.

To illustrate this point, and place this premise in context, this section provides a brief history of the thinking skills movement in English schools which began in the eighties, and the part played by Instrumental Enrichment in its development (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980). Instrumental Enrichment fell out of fashion for a number of reasons, but a renewed interest and recognition of the need to teach children how to learn has been welcomed by educationalists in this genre.

The current regeneration of the thinking skills movement in schools is very different from that of the eighties and early nineties when the value of Feuerstein’s work was first recognised here. In those early days, individuals who had made the long journey to Jerusalem to study with Feuerstein and his team came back to their schools and colleagues enthused by what they had observed and full of ideas for how use Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980) and implement thinking skills into the school curriculum (Baker, 1987; 1988; Makler, 1980; Shayer and Beasley, 1987; Weller and Craft, 1983). These early projects report how a minimal number of sessions in a crowded school curriculum were allocated to teaching thinking skills, often without full consideration for how the principles and rules developed in these sessions could or should be generalised across contexts or whether the number and intensity of the sessions corresponded to what was advocated by these methods.

Baker’s intervention was aimed at low-attaining pupils in a comprehensive school (Baker, 1987). The project of teaching IE as a curricular subject began in 1983, and was called PLAP, Project for Low-Attaining Pupils. Baker reports that when students were selected for the group, they immediately perceived their inclusion as a punishment for having ‘failed’ in class. Baker writes detailed accounts of her defence of the project to both the
selected students and their parents, who did not understand its purpose. She records her further frustrations directed at a number of issues: ‘The heckling hostility of the Governors’, (Baker, op-cit, p112); the low morale of the teachers, and her frustrations to get them to embrace any new ideas which would help her students in their class work; frustration at her minimal training, and lack of experience and support; and her own and others’ criticism of Feuerstein’s materials. However, she reports a pleasing pattern of change in a number of her students which is a merit to her tenacity and determination to succeed on their behalf despite the obstacles she describes (Baker, op-cit). But beyond its historical interest, Baker’s study illuminates the uphill and lonely battle of attempting to implement an innovative project without the full cooperation and support of the whole learning community.

Later, research studies describe an attempt to overcome these early difficulties by adapting established methods of thinking skills to ‘fit in’ with the National Curriculum (Blagg, 1991; Adey and Shayer, 1994; Burden and Nicholls, 2000). Some of these studies were based on insufficient training of mediators - thinking skills teachers - followed by insufficient intervention which produced poor results (Blagg, op-cit) and the value of Feuerstein’s methods lost credibility for many educationalists in the UK at that time.

3.4. Learning to learn

Nevertheless, the current thinking skills movement in England is changing, and a welcome emphasis in the National Curriculum on teaching children to learn how to think critically has led to a recognition of the need for a more infused approach to teaching thinking and creativity across the whole school (Costa, 2006). Evidence is growing that a whole school approach now seems to be the way forward (Burke and Williams, 2008; Claxton, 2002). By infusing thinking skills into the curriculum for a group of eleven-year-olds, Burke and Williams demonstrated significant gains in a range of thinking skills.

For example, Philosophy for Children (Lipman, 1991), gives children of all ages the opportunity to think about their thinking, to question their understanding of certain concepts and ideas, to present an argument cohesively and develop expressive language. Building Learning Power provides some practical ways to encourage teachers to think about how to
help children become aware of their own learning processes and understand the basic principle that learning can be learnt (Claxton, 2006a). A revived interest in De Bono’s Six Hats (De Bono, 2000), and Art Costa’s Habits of Mind (Costa and Kallick, 2000) is growing momentum in this country. Thinking Maps (Hyerly, 2000) provide whole schools with a set of eight defined structures or maps of varying complexity with which to organise and plan one’s thoughts and ideas. Claxton draws our attention to the terminology now widely used to develop thinking, by suggesting that we should now be talking about learning rather than thinking (Claxton, 2008). It would seem therefore that a broad recognition of the need to develop children’s creativity in thinking and dispositions towards learning is growing momentum.

Moreover, the teachers’ journal, ‘Teaching Thinking and Creativity’, regularly report a growing number of projects in schools up and down the country where students of all ages are offered a range of methods for classroom practice to develop good working habits, through the teaching of these structures, frameworks and tools. Educational psychology reflects this growing trend and there is growing evidence beginning to appear that suggest that the effectiveness of an infused approach is gathering momentum (Sokel, Oget, Sonntag and Khomenko, 2008; Topping and Trickey, 2007; Claxton, Edwards and Scale-Constantinou, 2006).

In 1998, a review and evaluation of thinking skills and related areas was commissioned by The DfEE (McGuinness, 1999). This review took a number of key issues for developing thinking skills such as, developing a framework for thinking, models of delivery, evaluation, communication technologies and teacher development. Models for teaching thinking considered to have made a contribution to the thinking skills movement at the time included Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980); Somerset Thinking Skills (Blagg, 1991); CASE (Adey and Shayer, 1994); Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 1983), Philosophy for Children (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980) and Teaching Thinking (Fisher, 2006; 1998) amongst others. The review concluded that because there was a clear social and interactive component to the implementation of all these models, careful preparation of teachers was needed for classroom practice. However, whilst what McGuinness was considering here was the quality and effectiveness of teaching thinking, no acknowledgement was made of Feuerstein’s didactical methods, the theory of
Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum, and Klein, 1994) designed to be applied in conjunction with Instrumental Enrichment, which would address this exact point in her argument.

This would seem to be a lost opportunity, for it is argued here that mediated learning is an essential dynamic for the delivery and efficacy of all intervention, including Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein Tannenbaum, and Klein, op-cit). Furthermore, in McGuinness’s report, the focus for both delivery and outcomes of thinking skills training were confined to the classroom, and how these effected performance. It would therefore seem that this review highlights two important and separate issues. First, the report rightly acknowledges a growing and welcome movement towards teaching thinking skills in schools. However, the author fails to make any distinction between the commonly accepted perception of thinking skills limited to classroom performance and the more holistic and lifelong goals of Mediated Learning Experience and cognitive education.

3.5. Cognitive education

Historically, the term, cognitive education has no special relation to the MLE framework and there is no use of the term in any of Feuerstein’s work. Indeed, I am told by his colleagues that Feuerstein never liked the term cognitive education because it was used as a general term to cover any form of intervention that targets purely cognitive rather than curricular aspect of learning. Feuerstein's own programme for intervention - Instrumental Enrichment, was designed to be offered in conjunction with the didactical methodology of MLE. However, studies in this genre have sometimes confused the effects of MLE and/or IE to mean one and the same thing, as if the implementation of the practical IE tasks without carefully considered mediation would be enough to bring about permanent modifiability in the human condition (see Blagg, 1991 for example). This is not so, as an explanation of both MLE and IE below aims to clarify. Indeed, there is now a huge body of literature reporting research studies across contexts which analyse the effects of MLE in the learning environment independent of a formal intervention programme such as IE (Falik, 2000; Klein, 2000; Seng, Pou & Tan, 2003; Tzuriel, 2001). More recently, the term cognitive education has been widely adopted in academic literature in this genre to describe the development of cognitive skills for meaningful learning by means of mediated learning
experience (Das, Parilla and Papadpoulos, 2000; Tan & Seng, 2005; Martinez, Lebeer and Garbo, 1998; Hadji, 1998). Therefore, if we are to consider the framework for MLE independently of a structured programme for intervention, and as a methodology for engendering meaningful learning in all social interaction across contexts, we can then perhaps begin to understand its true potential for fostering permanent change in the human condition.

The major goal of cognitive education in this sense is therefore to foster, promote, engender and encourage meaningful learning by means of mediated learning experiences within a given context which embraces the intellectual, social and emotional aspects of human development. The term cognitive education is therefore defined and referred to below and throughout the thesis in this manner. In this approach, it is always the human mediator or the more competent other who sets up the right conditions or the right environment for meaningful learning to take place. It is the human mediator who selects and regulates the stimulus for the less competent other(s), referred to as the mediatee(s). Feuerstein draws our attention to this cultural aspect of the philosophy of cognitive education in his criteria for the modifying environment (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997). The modifying environment is discussed in more detail below to illustrate the complex interrelationships between individual and social development, and the cultural practices of the learning environment. Indeed, it is the social and cultural implications of the philosophy of cognitive education which are its greatest strengths and of interest to this study. This notion is central to the meaning of cognitive education in this sense, and the consequent modifiability of the human condition.

Therefore, it is a core premise of the thesis that although established frameworks for teaching thinking undoubtedly help students develop good working habits, they would seem to address only part of human development. Beyond this, it is argued here that it is a combination of three essential components that generate permanent and lasting cognitive, social and affective change in the human condition. These are: firstly, the underlying philosophy of the learning environment; secondly, a strong belief in the modifiability of the human condition; and lastly, the quality of the mediation between participants within that environment.
Given the cultural and affective issues surrounding the current state of education and society, it would seem that it is precisely these qualitative aspects of cognitive education which are of the greatest significance to the education of the young. Burden emphasises this point when he says,

‘Feuerstein‘ ... ‘has been unfairly judged by many critics who appear to be only conscious of one small section of his work without fully understanding the theoretical strengths of its foundations or the interactive nature of its subsystems.’ (Burden, 2000b, p46).

In Burden’s metaphor to illustrate this point, Feuerstein’s theoretical concepts, their practical applications and didactical methods for cognitive change are represented as layers in an iceberg (Burden, op-cit, p47). See Figure (1) overleaf.

Here, the programme of intervention is seen as the visible peak of the iceberg above the water line, merely a vehicle for providing human intervention by means of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum, and Klein, 1994; Tzuriel, 2001) and therefore of secondary importance to the huge bulk of the iceberg hidden beneath the water line - that is, MLE, and the belief and core values of these methods.

Therefore, if we are to consider the practical framework of MLE as a powerful component in the learning process, then we can use it to create the optimal conditions for that learning experience to occur. For example, in the human relationship between people within a mediated learning experience, and with the central elements of the theory of Mediated Learning Experience such as intentionality, the human mediator first needs to make clear to the mediatee(s), (the client(s)), the deeper intention of his/her actions, whilst ensuring that reciprocity is established. Transcendence and meaning provide further insights for the mediatee(s) into the meaning of the mediator’s intentions, so that the underlying lesson of the experience can then become generalised across contexts and into other areas of human endeavour.
**Figure (1):** Feuerstein’s theories and their practical applications represented as an iceberg (Burden, 2000).
These central elements of the theory: intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence and meaning, are discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

3.6. Culture and identity

I have argued here that it is the social, cultural and affective aspects of cognitive education which are of major relevance to the education of the young. Feuerstein’s work is therefore in the Vygotskyian tradition, and governed by a philosophy which embraces the intellectual, social and affective components of human development, rooted in cultural transmission and social transactions (Beker and Feuerstein 1990; 1991). The current pressing need for such a holistic philosophy in education is emphasised by Freeman when he makes a conceptual connection between Mediated Learning Experience and other selected sociological theories:

‘Given that the loss of community in western civilization is most commonly attributed to the effects of the Industrial, French and American revolutions, as well as the ravages of the two world wars, it is not surprising that a theory stressing cultural distinctiveness and the role of community in cognitive development appears at a time of increased world migration and interaction among culturally different people’ (Freeman, 1994, p127).

It is interesting however, that Feuerstein’s use of the terms, cultural deprivation and cultural difference caused concern amongst those who have worked to promote these methods, since it was felt that these concepts might at first glance to be misunderstood, and could therefore be open to criticism of seeming to imply cultural superiority (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum, and Klein, 1994). Similarly, Basil Bernstein, a leading socialist of his generation, was committed to preventing the wastage of working class educational potential (Sadovnik, 2001), but is perhaps better known for his work on social class codes for describing language developmental differences between the working and middle classes where he discusses the concept of cultural deprivation as a social phenomenon (Bernstein, 1970; 1971: Rosen, 1974).
In contrast, Feuerstein uses the same term, cultural deprivation, to describe any individual, regardless of so-called social class, who has been deprived of cultural transmission, or interpersonal mediation from care worker, parent or teacher, from within his/her own culture.

The old Danish proverb, ‘A rich child often sits in a poor mother’s lap’, (Larson, Hegarty, 1991) would seem to support this view, suggesting that a child is considered rich because of good parenting or mediation from within his/her own culture, rather than because of material wealth or social class.

Feuerstein therefore defends his use of the term cultural deprivation which he suggests provides a useful metaphor for discourse to describe a lack of MLE; that is, a lack of cultural transference to the individual by a more competent other from within his own culture which would render him modifiable, a notion central to the theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability. Feuerstein argues that it is sufficient and specifically targeted mediation that can compensate for such cultural deprivation, thus allowing the mediatee to adapt to the social group in which s/he finds him/herself; to change, to reach his/her full potential as a human being and so become a valued member of society (Kozulin, 1998).

Feuerstein therefore makes a strong distinction between cultural difference in diverse communities and cultural deprivation. Indeed, this distinction has been clearly demonstrated in a number of studies which indicate that whilst culturally different children compared to children in mainstream culture show initial low performance, after a short intervention of MLE improve dramatically and narrow the gap with their counterparts in mainstream culture (Tzuriel, 2001).

An important consideration therefore for our generation in the multicultural society of modern Britain is to find ways to ensure that cultural differences between people do not, through misunderstanding or neglect, become cultural deprivation. Indeed, we ignore these considerations at our peril.
We need to create communities - schools, colleges, business environments and associations - where groups of like-minded people can find ways to communicate meaningfully with one another through shared practices and common goals. We need to engender shared values to help all members of our society develop an identity with their community, and a feeling of belonging, self-worth and optimism.

3.7. Cultural transmission

Further to the role of the human mediator to act as interpreter of the world for the child, Feuerstein’s theories advocate that every child has a right to expect the older generation to impart wisdom, skills, experience, and a culture of caring. His methods remind us that it is the role of educators, parents and care workers to develop the whole child; and traditional curricular activities fulfil only a small part of society’s responsibility to the young (Feuerstein and Hoffman, 1982). The authors further posit that education must include social, emotional and cognitive development and issues of morality, responsibility, citizenship, ethics, relationships and mutual trust are all part of what every child has a right to expect from the older generation.

In recent times, for both political and economic reasons, there has been a huge migration of people moving across the globe. The family unit and cultural identity have been replaced by a fragmentation of family values, a bombardment of media information, violence, excesses and choice (Beker and Feuerstein 1990; 1991).

‘Old cultures, traditions and practices have been swept away and parents often feel themselves ill-equipped to prepare their children for an uncertain future in a new culture, replaced in some ways by so-called experts, people who claim to know better than they do how to raise their children, so that they are unable, or perhaps feel themselves unable to act as guides, or be responsible for the welfare and education of their children in an increasingly complex world. Children develop in a society which has little structure or clear guidelines of how to behave in it. Parents, often through no fault of their own feel themselves unworthy to help, and children feel themselves unable to see beyond
instant gratification, the here-and-now (Feuerstein’s voice-over in Dean, 1990).

To illustrate this dilemma, and emphasise man’s overriding need for identity with a social group, Jhumpa Lahiri’s novel, ‘The Namesake’ provides a beautiful and poignant example of one family’s struggles to adapt to a new culture in a world full of strangers. The main character in the novel is the US born son of Bangladeshi parents and the novel tells the story of how he fights against the conscious imposition of his parents’ cultural heritage in his desire for a Western identity. The following brief extract from the novel describes his young mother’s sense of loss, and her feelings about the circumstances of her new son’s birth, in a hospital far away from home.

‘Without a single grandparent or parent or uncle or aunt at her side, the baby’s birth, like most everything else in America, feels somehow haphazard, only half true. As she strokes and suckles her son, she can’t help but pity him. She has never known of a person entering the world so alone, so deprived.’ (Lahiri, 2004, pp 24-25; also see Tremain, 2007 for another example).

We therefore need to explore ways to address these human dilemmas in our society, by making education meaningful and relevant to the younger generation.

More recently, others have taken up these ideas (see Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008 for example) and in the ‘fourth generation’ of teaching children to learn how to learn (Claxton, 2006a), it is now recognised in educational theory that learning needs to embrace the social and emotional aspects of human development (Rogers and Freiberg, 1994; Maslow, 1968; Feldman, 1990; Rogers and Kutnick, 1992).

3.8. Summary of chapter

To place the small bespoke apprenticeship model of Fifteen London into the wider context of learning environments elsewhere, the chapter began with a discussion about the current state of provision of apprenticeship programmes for young people in the UK; and
introduced the major themes of the thesis which suggest that the quality of the interpersonal relationships between individuals within the social context of learning affects human development. The first part of the chapter discussed the role of humanistic psychology in education, the growth of the thinking skills movement in the UK, and how my own experience of using these methods helped frame ideas for this investigation. I suggested that in the past, the nature of the thinking skills movement in the UK has mainly focussed on developing the technical tools of thinking for the enhancement of academic competence. I argue that this would seem to have been a lost opportunity, for in doing so educationalists have failed to recognise the strength of cognitive education which embraces the more holistic goals of ‘whole person learning’ (Rogers, 1994).

However, the thinking skills movement is now changing, and there is a welcome shift in current literature towards recognising that a more holistic and humanistic approach to construct ways of knowing is the way forward for education in the new millennium (Claxton, 2007; Craft, Gardner and Claxton, 2008).

Taking up the principle themes in this school of thought, I argued that the interpersonal relationships within the learning environment are a powerful component in the social, emotional and intellectual development of the young. I attempted to make the case that the framework of Feuerstein’s Mediated Learning Experience and the goals of its philosophy can be helpful for understanding the nature and quality of the specific mediation required to initiate, motivate and generate meaningful learning, and the subsequent modifiability of the human condition (Tzuriel, 2004; Williams and Burden, 1998). Therefore, social identity, cultural transmission and intellectual competence are of equal importance in education, and all rely on the quality of mediation between individuals within their learning environment.

In building my argument I suggested that the structured framework of MLE could usefully build on the feedback provided to teachers by school psychologists researching classroom climate, providing them with the didactical tools with which to articulate and communicate the necessary skills to promote a positive attitude to learning.
To put what follows into context of this philosophical perspective, the following chapter describes Feuerstein’s major theories. It tells the story of how his work developed in a place and at a time when Feuerstein’s understanding of the consequences of cultural deprivation became the prime motivator in which to develop a system for cognitive modifiability. It explains the theory of mediated learning experience within this complex system, and returns to the theme that the underlying philosophy and mode of delivery developed by Feuerstein and his colleagues more than sixty years ago to address the needs of the young people damaged by a war-torn Europe would seem to resonate with many of the pressing needs we face today in our own fragmented society.
Chapter Four - Mediated Learning Experience

4.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I described the historical development of the social-cultural movement in education and its influence on our thinking. This chapter now turns to the theory of MLE itself: its historical development and Feuerstein’s major theories: Structural Cognitive Modifiability (Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman, 1979); and Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)(Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994), which together with the interrelated didactical methods underlying this approach, form the epistemological basis for the thesis. This chapter therefore offers a description of the framework of these methods and clarifies how the terminology of Feuerstein’s theories is used throughout the thesis.

Like Vygotsky, Feuerstein’s approach suggests that cultural transmission and human mediation are crucial factors in cognitive development (Tzuriel, 2004; Kozulin, 1999). However, no attempt was made by Vygotsky to elaborate or expand his ideas for human mediators. It was Feuerstein who later expanded Vygotsky’s ideas for human mediation by developing a set of didactical tools for the enhancement of the human condition (Kozulin, 1998).

‘The main differences between Vygotsky and Feuerstein relate to the level of theoretical elaboration and operationalization of the theoretical concepts into applied systems. Unlike Vygotsky, Feuerstein has developed the concept of MLE by suggesting an elaborated list of MLE criteria’... ‘and a conceptual framework that defines the role of distal and proximal factors’ (emphasis in the original) ‘as determinants of cognitive development (Tzuriel, 2004, p 31).

Feuerstein’s applied systems therefore offer a cohesive didactical framework for pedagogy, and it is this that would seem to set his work apart from others in this genre.

However, many of the themes within Feuerstein’s major theories have been developed elsewhere. So whilst this chapter offers a description of both the underlying philosophical
and didactical aspects of MLE, it also acknowledges that many key themes within this approach are not unique to MLE. Nevertheless, Feuerstein’s system of theories would seem to offer a comprehensive and practical framework for the enhancement of all aspects of human potential - intellectual, social and affective; and it is this holistic aspect of the work that is emphasised here.

4.2. The historical development of Mediated Learning Experience

After the end of the second world war and in the years between 1950 and 1963, Feuerstein was employed in two contrasting environments. Two or three days a week were spent at the Piagetian school in Geneva developing cognitive tools for assessment, and the remainder of his time in the transit camps of France to assess Jewish children and young people released from the death camps and ghettos of Nazi Europe, in preparation for their settlement in Israel. These children had come from many countries and diverse cultures. But now, through their tragic experiences of survival, they shared a common dilemma, losing not only their families but their cultural heritage and, consequently, any framework for how to conduct their lives in a changed world (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum, and Klein, 1994).

These environments provided Feuerstein and his colleagues with two distinct and contrasting sources of clinical and academic interest: that of cultural difference in one environment and cultural deprivation in the other. They came to understand that culturally different children seen at the Piagetian school were hungry to learn, stimulated by new experiences and demonstrating what they came to refer to as cognitive modifiability. That is, despite having some cultural differences between them, they demonstrated an ability to develop new strategies for more efficient functioning. However, in contrast to the children in Geneva, the refugee children in the camps showed little appetite for learning. These culturally deprived children required a huge investment on the part of the assessor to render them modifiable, an effort which went far beyond that which Feuerstein was accustomed to make (Feuerstein and Richelle, 1963).
The experience of working in these two contrasting environments was to have a profound effect on the development of the young psychologist, who vowed to find a way to allow the young people in the camps to acquire the cognitive skills they had been deprived of developing normally during their years of survival (Sharron, 1996).

‘We couldn’t give up on any one of them. We couldn’t lose one individual. But saving them was not enough. We had to have the need to do it. And this need was clearly to have all individuals a part of our society’, (Feuerstein’s voice-over, in Dean, 1990).

This became the passion which has governed his life’s work, sustained by his belief in the learning potential of all human beings. Thus, from the outset, Feuerstein acknowledges the complex interrelationships between society and cognitive development.

There are interesting parallels between the historical times in which Feuerstein’s ideas developed and the turbulent times in Russia a generation earlier in which Vygotsky first became interested in the innovative and revolutionary idea that human development is reliant on both natural and socially mediated factors. The young Vygotsky had been expecting to follow his interests in literature and humanities. However, the brutal times of post revolutionary Russia forced everyone to find any occupation which would help them survive, so when he was offered a post teaching, he took it. This was where he first encountered children with special needs, victims of political revolution, sociocultural dislocation and educational deprivation (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller, 2003). Similarly, thirty or forty years later, following the Holocaust, Feuerstein was entrusted with the selection and assessment of Jewish children in post-war Europe in preparation for a new life in Israel. Again, dislocation and educational deprivation had led to culturally and educationally deprived children.

Now, in our own rapidly changing times, these same problems of dislocation and educational deprivation are just as real, and it is argued here, just as pressing, as a huge migration and movement of peoples from a number of diverse cultures move across the
globe, producing as they do so a younger generation dislocated from its cultural roots (Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev and Miller, op-cit).

Similarly, in our own society, small and hitherto thriving communities with their traditional cultures and practices, in both rural and urban settings, are being swept away as new technologies are developed in the name of progress and profit. Nevertheless, in the multicultural society of today’s Britain, it is argued here that the potential talents of our diverse population are this country’s greatest natural resource. However, if education underestimates the power of the quality of the interaction between people within the social context of learning to affect human development and good citizenship, our generation will be responsible for creating a national culture where many people will continue to feel themselves isolated from the best that society can offer; ill-equipped to change their lot in society; and so resort to helplessness or aggression for survival. But worse, these same people will pass on this apathy and helplessness to the next generation. It would therefore seem that the need for a socio-cultural perspective of education has never been more necessary. We need to foster and support communities where ethical values can be developed and promoted through shared goals and shared meanings; where people can grow and learn and live together to create strong, vibrant and optimistic communities.

The following section therefore goes on to describe Feuerstein’s major theories, and their relationships and interdependencies within a complex system for cognitive change. In doing so, it attempts to demonstrate that it is the underlying beliefs and values of this approach which are of central significance to human development and modifiability.

4.3. Structural Cognitive Modifiability

In his major theory, Structural Cognitive Modifiability, Feuerstein posits that the human brain is an open system, having a plasticity that renders it malleable and capable of growth and structural change throughout our lifetime (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979; Feuerstein, Tannenbaum, and Klein, 1994). The notion of Structural Cognitive Modifiability therefore suggests an optimism which places the emphasis on the quality of the interaction between the mediator (the parent, care giver or teacher) and the mediatee (the child) to initiate
structural and permanent change in the developing child. And it is thus to compensate for what Feuerstein refers to as cultural deprivation and consequent weak structural modifiability, responsible for the vast cognitive differences between individuals, that he has developed a methodology for learning called Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum and Klein, op-cit).

More recently, Dweck and others have taken up these themes, suggesting that intelligence is malleable and changeable throughout our lifetime but dependent upon a number of psycho-social factors (Dweck, 1999; Elliot and Dweck, 2005). Self-theories suggest that the implicit theories people have about themselves foster different responses: helpless or mastery-orientated (Dweck, 1999). That is, people who are optimistic about their ability to succeed, and believe that their intelligence is malleable, are said to have a personal incremental theory about their intelligence (also see Seligman, 1991); but people who tend to be pessimistic about their ability to succeed, assuming their intelligence is fixed, are said to have an entity theory (Dweck, op-cit).

‘helpless versus mastery-orientated responses to personal setback relies on implicit beliefs that...’ (an) ... ‘incremental theory of intelligence is cultivatable’ (Dweck, Chi-yue Chiu and Ying-yi Hong, 1995, p268; also see Tzuriel, 2004).

In exploring these ideas Dweck and her colleagues suggest that their goal for research was not to evaluate the correctness or otherwise of these two perspectives, but to demonstrate that holding one view or the other has potentially important consequences for people (Dweck, Chi-yue Chiu and Ying-yi Hong, op-cit). Mediated Learning Experience can be a powerful tool in the cultivation of mastery-orientated responses which then effect both self-actualisation and non-intellectual processes (Tzuriel, Samuels and Feuerstein, 1988).

Therefore, self-belief, optimism, motivation, and feelings of competence are all themes embedded in a philosophy which suggests that the human brain has a plasticity which allows it to grow, change and adapt to different conditions throughout our lifetime. The
issue of developing optimism in the learner by means of mediated learning experience is discussed later in the chapter.

Feuerstein refers to the determinants of differential cognitive development as, 'distal' factors, and introduces what he considers the most essential and significant ingredient for human development, the 'proximal' or near factors which he describes as MLE (Falik, 2000). Interestingly, we are told that the theory of MLE was developed independent of Vygotsky’s ideas for mediation within a sociocultural framework (Kozulin, 1999). Nevertheless, it is Vygotsky’s now famous Zone of Proximal Development which describes

\[\text{'The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers'},\] (Vygotsky, 1978, p86).

It would seem that the notions of cultural deprivation and cognitive modifiability were discussed by Feuerstein and his colleagues long before it became fashionable to do so (Narrol and Bachov, 1975; Feuerstein, 1968). However, since that time, the literature suggests that psychologists and educationalists have become increasingly interested in understanding the relationship between learning processes, intrinsic motivation and collaboration (Tzuriel, 2004; Johnson and Johnson, 1989a; also see Slavin, 2008; Fraser, 1991; Ames and Ames, 1989; Berliner, 1989).

The following section outlines the key theoretical aspects of this approach.

4.4. Feuerstein’s system of theories

As outlined above, the theories of Structural Cognitive Modifiability and Mediated Learning Experience work together to form the theoretical framework for this approach. The applied methods for intervention and operationalization are,
1. the Learning Propensity Assessment Device, providing a set of tools to assess potential cognitive skills (Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman, 1979; Lidz, 1987; Jenson, 2000; Tzuriel, 2001; Lidz and Elliott, 2000).

2. Instrumental Enrichment, providing a programme for intervention designed to enhance and accelerate cognitive development (Rand, Tannenbaum and Feuerstein, 1979; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980).

3. the Modifying Environment, creating the right conditions for learning to take place, (Feuerstein and Beker, 1990; 1991; Rynders and Feuerstein, 1997; Sasson, 1997a;1997b).

Together, these applied methods form a practical and powerful framework for intervention with the prime goal of rendering the individual modifiable so that s/he becomes an autonomous and innovative member of society. See Figure (2) overleaf.

Of relevance to this thesis, which considers both the environment and the quality of mediation of equal significance to the modifiability of the human condition, is the central concept of this approach; that instead of adapting the environment to suit the low functioning child, Feuerstein's theories invite us to think how we can modify the mediatee by helping him/her adapt to the environment by providing them with the cognitive tools they need to become an autonomous and active learner included within the environment. In using this very robust and ‘can-do’ approach, Feuerstein challenges what he calls, ‘society’s passive acceptance approach’ which allows acceptance of the low level of functioning of an individual as static or immovable, perceiving the individual as a closed organism. In contrast, Feuerstein states that we should perceive the organism, the child, as an open system that is receptive to change and therefore modifiable (Feuerstein’s voice-over, in Dean, 1990).
Figure (2): Feuerstein’s theories: the theoretical basis and the tools: the applied systems.

**The theoretical basis:**
- The Theory of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (SCM)
- The Theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE)

**The tools: the applied systems:**
- The Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD)
- Instrumental Enrichment (IE)
- The Modifying Environment (ME)
4.5. The Belief System

If we accept the underlying principles of *Structural Modifiability*, then we have to believe that we can make those changes happen. In his descriptors of Structural Cognitive Modifiability (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979) Feuerstein sees the belief system as the essential first step on the shared journey of discovery of the mediator and mediatee together - both the deeply held belief and trust between them, and the quality of the mediator’s intervention, aimed at bringing about fundamental changes in the human condition. This aspect of humanity is emphasised by Feuerstein when he talks about the need for the mediator to develop a ‘Belief System’ when intervening with a child.

‘...[F]irst you have to have a firm belief in the modifiability of the individual. This is the most important’ (thing). ‘Then, you need the techniques ... and the modified environment ... but you have to believe - if you don’t have this, the best techniques will not help you’, (Feuerstein’s voice-over in Dean, 1990; also see Sasson, 1997b).

Further than this, as outlined above, Feuerstein suggests that it is *cultural deprivation* that is the root cause of a child not reaching his or her full potential, rather than accepting the cause as being a fixed intellectual state. A belief system therefore allows the mediator to perceive the mediatee as a changing entity, and intervention as a dynamic process and importantly therefore, to perceive a low level of functioning as transient (Feuerstein and Rand, 1997). Instead of giving up, such a positive approach helps the mediator to continue to believe in the child’s capacity to change, sometimes in the face of enormous disappointment and frustrations. It also allows the mediator to point what Feuerstein refers to as, ‘the stiff finger of blame’ away from the mediatee and his/her disabilities and towards themselves and ask: ‘have I done everything possible to change this child? ’, (Feuerstein’s voice-over, in Dean, 1990). Such a philosophy allows the mediator to feel optimistic and energetic about the child’s potential to change and so play a significant role in making those changes happen. Thus the focus of intervention shifts from accepting the child’s intelligence as static to assuming that the child’s intelligence has the potential to grow.
A review of the wider literature on learning reveals that Feuerstein is not alone in understanding the central role that belief and trust plays in the relationship between mediator and mediatee. Indeed, Bruner reminds us:

‘(W)e know that man is infinitely capable of belief’ (Bruner, 1987, p51).

Freire too tells us that the belief of the educator in what he terms as ‘ordinary people’ is paramount.

‘The basic aspects of education will be ...the practice of freedom,’ (and) ‘whatever points the educator may have at his or her disposal, are secondary, and only justifiable, if they are used in an undertaking which aims at liberation.... If’ ...(the educators) ...‘are incapable of believing in and communing with’ ...(the educatees)...‘they will be at best cold technicians. They will probably be technocrats or even good reformers, but they will never be educators who will carry out radical transformation’ (Freire, 1973, p 164).

Moreover, this theme has had a great deal of attention in recent years in the work of Seligman and his theory for learnt optimism (Gerber and Seligman, 1980; Dweck and Licht, 1980; Dweck, 1995; Seligman, 1991) which suggests that if helplessness can be learnt, then optimism too can be learnt.

‘Learnt helplessness’ (emphasis in the original) ‘is the giving-up reaction, the quitting response that follows from the belief that whatever you do does n’t matter’ (Seligman, op-cit, p 15).

And,

‘I have come to think that the notion of potential, without the notion of optimism, has very little meaning’ (Seliman, op-cit, p 154).

Moreover, what has been referred to as the ‘Just Community approach’ in democratic education takes up these themes, suggesting that if the attitude of the educator is one of belief and trust, then this effects the attitudes of the students (Oser, Althof and Higgins-
D’Alessandro, 2008). Like others before them, Oser and her colleagues reflect a passionately held view for the need of a firm belief system when they say:

‘Teachers who believe and trust in advance that students fundamentally want to participate, to think and act morally, will treat them in such a way that actually helps in advance these attitudes - and the corresponding competences. Show those who have failed once how much you mistrust their reliability and they will fail again. Demonstrate that you trust them to be reliable in the next case and they will want to live up to your expectation. While paradoxical interventions do work sometimes, they only work in a context of basic trust (Oser, Althof and Higgins-D’Alessandro, op-cit, p408).

Therefore, the mediator’s or educator’s reciprocity with his/her students, and a belief in his/her students’ potential competences is paramount. The themes of intentionality and reciprocity are a major cornerstone of Feuerstein’s approach and are discussed more fully below (see 4.8 and 6.7).

4.6. Mediated Learning Experience

Mediated Learning Experience therefore provides a conceptual framework to understand the power and complexities of targeted intervention to effect human development (Feuerstein and Rand, 1997).

In MLE, the mediator acts as interpreter of the world for the mediatee by filtering and selecting the stimuli to which the mediatee is exposed with the prime goal of affecting the child’s development. MLE identifies and acknowledges the role of the human mediator first to control the quality and quantity of the stimulus to which the mediatee is exposed, and then to control and regulate the child’s response.
This relationship is made clear in the graphic formula for Mediated Learning Experience: where S represents the Stimulus; \( M \) represents the human mediator; O represents the child; \( M \) represents the human mediator again and R represents the child’s response, thus:

\[
S - M - O - M - R
\]

Mediated Learning Experience goes further than Vygotsky’s ideas for mediation by analysing and describing the different qualities of mediation in twelve specific parameters which provide a valuable conceptual tool for addressing cognitive deficiencies (Kozulin, 1994; 1998; 1999). In discussing the similarities between Feuerstein’s and Vygotsky’s ideas for human mediation, Kozulin and Presseisen acknowledge this important development when they point out that Vygotsky made no attempt to elaborate the activities of human mediators beyond their function as vehicles of symbolic tools (Kozulin and Presseisen, 1995).

Nevertheless, Vygotsky gave the generations of thinkers who came after him what has been referred to as a ‘posthumous life of ideas’ (Kozulin, 1999, p1), and the literature review, which follows the pilot study described in the next chapter, suggests that Feuerstein is not alone in addressing many of the concepts identified in MLE.

4.7. Concepts and metaphors

The term ‘mediated learning’ was first used by Vygotsky ("oposredovanie", meaning mediation) and then by many of his students and followers, first in Russia and then in the West (Kozulin, 1999). In Vygotskian theory, the concept, ‘mediator’ is used in a general sense to describe the words, symbols and concepts that act as tools to facilitate a higher or more abstract level of functioning (Kozulin, 1999), rather than purely as the human mediator of Feuerstein’s approach. Mediation in the Vygotskian sense is applied on two different levels, firstly, to describe interpersonal mediation - between people, and then to denote the transference of what becomes intrapersonal mediation, the internal language we all use to formulate and clarify our ideas and develop what is called, an internal locus of

The term, ‘Mediated Learning Experience’ was used formally by Feuerstein for the first time in 1968 in a conference paper in which he introduced the concept of Learning Potential Assessment Device, (Feuerstein, 1968) and indicated that MLE is the basis of interaction taking place during dynamic (as opposed to ‘static’) assessment.

However, in the rapid growth and interest in the theory of MLE since its early development, Feuerstein warns against the danger of misuse of the term ‘mediation’ when discussing MLE. For example, for many behaviourists, the term mediation has become overgeneralised to mean all interaction and therefore holds an entirely different meaning to mediation within a mediated learning experience according to these methods. For example, a mother who stops her child from putting his hand in the fire by shouting loudly, ‘Stop!’ is not providing a mediated learning experience, nor is she mediating a rule or principle which goes beyond the here and now. But a mother who says, ‘Stop! Fire burns; so we must never go near a fire because it will hurt you,’ mediates a rule or principle which the mediatee will learn to apply when s/he is next exposed to a similar situation.

Mediated Learning Experience thus,

‘Sensitizes the person to the continual exposure that effects the quality of his response to an event or stimulation thus enabling him to react by changing himself.’ (Feuerstein, Klein, Tannenbaum, 1994, p.49).

In summary, the term, mediator, in Feuerstein’s methodology, describes the more competent other within a mediated learning experience and, mediation describes the interaction between the mediator and mediatee to initiate a change in cognitive development. Both these concepts are used here below within this terminology.

In the sections above I have described the philosophy underlying MLE, and the terms and concepts used in this approach. In doing so, I have identified others who have taken up
various aspects of the themes within these methods. For example, it is suggested that ‘incremental intelligence’ is reliant on psycho-social influences throughout our lifetime (Dweck, Chi-yue Chiu and Ying-yi Hong, 1995), and this would seem to echo the notion that cognitive modifiability, according to an MLE approach, is reliant on the mediation between people within the culture of their environment (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979). Similarly, the notion of the mediator needing a strong belief in the learning potential of the child is also discussed widely in the literature elsewhere (Friere, 1973; Sasson, 1997b; Martinez, Lebeer, and Garbo, 1998; Oser, Althof & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2008).

Nevertheless, whilst recognising that many themes within MLE are discussed widely elsewhere in the literature, it would seem that its theoretical underpinning, and didactical methods provide a complex but coherent framework for the enhancement the human condition.

4.8. The twelve parameters of Mediated Learning Experience

The twelve parameters or qualities of MLE are described below. They define the specific quality of an interaction initiated by the mediator to affect the learning process of the mediatee.

Mediation of Intentionality and Reciprocity

Intentionality and reciprocity describes the main conditions for an MLE interaction, where the mediator demands the mediatee’s attention, first to explain his/her intention, then to gain a response, either visually, verbally or non-verbally, thus setting up an atmosphere for learning. Examples of intentionality are: ‘I need you to understand this because... ’ or ‘let me show you this beautiful thing... ’, or, ‘I want you to know how to do this, therefore I will do it slowly.’

However, having an intention to change the mediatee’s learning without a clear objective is not enough in itself - the objective of the mediator’s intention must first be identified and made meaningful for the mediatee, and then followed through to interaction. The twin
concepts of intentionality and reciprocity therefore transform the three partners in the shared interaction: the stimuli, the mediator and the mediatee; not only making the interaction incidentally registered but clearly understood. This effects the frequency of and/or exposure to the stimuli to be mastered, helping it become part of the learnt repertoire of the mediatee, as was the intention of the mediator. All interactions therefore, if shaped by both the mediator’s intentions, and the reciprocity of the learner, can be said to have this specific parameter of MLE.

Kahan makes the case for suggesting that reciprocity is a cultural and motivating force, and that we need to create an atmosphere conducive to reciprocity and trust in what he terms the logic of reciprocity (Kahan, 2003). This notion is discussed more fully below, in the literature review (see 6.7).

Mediation of Transcendence

The dictionary definition of transcendence means going beyond or surpassing the boundary or limits of an experience (The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, 1994). The Encyclopaedia Britannica lists a number of aspects of this topic: theological, philosophical and poetic (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, http://www.britannica.com/Ebched/topic/602404/transcendence, retrieved 30 June 2009). Transcendence in MLE describes the intention on the part of the mediator to help the learner look beyond the here and now of the concrete activity of the experience, creating an awareness or consciousness of the more important lesson to be learnt.

A philosophy lesson would be a prime example of this, where mediation of transcendence can be skilfully used to guide the community of inquiry to explore the deeper significance of a given stimulus, and the philosophical and ethical questions which may develop through discussion from that stimulus (Lipman, Sharpe and Oscanyan, 1980; Lipman, 1991). The mediation of transcendence therefore changes the primary or immediate goal of the interaction, widening its intention towards something more remote which requires visualisation or representation and perhaps of greater significance for the learner. Another example of transcendence is the story described above in chapter three, of a father and son
in a labour camp during World War II, and the father’s attempt to offer his son the gift of a few minutes of hope in the most dire of circumstances (see page 39). Mediation of transcendence in both religious and philosophical settings can therefore be a powerful tool for cultural transmission.

Transcendence is also evident in an Instrumental Enrichment lesson, where the prime objective of a task is to develop a rule or generalisation from the activity, and then by means of MLE think how such a rule might apply in different situations beyond the classroom (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980). In this manner, the rule or generalisation which is developed takes on a far deeper significance for the learner beyond the boundary of the task.

For example, an IE teacher presents a task from the first instrument of the programme, Organisation of Dots. This comprises a paper and pencil task of a number of graphic exercises presented in a series of frames. Each frame contains an amorphous clouds of dots, and the task is to join the dots to make a given set of geometrical shapes in differing orientations. The goals of the task include the enhancement of the mediatee’s visual perception and spatial orientation and, curbing impulsiveness. The rule established through group discussion following completion of the task may for example, concern the idea that, ‘When I wait a minute and look more carefully at the problem I don’t make so many mistakes’. Such a simple rule can then be ‘bridged’ across to other areas of the mediatee’s development in different aspects of his/her life; addressing for example, an internal locus of control, linking cause to effect, and so on. Developing an internal locus of control in the learner is discussed later in this section.

This notion has been described elsewhere as ‘knowing in action’ - in this case, the mediator needing a conscious awareness of what is happening in his/her interaction with the child whilst it is happening, and of thinking on one’s feet how to mediate the deeper significance of the experience for the benefit of the child (Schon, 1991; also see Friere, 1973).

‘If common sense recognizes knowing in action’, (emphasis in the original) ‘it also recognises that we sometimes think about what we are doing. Phrases like
“thinking on your feet”, “keeping your wits about you”, and “learning by doing” suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we think about doing something while doing it. Some of the most interesting examples of this process occur in the midst of a performance.’ (Schon, op-cit, p 54).

Mediation of transcendence is therefore governed by the mediator’s awareness of the deeper significance of his/her shared experience with the child.

**Mediation of Meaning**

This third essential component of MLE refers to the notion of the special significance attached by the mediator to a particular object or event in time. It therefore describes the transmission of culture, giving value and significance to cultural artifacts and practices, objects and events, ritual, tradition, and learnt activities in specific contexts. It makes explicit and transparent those aspects of cultures and practices which may not be obvious to the child or newcomer, answering ‘why?’, or ‘what for?’, and other questions which would help make clear the routines and practices of the culture which need to be learned and understood.

Bruner argues for a renewal and refreshment of what he calls the *original revolution* that was inspired by the conviction that the central concept of a human psychology is *meaning* and the construction of meanings (Bruner, 2002, p 33).

‘to understand man you must understand how his experiences and his acts are shaped by his intentional states, and’ ... ‘the form of these intentional states is realized only through participation in the symbolic systems of the culture. Indeed, the very shape of our lives - the rough and perpetually changing draft of our own autobiography that we carry in our minds - is understandable to ourselves and others only by virtue of those cultural systems of interpretation.’ (Bruner, op-cit, p 33).
Indeed, meaning and participation have been widely discussed in the literature on social psychological theory elsewhere (see Rogers, 1990; Bruner, 2002; Kahan, 2003; Wenger, 1998 for example), and are taken up more fully as the thesis develops. So, whilst acknowledging that these concepts are by no means exclusive to Feuerstein’s framework for cognitive modifiability, together, \textit{intentionality and reciprocity, transcendence} and \textit{meaning} would seem to provide a theoretical and didactical framework in which the mediator’s intention can be made meaningful and understandable for the learner; and thereby, of the twelve parameters outlined here, these first three are considered essential components for an interpersonal interaction to qualify as an MLE, and responsible for what all human beings have in common: structural modifiability (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994). Feuerstein suggests that these three are universal to all cultures and in all contexts.

A further nine qualities of mediation reflect the diversity of the human condition. These qualities are task dependent and strongly related to the culture in which one operates. Their use is therefore dependent upon the individual needs, levels of motivation, types of skills needed to be mastered and cognitive development.

\textit{Mediation of the Feeling of Competence}

Feuerstein makes a clear distinction between competence and a feeling of competence (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 2004), recognising that one can be skilled and competent, but have a feeling of total incompetence because of poor self image; conversely, one can \textit{feel} competent without having any real competence.

\textquote{\textquote{Human existence and its experience is not the source of optimal competence. A person’s life experience is marked by an inability to assume total responsibility for the major events in his life and make reasoned decisions about it. His destiny is dependent on so many determinates which are out of his control that the subjective experience of internal control is not a natural outcome, but is rather an artificial mode of experience in the world.}
\textquote{Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, op-cit, p 29}.}
Mediation of competence therefore provides the mediatee with an interpretation of the learning experience. Such constructive feedback gives the learner a feeling of mastery and self-worth, not only for success but for attempts at mastery.

There is a huge body of work to support this view, which suggests that self-efficacy and goal orientated behaviour is achieved through the development of competence (see for example, Bandura, 1997; Ames and Ames, 1989; Dweck and Licht, 1980; Marcia, 1966; Bandura and Dweck, 1988). Bandura emphasises this point in his discussion of what he terms as the ‘efficacy belief systems’ people have about themselves.

‘Beliefs influence how people feel, think, motivate themselves and act’... ‘Those who judge themselves as ineffectual construe uncertain situations as risky’... ‘it is difficult to achieve much while fighting self-doubt’... and consequently, ... ‘the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goals people set for themselves.’ (Bandura, op-cit, pp 116-117; also see Schunk, 1989).

Mediation of competence therefore plays a crucial role in how an individual learns to develop self-belief, adapt to new situations with optimism, and feel themselves able to reach out towards new challenges with confidence (Deci and Ryan, 2002). In their construction of a theory for self-determination, Deci and Ryan identify three needs: competence; relatedness; and autonomy.

‘Competence leads people to seek new challenges that are optimal for their capabilities and to persistently attempt to maintain and enhance these skills and capabilities through activity. Competence is not then an attained skill or capability but rather a sense of confidence and self-expectance in action.’ (Deci and Ryan, op-cit, p 7).

However, by separating out competence, relatedness and autonomy into the parameters of mediation of competence; mediation of sharing and mediation of a feeling of belonging; and mediation of individuation and autonomy, (see below) Feuerstein’s methods provide a coherent didactical framework in which the mediator, practitioner, or more significant
other, can reflect on and analyse the impact of these different aspects of their intervention on the learner’s developing abilities. Schon’s ideas for reflective practice would seem to support the view, which suggests that the practitioner needs to have many skills at his/her fingertips beyond the context of the task in hand.

‘A reflective practitioner needs a kind of educational technology which does more than extend her capacity to administer drill and practice. Most interesting to her is an educational technology which helps students to become aware of their own intuitive understandings, to fall into cognitive confusions and explore new directions of understanding and action.’ (Schon, 1991, p 332).

In saying this, Schon is highlighting for us not only the key role of the reflective practitioner in the learning process, but also the need for the practitioner to foster in the learner a growing awareness of his or her own developing abilities. In the didactical methods of a mediated learning approach, such reciprocity between the mediator and the mediatee is considered an essential component for meaningful learning to take place.

**Mediation of Regulation and Control of Behaviour**

Mediation of regulation and control of behaviour is used to regulate, accelerate or inhibit impulsiveness or acting-out behaviour, depending on the mediatee’s reactive style to the stimulus. Mediation of regulation and control can be done in a number of ways such as demanding from the mediatee a careful analysis of the components of the task, or eliciting meta-cognitive strategies in order to bring the learner’s attention to register the information offered (Tzuriel, 2001). Regulation and control does not therefore imply a means of the learner’s restriction, but rather an instrument for encouraging and fostering an increasingly analytical and self-reflective response.

Rotter’s theory of locus of control refers to a person’s belief about their perceived control over life events. **Externalizers** according to Rotter’s ideas are those who feel that everything that happens to them is beyond their control, and **internalizers** are those who feel they are directly responsible for what happens to them (Rotter, 1954). Rotter suggests that
most of us are a mixture of both, but an internal locus of control tends to be associated therefore with positive attitudes towards mastery and competent behaviour (Wang, 1983). The need to develop an internal locus of control in the learner has been widely discussed in the literature elsewhere as an essential component for becoming an autonomous, self-volitional individual (Rotter, op-cit; Lefcourt, 1976; Muskett, 1990; Bandura, 1997), and extensive research suggesting that a person’s perceived control over events in their lives play a central role in many motivational and cognitive accounts of behaviour (Connell, 1985).

However, the self-efficacy beliefs people have about themselves are usually related to task specific situations (Bandura, op-cit; Burden, 2004). Moreover, research has revealed that rather than social-economical conditions or academic achievement, children’s perceived academic, social, and self-regulatory efficacy influence the types of careers for which they judge themselves suitable (Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara and Pastorelli, 2001). Therefore, fostering positive and self-volitional behaviour by means of mediation of regulation and control of behaviour in work-related practices such as the setting described in this investigation, would seem to be vital for developing in the learner the need to take responsibility for his or her own self-efficacy.

The two main goals for regulation and control are therefore firstly, to develop cognitive functions, together with an analytical and reflective response to the source of stimuli; and secondly, to foster by means of MLE an internal locus of control, thus helping the learner develop self-efficacy, and a propensity towards more adaptive and reasonable behaviour (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994, p 36).

Mediation of Sharing Behaviour

Sharing is an extension of the mother/infant bonding - a feeling of ‘oneness’. It describes the pleasure of working and learning together in a shared experience with shared goals. In this aspect of MLE, the mediator might share his/her responses to a specific source of stimulus directly with the mediatee rather than wait for them to react. In this manner, the mediatee learns to take the mediator’s lead. A lack of emotional feedback in either
direction has detrimental and short-lived effects on the relationship between the mediator and the mediatee, whereas a continual reciprocity of sharing fosters both a feeling of empathy and respect for the other.

It would seem therefore that mediation of sharing is opposite to mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation. However, according to MLE, mediation of sharing within a group or community, also implies an ability to find things in common with one another. Peer mediation too has been found to have a powerful effect on human development (Kaufman, 2001). Similarly, extensive research elsewhere has shown that sharing of common goals by means of collaborative group work and cooperative learning develops tolerance and acceptance in the individual, and an ability to respect and embrace each other’s differences (Rogoff, Turkanis and Bartlett, 2001; Johnson and Johnson, 1989a; Slavin, 2006; Kagan, 1985; also see chapter three). These themes are expanded as the thesis develops.

Mediation of Individuation and Psychological Differentiation

Mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation means helping the individual become an assertive, self-reliant and differentiated person. It therefore respects and promotes individuality, and different rates of development, as well as individual needs and rights. Implicit in this therefore is mediation of challenges and goals (see below) in which to develop and foster independence and autonomy.

The concept of autonomy however often gets confused with the concept of independence (Deci and Ryan, 2002). Deci and Ryan make this distinction clear in their explanation of a self-determination theory.

‘To be autonomous means to feel volitional or willing to engage in a behaviour, whereas to be independent means to act without reference to or support from another’.... ‘According to SDT, self-regulation develops and people become autonomous through the processes of internalization’ (Deci and Ryan, op-cit, p 236).
It would seem that issues such as respect, tolerance, celebrating each other’s differences are all implied in this important aspect of mediation and cultural transmission. The development of individuation and psychological differentiation is therefore a complex process that varies across cultures, and has been widely discussed elsewhere in the literature; an attribute more prized in Western societies than others, where obedience and compliance might be seen as virtues. However, in Western societies, identity and autonomy are considered central to the development of a sense of self (Erikson, 1968). But individuals develop at different rates, and therefore individual differences also need to be respected in the quality of our mediation.

‘Although developmental by nature, should we not honor individual timetables of identity formation? For different individuals different domains of life are significant and perhaps at different points in time.’ (Archer, 1994, p 5).

There is therefore a clear connection between mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation, and mediation of the awareness of the human being as a changing entity described here below. The issues of identity and allegiance are expanded later in the thesis.

**Mediation of Goal Seeking, Goal Setting and Goal Achieving Behaviour**

Goal seeking, goal setting and goal achieving behaviour is helping the learner strive towards something which requires planning, representation, and visualization.

For example, the story of the old man who is planting a Johannes bread tree.

‘Someone passes by and asks, “why do you plant this tree? You know that you won’t be able to eat the fruits since it takes seventy years until the tree bears fruit.” He responds, “Yes, but if my parents would not have done what I do, I wouldn’t be able to eat such fruit.”’ (Feuerstein, Klein, Tannenbaum, 1994, p.45).
Such mediation suggests to the learner the search and choice of one specific goal, and helping them develop the necessary tools to reach that goal enriches the learning process. Selecting one goal from many encourages planning of how to go about reaching that goal.

Goal setting might require for example, comparing present performance to a standard, or past personal performance (Schunk, 1989). When students are given or select a specific goal, they may experience a sense of self-efficacy for attaining it, which is substantiated as they work at the task and observe their own progress. Research elsewhere reveals that when the learner participates in the selection of his/her own goals, this leads to higher goal commitment (Locke, Shaw, Saari and Latham, 1981). Moreover, once a goal is reached, a heightened sense of learning efficacy helps sustain motivation (Schunk, op-cit; also see Schunk, 1985b).

In MLE, the role of the mediator is therefore to help, encourage and steer the mediatee towards making a distinction between long-term goals, hopes and dreams, and immediate, achievable, short-term goals (Ames and Ames, 1989). This distinction is made clear in the data presented later in the thesis (see chapter eight) which show that whilst apprentices hold long-term goals and aspirations they are encouraged to pursue, such as wanting to have their own restaurant, look after their families, become rich and famous, gain a scholarship etc., short term and immediate goals are equally encouraged; for example, to come into work on time every day and learn the professional skills of a chef one step at a time, etc.

Such short term and more achievable goals represent concrete and attainable targets for intervention, as the apprentices move dynamically towards a defined long-term goal. Aspirations and dreams therefore require representation and intrinsic motivation, transcending the concrete activity of the task towards the realm of possibilities (Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989). These themes are developed later in the thesis.

**Mediation of Challenge: The search for novelty and complexity**

Mediation of challenge helps the mediatee develop a readiness to learn from as many diverse experiences as possible, thus rendering them more adaptable to new and unpredictable situations. Adaptation to change is probably the most relevant factor to the
structural modifiability of the human condition (Feuerstein, Klein, Tannenbaum, op-cit, p.45). The shared interaction of the mediator and mediatee therefore plays an important role in its development. And encouraging the learner to confront a challenging novelty rather than give up is vital to the learner’s adaptive processes and developing task intrinsic motivation.

‘The optimistic individual perseveres’ (Seligman, 1991, p 255; also see Dweck and Licht, 1980).

Therefore, feelings of competence and self-esteem are essential components for developing task intrinsic motivation in the learner, so that s/he meets new challenges with optimism (Dweck, 1999).

Similar to Seligman’s ideas for what he terms as ‘learnt optimism’, the ‘flow phenomenon’ would seem to rely on an optimum point within the dynamics of an experience at which the learner feels both challenged by the novelty or complexity of a task but importantly, also feels optimistic and confident that they have the skills to complete it (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p7; also see Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamamdeh, and Nakamura, 2005).

‘The universal precondition for flow is that a person should perceive that there is something for him or her to do, and that he or she is capable of doing it. In other words, optimal experience requires a balance between the challenges perceived in a given situation, and the skills a person brings to it.’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, p 30).

Therefore, the mediator’s role is to regulate, filter and select the stimulus for the learner, so that each new challenge presented to the learner can be met with optimism and feelings of competence. However, cultures vary widely in the challenges they expect of their participants. Therefore, learning how to adapt to challenges expected of participants in one culture may be quite different to those expected in another.

Mediation of the Awareness of the Human Being as a Changing Entity
Mediation of the awareness of the human being as a changing entity encourages the mediatee to reflect on and recognise the cognitive distance they have travelled along a personal continuum towards success; and furthermore, develop a recognition that some individuals need longer to achieve their individual goals than others. This mediation helps maintain optimism, both for the mediator and the mediatee, allowing both to persist, and helping to overcome obstacles by seeing these as transitory rather than fixed unchanging states.

In a psychoanalytical manner, Erikson was suggesting something similar in his eight stages of human development (Erikson, 1980). Marcia has developed Ericson’s ideas further in a description of identity as a set of statuses that he suggests the individual needs to explore in order to reach commitment and identity (Marcia, 1994). These statuses in adolescent development include for example, notions of increased intellectual reasoning, abstract thinking and principled moral values, which adolescents might use when testing out their personal identity in the real world.

However,

‘A key concept in identity development is the adolescent’s ability to consider alternatives to the current reality, whereas a key concept in identity status research is the importance of the adolescent’s exploratory activities in terms of such real-life issues as occupational choice and commitment to religious and political ideology’. Therefore, ‘Identity formation in adolescents can be encouraged and promoted by surrounding them with educational environments that stimulate exploration and commitment’ (Dreyer, op-cit, p 123).

It would seem therefore that the different environments to which young people are exposed affect how they choose to live their lives in the real world. Therefore, it is assumed that the relationships between people within those environments might also affect those choices. If this is the case, then mediation of perceiving the human being as a changing entity offers the learner an awareness of his/her developing sense of self, identity, and allegiance. Indeed, learning what needs to be learned is the first step on the personal journey of
discovery towards developing a sense of one’s own identity. Therefore, a mediator who points out to the mediatee the developmental changes which occurred in the learner following a specific event sensitizes them to a need to be active in pursuing the goals of development and improvement. The issue of identity is taken up again later in the thesis.

Mediation of the Search for an Optimistic Alternative

This aspect of mediated learning experience has two perspectives. Firstly, such mediation has an intellectual effect on the cognitive development of the individual and secondly, it has an affective and emotional effect on his/her motivations, attitudes and behaviour. For example, if an individual has a pessimistic attitude to new experiences or tasks, they might say to themselves: ‘I know I will fail’ or, ‘Why try if I know I will fail?’; maintaining a passive acceptance approach, a reliance on others to blame, and solve their problems (Haywood, 1992b), and we know from research elsewhere that children are as much at risk from depression as adults (Seligman, 1991; also see Conner-Smith and Compas 2002). However, in making the case for a theory of learned optimism, Seligman suggests that whilst some of us are born optimistic, or born pessimistic, most of us learn one or the other through our experience of the world. Therefore, if we accept the premise that the self-fulfilling nature of pessimism is often learned through our experience, then we must also accept that we can learn to become optimistic in the same way (Seligman, op-cit).

‘When the skills of optimism are learned early, they become fundamental. Like habits of cleanliness and kindness. They are so rewarding in themselves that practice is automatic rather than a burden’...but... ‘a child is at high risk for depression and lowered achievement in a school if he does not acquire these skills. If he does acquire them, he may become all but immune from the protracted feelings of hopelessness and helplessness that otherwise could afflict him’ (Seligman, op-cit, p 253).

Mediation of the search for an optimistic alternative therefore develops a need in the individual to alter their direction; to begin the journey of cognitive growth, learning how to foster the ability to confront difficulties with optimism rather than giving up;
encouraging an intellectual approach to anticipate a positive rather than a negative outcome, and perceive problems as challenges to be overcome rather than insurmountable hurdles which forbid success. Fostering such feelings of optimism by means of MLE refers directly back to the central premise of this approach which posits that the mediator must have a secure belief system in the learning potential of their students, and the notion that all individuals are potentially capable of structural cognitive modifiability (see above). Indeed, there is a huge body of literature elsewhere which supports this perspective (see Ames and Ames, 1989; Dweck, 1996; Claxton, 2008 for example).

**Mediation of the Feeling of Belonging**

As discussed in the previous chapters, there has been a reduction in community living and the nuclear family, and in many cultures secure boundaries or identities no longer seem to exist. Finding new ways to create the opportunity for generating in the learner a feeling of belonging and identity with their learning environment has been recognised elsewhere therefore to be of prime importance to the education of the young. A feeling of belonging varies widely in different cultures and traditions. For those individuals who lack experience of extended families it offers inclusion in a heterogeneous community, promoting responsibility to and respect for others, being part of something, and making a contribution.

Research elsewhere has shown that developing a feeling of belonging and inclusion in the community appear to have strong effects on both emotional patterns and cognitive processes (Avramidis, Bayliss and Burden, 2002). The need to belong, and the need to sustain strong, stable, interpersonal relationships is therefore a powerful, fundamental, and extremely pervasive motivation (Baumeister and Leary, 1995). Moreover, Deci and Ryan’s ideas for a theory of self-determination support this view, identifying three essential components for self-determination: competence, autonomy and relatedness, where,

‘... Relatedness refers to feeling connected to others, to caring for and being cared for by those others, to have a sense of belongingness both with other individuals and with one’s community’. (Deci and Ryan, 2002, p 7).
Indeed, research shows that people form social attachments readily under most conditions and resist the dissolution of existing bonds, and a lack of a feeling of belonging has been linked to ill effects on health, adjustment and general well-being (Baumeister and Leary, op-cit). Moreover, in their research on the psychological effects of loneliness, Heirich and Gullone emphasise that the human need for satisfying human relationships is paramount (Heirich and Gullone, 2006). Therefore, fostering a sense of belonging and relatedness in the learner or newcomer to the social group, by means of mediation of a feeling of belonging, would also seem to be paramount.

It would seem therefore that in this last parameter in the framework for MLE, we find perhaps the most essential aspect of humanity to be considered in the pursuit of structural cognitive modifiability in the individual, that of personal identity with a group, or community. For if we consider ourselves to be social beings, we have to begin our relationships with one another by developing in the learner a feeling or sense of belonging and identity with the social group in which that relationship is to develop. In this manner, and together, the mediator and the mediatee are starting on the exciting journey of discovery in the learning potential of the individual.

Mediated learning experience thus sensitises or provides the mediator with a conceptual framework for developing an awareness or consciousness of the potential power of his/her interaction and its subsequent impact on human development. Its methods allows the mediator, the more significant other, to both reflect constructively on the quality of his/her intervention to ascertain whether the mediation used has had the desired effect, and moreover, remain optimistic about the possibilities of the mediatee’s potential development. Moreover, the didactical methods of MLE also provides the mediatee, the learner, with opportunities to reflect constructively on the changes which have occurred, or need to occur, in his/her own development over time. MLE is therefore both a powerful educational philosophy and a practical set of tools for intervention, and the key component in a holistic system of interrelated theories designed to enhance, accelerate and develop cognitive development.
4.9. Summary of chapter

This chapter began with a description of the historical development of Feuerstein’s work. This was followed by a discussion of the major theories within Feuerstein’s complex system for structural cognitive modifiability and an explanation of how relevant terms and concepts are used throughout the thesis. This was followed by an explanation of the key didactical aspect of this approach, namely the twelve parameters of mediated learning experience. In describing these parameters, I have added some supporting theoretical approaches to show that whilst the major themes within these methods are by no means exclusive to the theories of MLE and structural cognitive modifiability, Feuerstein would seem to start from a more didactical perspective than others in this genre. Many of these themes, particularly, meaning, identity and community are taken up more fully in the literature review, and become significant tenets of the thesis.

In the ongoing narrative of this inquiry, and to put what happened into chronological order, the next chapter describes the pilot study for the thesis and what became a personal journey of discovery. It tells the story of the organisation which provides the setting for the thesis; the stories of its participants; and the story of conducting the study. The setting is an established and successful vocational training project, where young people from mostly underprivileged backgrounds are trained to become chefs. During their training, these apprentice chefs are exposed to a wide range of learning experiences - intellectual, in the activities of the professional kitchen; social, in the culture of the community; and motivational, in the opportunities that this experience and their growing expertise provides. The study revealed that these young people felt their lives changed as a consequence of these experiences, and the people they met. This led me to explore the central questions for this thesis, which asks whether the culture of a successful learning community such as this can be analysed according to the theory of Mediated Learning Experience, and what could be its significance for education.
Chapter Five - The Pilot Study

5.1. Introduction

The thesis began with a discussion about the current state of education in the UK that leaves many school-leavers with no qualifications, and ill-equipped to cope with the challenges and complexities of life in the twenty-first century, and therefore at risk of slipping through the cracks of society towards dependancy.

The ongoing debate this problem has generated has led education and society to consider new and innovative ways to develop the whole child, considering as it does so the development of identity, a feeling of belonging, self-efficacy and optimism. The work of the Pyramid Trust (Moore, 2003; see chapter one of the thesis), and the SEAL initiative (Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning) would seem to provide two such examples (http://nationalstrategies.dcsf.gov.uk/66368?uc=force_u, accessed on 20/06/09). Moreover, there is a growing shift in current educational literature and pedagogy towards looking at how to develop personal skills beyond the traditional curricular subjects (Claxton, 2006); suggesting that the way forward now is a broader recognition of the central role that culture plays in the development of the young (Kozulin, 2003). The thesis takes up the themes of this debate and is therefore concerned with the culture of the learning environment itself and, the quality of the interpersonal relationships within it. The pilot study therefore began with an interest into exploring innovative and new ways to teach our children to be better equipped to cope with an ever-changing society.

The second chapter goes on to discuss the nature of interpretive research, by making the case for suggesting that we can only really understand other peoples’ lives by listening to their stories and trying to share some accessible part of their lives (Richardson, 2003; Elliott, 2005; Czarniawaka, 2004). Therefore, the narratives of both the development of the pilot study and the thesis which came out of it are told chronologically, and as they were experienced.
Taking up the themes introduced earlier, I then go on to place the thesis into theoretical context, by suggesting that the current movement in education towards teaching children to learn how to learn seems to be the way forward (Burden & Nichols, 2000). Chapter three therefore begins with a discussion about the role of humanistic psychology in education, and the holistic goals of classroom climate research which suggests that helping children develop social competence has a cognitive dimension (Slavin, 2006; Hanko, 1999). The second part of the chapter describes the current thinking skills movement in the UK, and Feuerstein’s part in its early development. Those of us in this genre have welcomed the attempt made to improve thinking skills in schools but suggest that in focusing on classroom performance, the thinking skills movement in the UK has largely ignored the major strength of Feuerstein’s ideas, concerned with what he refers to as, the modifiability of the human condition, and mediated learning experience to affect potential intellectual, social and emotional development (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979). Moreover, in this approach, the nonintellective factors of learning such as intrinsic motivation, need for mastery, locus of control, anxiety, frustration, tolerance, self-confidence, and accessibility to MLE are considered to be of equal importance to cognitive functioning (Tzuriel, Samuels and Feuerstein, 1988; Haywood, 1992b). It is therefore the notion of learning potential which is of interest here.

In chapter four I described the historical development of Feuerstein’s major theories and his complex system for cognitive, social and affective change in human development, and suggest that Feuerstein’s methods are just as relevant to education in our own generation as when they were developed more than sixty years ago.

5.2. Background to the pilot study

For many years, and at the time this study began in 2003, I was training both teachers and children in Feuerstein’s methods for cognitive education and mediated learning. As discussed earlier in the thesis, this approach is based on Feuerstein’s methods which suggest that the human being is modifiable, and that with specifically targeted intervention, or what Feuerstein refers to as mediated learning experience, we all are capable of change throughout our lifetime (Feuerstein and Rand, op-cit). Within the field of cognitive
education, I have always been particularly interested in what is referred to in the literature as gifted under-achievers (Claxton and Meadows, 2008; Renzulli, 2000; Tannenbaum, 1994; Gonzalez and Hayes, 1988), those high-functioning individuals who may, for a variety of reasons, find it difficult to perform and so fulfill their potential. I consider myself fortunate that as a specialist teacher, my professional interests have allowed me to move easily between educational settings as diverse as Early Years, primary and secondary schools to vocational training and adult education. When thoughts for the pilot study began, I was involved in projects which regularly took me to both a primary school in a low socio-economic area in the Southwest of England and, an independent and selective secondary school for intellectually gifted girls in North London. The contrast of working in these two cultures was extraordinary, given that the children in both these environments were exposed, through my intervention, to a programme of a similar nature, that of mediated learning. Moreover, both populations seemed to benefit from that intervention. This led me to think about the learning environment and the quality of the interaction within that environment necessary to effect change in the human condition.

Thoughts for a more in-depth research study therefore began with curiosity into the role of mediation between people within their environment. A review of the literature giving both the historical perspective of the theory of mediated learning experience and more recent studies reveal that research looking at mediated learning has in the past mainly been concerned with the cognitive changes brought about by imposing specifically targeted mediation (Lidz, 2005; Kaufman, 2001; Lidz and Elliot, 2000). Like the two learning environments I was working in at the time, these settings had consciously chosen to impose a method of thinking skills onto its population to accelerate learning. As discussed earlier, mediated learning provides us with a valuable framework of concepts for understanding the impact of our mediation on human development. But surely, I began to wonder, there must have always been good teachers and parents? Where can we find examples of successful learning environments which can demonstrate effective mediated learning in the relationships between its participants and furthermore, what could we as educators learn from their example?
With all these thoughts in mind, and in my search to find one such example, I found an unusual educational project in Scotland which had recently received a £200,000 award from NESTA, (the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) to expand its work. A primary school in the West Highlands is the environment for an innovative project called Room 13 (see www.room13scotland.com). Room 13 is an art studio attached to the village primary school which aims to allow its young members to explore, debate, create, and develop their skills and abilities as artists and as human beings.

But far more than this, Room 13 is an entrepreneurial project and a limited company, which generates income through sales of photographs and artwork. Moreover, it has an employee, an artist in residence, who is the only adult directly involved in the project. My first visit to the school in the early summer of 2003 was welcomed by the Directors of the project, a team of three year five students. This fascinating experience persuaded me that this project appeared to be an educational setting which was prepared to go out on a limb, to seek out new and innovative ways to teach children to learn how to learn. The major goal of the Room 13 project is to encourage the development of young artists, but also to allow children to use the culture and medium of art and self expression as a vehicle for the enhancement of higher cognitive functioning. Indeed, with NESTA’s help, Room 13 now has studios around the world (see www.room13scotland.com). Recent studies on Room 13 have shown how its methods have impacted on the development of the many children who have taken part (Adams, 2005; Roberts, 2008). What was it, I wondered, that made this learning environment so meaningful for the children, and why did they want to be there?

My initial visit to see Room 13 prompted me to consider broadening my ideas for research to study various learning environments which have, through their innovation and hard work, helped children to develop skills they had not been able to do in conventional school classroom settings.

I now had three very different settings to think about: a selective independent secondary day school in north London for intellectually gifted girls; a well run primary school serving a
low social-economical community in the South West of England; and Room 13. Copious notes accumulated about my activities in all three settings.

Reading through these early notes again for the purposes of this chapter, my research interest at the time seemed to centre on exploring the common themes across these three diverse learning environments.

Taking the example of Room 13 further, I began to think about finding another creative environment which is set up to provide the opportunity to develop a particular ability, and which can then use that ability as a vehicle to reach a higher level of functioning (Renzulli, 2000). It was thought at the time that a second innovative learning environment would balance my growing ideas for researching across all these environments; so that I would then have two conventional settings, and two more innovative settings. I began to explore the possibility of finding another unusual and creative environment, perhaps in the field of music or dance, where another group of young people were given the opportunity to develop particular talents and competences.

At some point in this thought process, and quite by chance, I came across a television programme about an unusual vocational training devoted to training a group of young people to become chefs serving the fine food industry. I had not considered catering or vocational training as an option for the fourth setting but my early impressions were that this project seemed to offer the kind of creative and innovative learning environment I was seeking. At the time of filming the programme, Jamie Oliver already had a successful career as a television chef and an international reputation. Jamie had a dream to put something back into society by helping young people who might not have had as much luck and opportunity as he felt he had. A self-acknowledged dyslexic, he claims to have not achieved very much at school. However, by the age of twenty-eight he already had a string of successful television programmes behind him and the respect of his peers in the competitive harsh world of a top-class chef. The television programme which attracted my attention had followed Jamie’s trials and tribulations as he launched his apprenticeship for young chefs in a dedicated restaurant in the city of London (see Jamie’s Kitchen, 2002).
The short clip I saw showed a dialogue between a young trainee chef and an experienced older chef who was teaching his student the names of herbs. As a trained mediator I was fascinated by their exchange, as it was shown on the programme, which seemed to me to illustrate the powerful impact of the relationship between a master and his apprentice. Further knowledge gleaned from the website of the organisation responsible for training (www.Fifteen.net) convinced me that this would be a fascinating project to investigate and possibly answer some of the questions which had begun to form in my mind.

I began to explore the question that, rather than consciously imposing a set of didactical concepts and tools such as mediated learning experience in an educational setting, supposing an inquiry was conducted to take the opposite perspective and analyse the qualitative elements of an apparently positive and successful learning environment such as Fifteen London which was set up with the prime goal of wanting to change young peoples’ lives? Did these young people feel themselves changed as a result of this experience and what was it about the experience that effected these changes?

I contacted a friend who is a researcher for television, who knew the name of Jamie’s public relations agent, who gave me the name of the Trainee Manager of the training programme. By these means, in three calls, I had my point of entry. I asked the trainee manager, if the organisation would allow me to conduct a study on one complete cycle of training. It was pure luck that in plans for the third cycle of training due to commence in March 2004, the organisation had decided that the television cameras had become too intrusive for the young people undergoing training and they would no longer be filming the training. They were therefore supportive of an alternative way to document the training process. I now had my fourth setting, a vocational environment training a group of young people to become chefs serving the fine food industry.

Over the forthcoming months, as I became more intimate with everyone at Fifteen London, I found my growing interest in its learning environment overshadowed that for the school settings described above. Moreover, when I started my research in earnest, I soon learnt that using four settings made my research far too complicated, and using the four sites became impractical for data collection, simply because of their geographical distance from
one another. I consequently decided to drop the other sites in favour of Fifteen London. The only setting I was really sorry to abandon was Room 13, since by then I had begun to really enjoy my investigations into its expanding activities, despite its distance from my home in London. But I had also learnt that Room 13 needed and deserved to be fully investigated in its own right. I reluctantly told my new young friends in Scotland my decision, and promised to come back again in a few years time and give their project the attention it deserved.

By this time my focus for research had also changed and refined, as I became more and more interested in exploring the deeper complexities of learning itself within the culture of the learning environment. I came to realise that I could explore these notions far more efficiently within one setting rather than four. And so it was that the environment of Fifteen London became the sole setting for what was to become the pilot study for the thesis.

5.3. The focus for research in the pilot study

A case study was subsequently devised to explore the innovative vocational training of Fifteen London, its culture and its impact on the lives of the young people it serves. The study describes the learning experiences of a group of young people between the ages of sixteen and twenty-four and their journey through an unusual training programme involving an accelerated chef’s training, provided by a registered charity in a dedicated professional restaurant. In the course of an eighteen month programme, these young people are exposed to a wide range of experiences, cultures and training within a carefully structured framework of pastoral support and professional excellence.

The focus for research in the pilot study is therefore an attempt to understand and define the specific qualities and key elements of this learning situation which may have contributed to the transformation of these young peoples’ lives. Three levels of this situation are discussed: firstly, the interpersonal mediation between participants, secondly, the key elements within the learning environment and thirdly, the changed self-concepts of the trainees as a result of their experience. The following narrative tells the stories of four
trainees; my own personal reflections as researcher and describes the culture in which they take place.

5.4. The setting

Fifteen London is a registered charity (Registered Charity no.1094536), and a major artery of an international organisation comprising a number of food related companies with a shared history; and it is the context of this larger community of communities that provides the setting for the pilot study and the thesis which developed.

In order to understand the community of Fifteen London, one needs to consider it in its wider context and understand the kind of world its participants inhabit. For this is a world of good food, fine dining, cookery books and celebrity, as well as that of the harsher realities of social responsibility and changing young peoples’ lives. Thus the fruits of talent and celebrity and the goals of social enterprise and education coexist to serve one another in a privileged and dynamic environment, brought into existence through its participants’ persistence, energy, passion, hard work and co-operation.

Conducting the major part of their business in the city of London, this growing organisation occupies ever-increasing office space yards away from the Fifteen restaurant which represents just one of the public faces of the organisation and a major focus for this study. Outside, on a quiet back street, participants from this ever-growing organisation are seen hurrying to and from the restaurant to the office, or office to office, greeting each other as they go about their business, mobile phones to ears. Chefs and trainee chefs in their kitchen whites are seen going on shift to the kitchen or towards the office, stopping for a word or two with friends and colleagues, to gossip or have a quick cigarette. This world was to become the setting for this ethnographic inquiry - the pilot study which is the subject of this chapter, and the in-depth study which grew out of it.
5.5. The study

Fifteen London is a registered charity which offers training to fifteen to twenty young people a year to become chefs in a very privileged learning environment. The focus for the pilot study was initially an attempt to understand the specific qualities within the learning environment which could have contributed to the life-changes of the trainees as they were described to me over the course of their experience.

A group of young people from a wide variety of backgrounds are selected each year to learn in the kitchen of one of the best restaurants in London. The only thing that most of them have in common is a passion for food. Over the forthcoming months of training they would learn to work together and support one other, with the guidance of a team of professionals whose only motive is to help them succeed. Of course, some of this I learnt much later, after I had been granted permission by the board of trustees to make this environment the subject for this investigation.

My initial questions for research were primarily concerned with the interaction between people. However, in revisiting the pilot study for the purposes of this current inquiry, it is clear that over the course of the pilot study, this perspective shifted. This illustrates that when we learn about a culture, not only does it allow us to be able to recognise changes in others, but we too undergo changes. Therefore the researcher must be sensitive to this and learn to recognise and acknowledge these changes in herself (Wellington, 2000).

5.6. Methods

Research literature on MLE in the past has been mainly concerned with the researcher documenting and scoring incidents of mediated learning by observation of group and/or individual practice (Feuerstein and Rand, 1979; 1997; Adey, and Shayer 1994; Klein, 2000; Tzuriel, 2001; Haywood, 1992 b; Jensen, 2000; Skuy, Young, Ajam, Fridjhon & Lomofsky 2001; Sternberg, 2000; Kozulin and Rand, 2000; Greenberg, 2000; Lidz and Elliott, 2000; Lidz, 2005; Kaufman, 2001; and others).
However, I rejected established methods of recording incidents of MLE since these seemed to me to be too individualistic to reflect the social, dynamic, and messy business of change that I witnessed and struggled to capture in my early observations of the community of Fifteen London. For we do not see learning, we see the reification of learning (Wenger, 1998; Claxton and Carr, 2004; Carr & Kemmis, 1986), and my interest for research lay in whether the mediation observed within the social landscape of this setting had the desired effect on the self-efficacy and development of the trainees, and moreover, what were these young peoples’ feelings of self worth as a result of their experiences? Moreover, it seems that there is still a challenge for research to understand both qualitative changes in human development and moreover, the conditions in which they might flourish (Burden, 1990).

The pilot study, begun late in 2003 and completed in 2005, therefore uses a narrative style throughout to describe what I learned about the organisation as it was experienced, and as it was at the time. It follows a complete cycle of training of one group of young apprentices, and tells the stories of four trainees. It uses their personal reflections on the significance of their own experiences (Atkinson, 1998), and describes their growing awareness of the changes they had made in their lives, their changed self-perceptions in the light of these experiences and, their hopes and dreams for the future.

Three methodological points highlighted by Bruner, have been kept in mind throughout this long investigation, and were therefore first used to provide a framework for the pilot study. Firstly, it is impossible to have an understanding of an individual separate from his culture; secondly, it is an individual’s participation within that culture which allows meaning to be shared (also see Crotty, 1998); and thirdly, is what Bruner refers to as,

‘Cultural or folk-psychology’...which describes... ‘the systems by which people organise their experiences in transaction with the social world.’ (Bruner, 2002, p35).

Using these three points as a framework for the story I wanted to tell, the pilot study tells the story of the organisation responsible for the training; the individual stories of four trainees; and reflections of my own experiences as researcher in this inquiry. The context
for the study was therefore the process of training and the shared experiences of myself and the participants within this inquiry, and within the dynamic and ever-changing nature of the organisation itself.

An agreement was drawn up with the organisation for the duration of this first study according to the ethical guidelines laid down by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter (SELL, current). In addition to this, each interviewee was given an individual agreement which explained their right to withdraw from the study at any time. All field notes, journal entries and extracts from interviews used in the pilot study were included with the specific permission of the individuals concerned.

The study uses the recorded and transcribed stories told by four trainees (Holloway and Jefferson, 2000; Hammersley, 1992; Radnor, 1994; Wolcott, 1990). Named here Tim, Nick, Maddie, and John, they are analysed using Ginsberg’s life-story approach, which cleans up the text and analyses it systematically to get to the underlying content (Ginsberg in Riessman, 1993). These stories are supported by excerpts of field notes for triangulation and emphasis. In accordance with our agreement, I was allowed full access to observe every aspect of training: the selection process; formal tuition at vocational college; welfare support; apprenticeship in the kitchen; and sourcing trips.

These five aspects of training are described here below to illustrate the range of learning experiences to which the trainees are exposed. These diverse aspects of the training are taken up more fully in the thesis which grew from this pilot study.

5.7. The selection process

In February 2004, twenty young people aged between sixteen and twenty-four were selected from approximately nine hundred applications. The high number of applications that particular year was thought to reflect the success of the television programme; in the same way it had attracted me to the work of Fifteen Foundation. These applications came from a number of sources - self referred via the website, probation and youth offenders services, prison services and welfare organisations. Applicants from under-privileged backgrounds
were given priority for interview. A paper selection reduced the number to 120 for first interview; 60 were then selected for a tasting interview; thirty were selected to attend a three-day challenge weekend in Wales for the final selection of twenty. The remaining ten were offered an interview in a conventional training at vocational college. Most of the young people selected had experienced trouble getting started in other programmes or endeavours elsewhere. However, not all those selected for training had an unsuccessful experience at school and that particular year one or two young people were included whom it was felt might be good role models for the group.

Training provides young people with a 'second chance' for success and the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification. This would seem to correspond to Bathmaker’s findings that some students see the move to Further Education as an opportunity to make a fresh start after unsuccessful school experiences (Bathmaker, 2001; Postlethwaite and Maull, 2003). The main criterion in the rigorous selection process of trainees is always whether candidates can demonstrate a passion for food. A sense of humour is also considered helpful. Judges, members of the organisation, told me they use ‘gut instinct’ to select those they feel would benefit most from this opportunity. ‘Would they make it without us?’ was one judge’s guideline in the final selection process.

Tim was a graduate of the first cycle of training and at the time of interview was employed in the kitchen as a professional chef.

He was eighteen when he came into the first group of trainees three years earlier, via ‘StepUP’, a Government initiative at the time, which was designed to encourage young people into vocational training. He explains here that the initial incentive for training was not to become a chef but to get a trade.

‘When they’ [the people at StepUP] ‘asked me what I wanted to do, I said: “As long as I am working with people I will be happy, really.”’ So, when they forwarded me the application form for training here, I applied, and was really chuffed when I got on! I thought to myself: this is an opportunity to go to college, to get a trade. I never thought of being a professional chef, even
though I used to enjoy knocking up a quick ‘munch’ for my friends,’ [Jamie slang’ for “snack’] ‘but when I started cooking, I just fell in love with it really. I thought, “wow! I can do this!”’

Tim recognised that he had got to a point in his young life when he knew he needed to get a trade of some kind, and that he felt himself fortunate that he fell in love with cooking.

5.8. College

Formal training took place four days a week in a large modern vocational college in West London. This accelerated training, exclusive to trainees from the organization, took sixteen weeks instead of the conventional year. The fact that training was accelerated was very attractive to Tim.

‘It was fast-tracked which was very appealing to me. This was partly the attraction, to get to a trade quickly. Sometimes, it’s a bit scary when you’re a young person and you know you need to learn, you know? You need to go through college and that’s always going to be the hardest part - the nitty gritty of it, really. And people actually feel frightened of that part because they’re thinking of the end result when they would start to make money. It’s that bit in the middle - a lot of people get thrown off by that. So when they told us we would be passed in sixteen weeks instead of a year I was shocked! It’s not a long time at all!’ I thought, ‘Really? Is that all it takes?’ I could have done it six times over! And we definitely learnt a lot in those first sixteen weeks at college: how to work safely in the kitchen...the basics of what you need to know.’

Even though Tim explains here that the accelerated training at college made the formal part of training easy for him compared to what he would have had to complete on a conventional route to catering, not all trainees shared Tim’s enthusiasm. Once the euphoria of gaining a place for training at Fifteen London wears off, trainees are expected to get on with the routine and demands of working towards their National Vocational Qualification,
learning the basic requirements for the professional kitchen in a formal educational environment; establishing the need for conformity, discipline, and shared responsibility; and learning the importance of good time-keeping. All these considerations are monitored continually throughout training.

John, another trainee from the third cycle of training, told me that he saw college only as a means to an end. His anticipation of work provided the necessary motivation and impetus to get him through college to become qualified to take up his apprenticeship in the kitchen.

‘College is good for what it is - it’s a starting point. But you can’t really learn what it’s like in the trade: the pressure of the job, the service and all that. It’s OK for the basic things, learning to use a knife and everything, but it was the anticipation of work that got me through it. I kept thinking when I was there, “I want to get out of here and work! I don’t want to be here!” No, that’s not fair, I wanted to be there, but I would rather have been in the restaurant than go to college. It was just something we had to do.’

5.9. The kitchen

Tim explains to me about the working environment of the professional kitchen.

‘Most kitchens are very tough, very tough. It’s like being in the army, really. You have that level of discipline. You have to be very strict about things like Health and Safety...you cannot allow someone to get slack about important issues like that. For example, if you are Head Chef and you have people who don’t respect you, the next stage is that they may miss a shift and get a bit lazy and turn everything sour. It’s very important to emphasize that strictness to new trainees.’

What Tim is considering here is the discipline in the culture of the kitchen, and the hierarchy of apprenticeship in the 'Brigade'; that is, the order of seniority of staff from Head Chef, to Sous chefs, to chef de parti and trainees. In this manner, skills are transferred from
one generation to the next by means of work-related practices. The learning offered within the workplace of the kitchen in the structure of the brigade of Fifteen London’s kitchen was to become a key setting in the more in-depth study which developed from this initial investigation and is subsequently discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

Tim went on to tell me that he thinks it is the sense of family and the feeling of belonging in the kitchen which brings people closer together. This notion of Tim’s corresponds to mediation of sharing and mediation of a feeling of belonging and inclusion in the activity of the enterprise.

‘Everyone in the kitchen is like a family because you spend so much time together, more than you do with your own family. It’s like the Big Brother House, really... you have to get along. And because of that you realize that some people have weaknesses in certain areas and you try and back them up. It’s almost like being in a family business. Jamie’...[Oliver]... ‘has acted like a father figure to me. In fact, so have all the people here. It’s as if they are saying to me: “make me proud”. That’s the approach used by everyone here. And now I am trying to encourage new trainees, to make them understand how important it is to graduate and do well.’

The peer mediation demonstrated in Tim’s comments towards his less experienced colleagues coming up behind him would seem to correspond to the notion of mediation of meaning, and intentionality and reciprocity. That is, in passing on what he had learnt through his own experience to these less experienced trainees, he is making sure they understand the deeper significance of training and what it can lead to in the profession.

Tim’s comments would also suggest that the specific mediation he received from the chefs in the kitchen of Fifteen London is special, and not necessarily typical of all professional kitchens across the industry. John’s reflections make Tim’s observation clear when he compares the nurturing but also demanding culture of the Fifteen London kitchen to his experience of other places he had worked.
‘When I was on work experience in another restaurant, the Head Chef told me I could work whenever I wanted. I didn’t like that, I would sooner he had told me which shifts he needed me. One night the chef said that I had done really well and that I could go home. But I didn’t want to go home, I wanted to do more! Whereas here, it’s all about welcoming and embracing everyone, and we know that if we are on a shift we are expected to work really hard, to the end of the shift. It’s all hard, but it’s a nice kind of hard. You have to be one of the team in the kitchen, because without the others, the kitchen wouldn’t work.’

John’s comments would seem to indicate that he was disappointed that he was not stretched to his full potential on work experience. He was used to more structure and discipline at Fifteen London. He expected and wanted to work hard, to the best of his developing abilities, and be included in the team or brigade, and for there to be an expectation by the Head Chef that he would do so for the complete shift. These and other comments in the stories of trainees, past and present, suggest that the more was expected of them, the more they felt part of the working team - a feeling of belonging; and the greater the expectation, the greater their need to meet these challenges and become even better at the skills demanded of them in the workplace.

The peer mediation and the hierarchical support of the kitchen described above in the comments of the trainees would appear to correspond to social cultural theory where a more skilled individual mediates to a less skilled individual. Vygotsky’s notion of the Zone of Proximal Development, describes learning supported by a more competent other, encouraging the learner to go beyond what is known (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978). What both trainees are describing here in the language, expectation and demands of their masters in the workplace is: mediation of sharing, competence, belonging, challenge, novelty and complexity, all specific aspects of mediation according to Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994).

After spending time watching the activity in the kitchen, I began to think too about the sensorial pleasures of the kitchen environment: the perpetual stimulation of tasting,
smelling, touching, chopping, mixing; seeing beautiful vegetables I had never seen before and the combinations of colours on the plate.

Nick recognizes this opportunity for chefs to express their creativity and individuality.

‘When you make a dish, even if you follow a recipe, you still know who’s made it. It’s how it’s plated up. So when you make a dish, you have ownership.’

This creative aspect of cooking and preparation of a dish is explained by Tim.

‘It’s definitely artistic, you can reflect your personality on the plate. You put all your artistic effort into it and if someone really enjoys it and says, “Ooh! That’s the best risotto I’ve ever had!”, you feel good, you know? That’s the buzz, that’s what all the hard work is for.’

This notion of ‘feeling good’ and the motivation it generates is illustrated in Nick’s following comments. One day, early in his career in the kitchen, he was so tired that the Head Chef sent him home. But he was determined to make up the time by working an extra shift. He explains why.

‘The way I look at it, I am only here for one year and I have to learn as much as possible in that time. I love learning new things. I have dedicated myself to this course. I don’t go out with my mates anymore. This course is great. I am learning new stuff every day and I really want to do well, that’s what’s driving me. Now I am in the kitchen I have to remember how privileged I am to be here and do my best all the time.’

5.10. Welfare support

Beyond the culture and support of the ‘brigade’, the hierarchy of the professional kitchen, the welfare team in the Fifteen Foundation office offers practical and emotional support demonstrating the organisation’s recognition of their responsibility to every aspect of these
young peoples’ lives. Human frailties are addressed by an experienced youth worker and where necessary, appropriate counselling is sought. The data suggested that as trainees develop the skills and practices of the professional chef, a learned optimism (Seligman, 1991) is fostered through the personal relationships which develop between all key participants in the organisation and the strong peer group of the trainees themselves.

All trainees are given support for personal issues and advice on self-management. In this way, they can get on with the central goal of training, becoming professional chefs without the stress and distractions that personal issues can cause.

Despite previous failed attempts to get into catering college, it was the pastoral support at Fifteen London which encouraged Nick to apply for training.

‘I had a million jobs before this and felt that I was never going to get anywhere. I kept applying for things and getting turned down. I was really fed up. Then I was on the tube and I saw in the ‘Metro’ [a free newspaper distributed daily on the London Underground] ‘that Jamie’ ...[Oliver] ... ‘and Mark had been to Court to support one of last year’s trainees. I couldn’t get over it that they would actually take the trouble to go to court to stand up for someone! Everyone deserves a second chance and I thought to myself, ‘These guys are good people!’

Again, Nick’s response to the value placed by two key participants towards a trainee suggests that Nick was encouraged to think that if they were prepared to support another person, maybe they would also value and support him. The participants’ actions in this story indicate mediation of individuation - a recognition that even within the social structure of a community, each one of us is valued for his or her contribution, and each one of us has our individual needs and experiences. This chance reading of this incident engendered in Nick a new optimism about the future and the beginning of his career as a chef.
5.11 Sourcing trips

‘Sourcing trips’ regularly took trainees to specialist suppliers who demonstrated their expertise and traditional practices. These diverse learning opportunities were felt by the organisation to engender in the trainee chefs respect both for the produce, and the expertise of the specialists who grew them. I listened to detailed accounts of these visits told by enthusiastic trainees as they explained the care and attention that went into rearing the produce they saw. These diverse and enriching trips included a sheep farm in Wales, a rare breed pig farm in the Southeast of England, an abattoir and, a herb grower who taught them the medicinal and culinary properties of herbs which allowed the trainees to handle the produce at each stage of its production.

After a few months of training, I travelled with trainees to see the wine and olive oil producers in Tuscany who supplied the kitchen of Fifteen London. The impact of this annual trip to Italy was always referred to by the community as a seminal part of the trainees’ programme, providing an opportunity for Jamie and other key participants to spend time with the trainees. This trip was indeed to be the highlight of the whole learning experience for many of the trainees, as it was for me, and helped frame the thesis which grew out of this initial study. This significant aspect of training is discussed in detail later in the thesis.

5.12. Autobiographical reflections

What has been described above is the learning environment in which a group of young people have learned to become professional chefs. But what is it in this environment that has motivated these young people to succeed, and what effect has the experience had on their self-concepts? The internal elements of self-concept affecting motivation have been described as:

- attitude - ‘the beliefs we hold about something or someone, the strengths of our feelings towards or against that object or person and our predisposition to act in a certain way’
Deci and Ryan suggest that our understanding of the development of intrinsic motivation and self-determination requires a consideration of three contributing factors: competence, autonomy and relatedness (Deci & Ryan, 2004). In the case of the culture of the learning environment described here, competence is developed in the hierarchy of the workplace; autonomy, in the growing expertise of the apprentice chef; and relatedness in the social context of learning. However, it seems to me that such a construction would in turn rely on two further considerations - the intimate relationships between people within their environment, and the internal elements of self-concepts to affect motivation (Ames & Ames, 1989; Burden, op-cit). The development of self-determination and intrinsic motivation is discussed in greater detail later in the thesis.

The reflective narratives which follow are included here to illustrate how four trainees felt themselves changed as a result of their experience as apprentice chefs at Fifteen London (McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich, 2001), to help everyone - researcher, storyteller and reader - engage in and understand the personal experiences which I have attempted to convey (Tierney, 2003).

Tim’s story

‘When I was about thirteen or fourteen I started hanging about with a crowd of kids from the housing estate. A lot of them were troublesome. I got into trouble for stealing, but nothing major. I found it hard to concentrate at school but the teachers always told my mother I was bright. But I never wanted to look a “nerd” in front of my friends,’...[studious]... ‘so I would make jokes to show off, and get into trouble. I didn’t see it then, but I used to think the horrible teachers were the ones who made you do everything and the good guys were the ones who let you do what you want. Of course now I know it’s the other way round.
When I got here, to be honest, I think Jamie could always see my potential, so he was always a bit harsh - not in a hard way, but very demanding, always giving me that little bit more, so I got more confident in myself. I used to hate it if I had a long list of things to do but now I love it. I hate it when there is nothing to do. But Jamie didn’t do it just for me, he was the same with everyone. He tries to push everyone. And I needed that ‘push’ then, I know that now. ‘But even towards the end of training, some chefs were still saying to me, “Com ’n, Tim! you’re working at two miles an hour here!”’ And I had to get through it, I had to graduate. To my mind, they had done all this for me, you know? I had to get on with it, so I really just ... went for it!’

Here, Tim is describing a clear example of mediation of challenge, where the mediator, in this case Tim’s senior chefs and tutors, encourage the mediatee, in this case Tim, to always strive in his/her endeavours to do a little better than he did the time before. Tim continues:

‘Everyone helped me, and I graduated with a starred Distinction, for how far I had come, from the beginning, you know? And then, when the next group of trainees started saying: “Tim, we really look up to you, we want to be like you.” I thought, “Wow!” And in the space of a single second I saw every single thing I had learnt! Just in that short time I realized that I had learnt so much, and now I had these new guys wanting to be like me. It made me realize that I had to be as professional as possible to show them what it is like to work in a professional kitchen.’

In Tim’s reflective account of his school experiences he recognizes the earlier negative influences to which he was exposed, and the difference in his circumstances now through his experience of training, the opportunities his present environment has provided, and his responsibility to others. Cultural transference from one generation to the next (Vygotsky, 1962) is emphasized in both the mediation towards him and in turn, the mediation he now sees as his responsibility to offer to the generations of new trainees coming in behind him. Tim’s awareness of the transmission of mediation from one generation to the next appears to correspond to Kaufman’s findings, that peer mediation effects the cognitive development
not only of the mediatee (the less able individual), but the mediator as well (Kaufman, 2001).

Nick’s story

‘I tried to get into the army and navy before this, and I had hundreds of jobs. When I applied here it was because I needed to do something, to get away from home, to stop sponging off my mother, to get a place to live; to get respect - not just self-respect but respect from other people, from society. I was really unhappy before I came here, and no one took me seriously. Everything kept happening to me. But now I feel great, I am learning new things every day, I love learning. Now when I go and see my mother she cannot believe the change in me - she’s so proud.

‘If you come into an environment where people use their minds to the best of their abilities to look for solutions to problems instead of ‘bitching’ and whingeing the whole time...it has to change you, hasn’t it? Some of that goodness has to rub off ... because it’s the people who teach us. It’s inspiring; you come in early in the morning and they are so focussed! It’s really changed me in a lot of ways. it’s almost like the start of a whole new life, you know? New people, new experiences. It’s been great - and it’s only going to get better now, I know it.’

Nick’s account emphasizes his need not only for self-respect but his need for respect from society. He tells us that he has a new found optimism and goal-orientated behaviour now that he has a clear path to follow. He tells us he was very unhappy prior to coming onto this training programme, and ashamed of relying on his mother for support. But now, in his changed circumstances, his mother shares his good fortune and is very proud of his success. Her changed attitude towards him would undoubtedly affect his self-image and perceptions.

This raises the question of whether the privileged learning environment of Fifteen London is merely an example of the Hawthorn effect (Wellington, 2000; Preece, 1994). That is,
perhaps having simply been selected for such a privileged training with Jamie Oliver’s organization was enough to make a difference in how these young people are perceived by their friends, their families and themselves, and their improved self-image and optimism is a natural outcome of this process. However, it is argued here that this phenomenon may have helped overcome initial feelings of inadequacy, but my experience taught me that these feelings would not be enough to sustain these trainees’ development through the rigorous demands of the training programme, through to graduation and beyond.

Nick comments on the quality of the chefs’ mediation towards him would support this. He emphasises their commitment to the trainees’ development. He recognises that their demeanour has engendered in him a strong feeling of respect and an optimism about the future and his new-found status as an apprentice chef. Such optimism is considered essential for maintaining motivation and goal-orientated behaviour in the learner. This illustrates yet another aspect of mediation applied to help the mediatee to look beyond the here and now towards a more optimistic alternative (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum and Klein, 1994). This affective aspect of human development is also discussed in what is termed as, ‘learnt optimism’ (Seligman, 1991).

Maddie’s story

‘I don’t see much of my old friends anymore. Because I have changed so much...so much... and they have stayed where they are. I was always in trouble from the age of twelve. Silly things, like ‘hard’ burglary and smoking ‘draw’, I think because we were bored...We had nothing to do, you know? And when you’ve got no money, nowhere to go, loads of you walk around the streets together. So you start to make trouble because there’s nothing else to do, just to make some excitement.

‘I had other jobs before I came here but nothing where I could see a future. And I still used to get up to this and that - I had time on my hands to fall back on something bad. But now, I am so focussed, all the time. I can see a future in front of me now. Whereas before I had nothing to look forward to. I have
come so far, it’s crazy..... My self-confidence is so good now and it used to be so, so low. I could never have spoken to people like I do now... I could never have spoken like this to you! I can feel my confidence going up and up, all the time. It’s this place...the people here...the opportunities we are given...the places we have seen.’

Maddie’s reflection on the changes in her life emphasize the difference in her past expectations to her present circumstances. The opportunities to which she has been exposed had a positive affect on her self confidence and her ability to communicate with other people. It also reflects Maddie’s optimism about the future now that she felt herself equipped with the tools to change her life. This aspect of transcending to a higher level of functioning indicates an optimism which was not evident in the life she recalls before she began the training programme. As a consequence, this would seem to indicate that she now feels confident enough to project herself towards an assured future as a professional chef.

John’s story

John’s comments seem to sum up the self-awareness required to meet the challenges of trying to live another kind of life.

‘I used to go out for the weekend, and I mean really go out for the weekend! Now, work is work and if there’s a little time for something else that’s fine. But I don’t take drugs anymore. If you go out drinking and smoking all the time your brain gets clouded and you don’t have the capacity to learn. And it got to the stage when I first came here that I would be asked to get something or do something and I couldn’t remember what was said to me, and I realized that what I had been doing the last four years of my life had screwed up my brain. Because I realized I wasn’t what I was when I left school. I wasn’t that fresh-faced lad. So I changed my life and that change is still going on, even more now, because I reckon there is always room for improvement. I’m ambitious now. It’s been hard but it’s a nice kind of hard - a challenge. And if I finish the course - and I really think I will - I will be so made up ’ [proud] ’that I have
This honest account of the effects of substance abuse on John’s abilities highlights one of the abiding and major considerations of the organization who take the issue of substance abuse very seriously. This is a working environment that demands its participants stay focussed. Thus, in this environment it seems that the negative stimulation of substance abuse is often substituted by the positive stimulation of the sensorial pleasure of smells, colours and flavours of food, and the demands of a motivating activity. Furthermore, John’s self-awareness reflects the support he has received by the organisation in order to reach Graduation. He explains that this training was for him the first time that he had been confident of his abilities to complete anything, and so reach Graduation. In saying this, what he was describing was the pleasure and satisfaction he felt for a job well done; a strong sense of task completion, explaining that this feeling was a new experience. His awareness of such important changes in his development indicates a strong sense of vigour and purpose, increased motivation and a strong commitment to succeed.

5.13. Discussion

Many issues are raised in these four accounts of changed self-concepts. Tim describes his enhanced abilities and professional competence, Nick describes his new optimism and feeling of worth, Maddie tells us about her changed habits and enhanced self-confidence, and John shares his feelings about his changed attitude and behaviour to work and what it means to him. All these accounts reflect, according to Burden’s self-concept framework: belief in oneself, commitment to the organization and, a strong sense of identity, efficacy and competence (Burden, 2004).

Organizational scientists and practitioners have long been interested in employee motivation and commitment. A meta-analysis of recent research published on commitment and motivation defined motivation as an energizing force - what induces action in employees (Meyer, Becker and Vandenberghhe, 2004). These narratives reflect increased
task orientated motivation (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980), but more importantly, intrinsic motivation. In other words, these young people have learnt to enjoy activity in preference to inactivity.

The mediation offered by participants and described in the stories of these four trainees, seem to correspond to a number of parameters of mediated learning experience referred to as; mediation of challenge, mediation of the awareness of the human being as a changing entity, mediation of the search for an optimistic alternative and mediation of the feeling of belonging.

Of significance here is that the recognised changes in the trainees’ development reflect the goals of such mediation - that of an enhanced motivation to succeed; engendering feelings of self-worth, of belonging and identity, an enhanced ability to look beyond the here and now with optimism; a positive ‘can-do’ approach; and ultimately developing in the learner the psychological tools with which to progress to a higher level of cognitive functioning (Kozulin, 1998; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980).

Each year, a small but significant number of trainees drop out of training during the year. Of the twenty two young people selected for training the year of the pilot study, only fifteen graduated. In selecting the four narratives included here to tell the nature of these young peoples’ experiences and the story of the organization, I have by implication excluded many other fascinating stories. Further studies are therefore needed to tell the stories of those individuals who were not so successful as those included here, to highlight some of the more difficult challenges this issue poses for the organisation. This theme is taken up towards the end of the thesis in Chapter Ten.

However, in the cases of the individuals whose stories are included here, the positive stress of hard work and challenge appear to have generated a feeling of motivation and self worth, illustrating the organization’s belief in the learning potential of each individual. This corresponds to the positive stress described as one of the main parameters of the modifying environment discussed below (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997).
In addition to the quality of mediation offered by the participants, undoubtedly the learning environment itself played a substantial role in these changes. Thus, both human interaction through individualized mediation and mediation offered within the culture of the environment would seem to have affected the trainees’ development.

The trainees’ stories suggested that two aspects of their experience affected their abilities to change. Firstly, their levels of motivation to succeed and secondly, their self-concept and how they thought about themselves. These notions would seem to correspond to Vygotsky’s idea of interpersonal and intrapersonal mediation (Vygotsky, 1979), which suggests that first mediation is between people in the social interaction of their communication, and then through the internal thought processes or internal language we all use in order to reflect on and process information.

External factors effecting the trainee’s ability to succeed were described in these stories as:

- the value of accelerated training
- the opportunity to gain a qualification, a trade
- the merits and appreciation for the key aspects of training: vocational training, professional kitchen, pastoral support, sourcing trips.
- the camaraderie, discipline and hierarchy of the kitchen - the ‘brigade’ of the professional kitchen
- the excitement of food preparation and the opportunity it affords for self-expression and creativity.

Internal factors effecting the trainee’s changed self-concepts were described in their stories as:

- developing a self-belief and a more optimistic attitude
developing the motivation to succeed

developing an internal locus of control

understanding the meaning and deeper implications of participating in the rich culture of becoming a highly skilled professional chef in the Italian tradition.

It has been suggested that the challenge for education in the twenty-first century is to develop learning communities which foster the acquisition of productive knowledge, competent learning and thinking skills (De Corte, 2004). A number of models for the learning environment have been developed which address this challenge and were considered as frameworks in which to describe what I had observed in the pilot study (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; De Corte op-cit). However, these models do not emphasise the interpersonal relationships between people which was the focus for the study.

For example, the CLIA model - competence, learning, intervention and assessment (De Corte, op-cit) considers a positive self-belief as an element of competence but does not discuss the belief of the mediator as being constructive in generating that competence in the child.

In contrast, Bronfenbrenner recognises that it is the relationships between people which have an effect on both the learner and his environment. His complex bioecological theory takes into account a number of elements and suggests that further research is needed to explore the interrelationships between them (Bronfenbrenner & Mahoney, 1975).

Moreover, despite Feuerstein’s insistence on including what he terms, the Modifying Environment together with MLE in his theoretical framework for the cognitive modifiability of the human condition (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980), very little research has been conducted which focuses on this aspect of his work. The essential characteristics of the Modifying Environment have been described as,
• a high degree of openness and opportunity, privacy and respect, responsibility and support

• positive stress to initiate adaptability and change

• positive tension between what is known and what is new to increase an adaptive capacity

• individualised, specialised, customised (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997).

In the nineties a number of papers were published which explored the issues of the modifying environment for residential group care (Beker and Feuerstein, 1990; 1991a; 1991b). The six criteria for what is referred to as, a Powerful Institutional Environment are described as:

• Positive expectations

• permanency of commitment

• social integration within the larger social milieu

• peer mediation respected by staff

• socially constructed work and

• an overarching ideology (Wolins, in Beker and Feuerstein, 1991a).

However, the learning environment of Fifteen London is neither residential nor institutional, but the concepts within both Beker and Feuerstein’s, and Wolins’ frameworks for the learning environment were considered closer to the ideas that I wanted to explore in this inquiry. These frameworks are discussed more fully later in the thesis, for it is a major tenet of this thesis that the learning environment plays an essential role in human development.
However, it is only possible to create positive expectations and permanency of commitment in the learner provided the mediation that is offered in the interpersonal relationships within the learning environment is relevant and meaningful, and of a sufficiently high quality to illicit, foster and generate essential changes for intellectual, social and affective development.

A far greater challenge for educators would therefore seem to be: what are the didactical tools we need in our repertoire in order to make significant changes in both our learning communities and the lives of the young people they serve?

5.14. Summary of chapter

In this chapter, I have described the pilot study which led to the thesis. It began with a curiosity about the quality of mediation within what appeared to be a successful learning environment, to find out what we as educators could learn from its example. But over the course of this investigation my perspective widened and shifted, reminding me that we need to stay open to new thoughts and perspectives when conducting educational research.

The experience of conducting the pilot study led to more questions than it answered, but to conclude that perhaps it is not exclusively the social interactions between individuals which allow them to change and grow, nor is it exclusively the elements within the learning environment which are responsible for the transference of skills and abilities from one generation to the next; so that if we endeavour to understand changes in the human condition we need to consider both perspectives.

I used the stories of four trainees to illustrate how they felt themselves changed as a consequence of their learning experiences. In those stories, the trainees reflected on their changed self-perceptions, changed attitudes and levels of motivation since starting their apprenticeship at Fifteen London. They shared with me how these factors affected their efforts towards becoming professional chefs. Their stories helped to frame a better understanding of the different aspects of the training process within this setting, and how these had worked together to change these young peoples’ lives. Importantly, and in
addition to the cultural factors described in their stories, it seemed that the mediation they
individually experienced in their relationships with key participants within this learning
environment were instrumental in helping to change these young people’s social, intellectual
and affective development. Certainly, all these factors would seem to have contributed to
these young peoples’ enhanced tenacity and energy to complete their training and gain a
qualification, emphasising as they do so, the multilayered complexities of learning itself.

In the ongoing narrative of this inquiry, the pilot study only served to lead me on to a deeper
curiosity about the complexities of learning and the need for further investigation in which
I could explore the theoretical implications of my findings for education. For this I knew
that I would have to go right back to the roots of the social cultural model for learning to
gain a better insight into its three major components of mediation, psychological tools and
the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). These three components are discussed
in the following chapter which describes a review of relevant literature. It follows what
became a personal journey of discovery as I came to learn not only about the changing
nature of research in this genre and the complexities of different theoretical viewpoints, but
the challenges it poses for helping future generations to reach their potential in a changing
world.
Chapter Six - Literature Review

6.1. Introduction

After completing the pilot study in the summer of 2005, I felt more than a passing regret that I would not be in close contact with those participants in the organisation with whom I had established a good working relationship. When the pilot study was completed, I had gone to the office, handed it to the Director of the organisation and that was that. This is the role of the researcher as s/he moves away from the intimate daily interaction with participants to a more analytical and reflective position, to consider the meanings and social significance that our stories represent (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Richardson, 2003).

In the months that followed I found that I missed going into the restaurant, the kitchen and the office as I adjusted to resuming my clinical practice and other recently neglected projects, and my thoughts turned to where my reading and research should go forward from this point. My ultimate goal for research had not changed. I knew that the story I wanted to tell was barely told and plenty more research was needed to get to the next stage of my thesis, to analyse and illuminate the very bones of the thing. Furthermore, the experience of conducting the pilot study had revealed that to understand the complexities of mediation between participants, my analysis would need to include a consideration of the culture in which such mediation occurred and its impact on the lives of its participants.

I had come to this study with a deep and passionate belief in the modifiability of the human condition and the key role of a significant other in the development of cognitive abilities. Moreover, a review of recent literature on theories of the learning environment revealed that although there is a growing awareness of the need to take the relationships between people into account when studying the learning environment, (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; Bronfenbrenner and Mahony, 1975; Biesta, 2006; Edwards, 2005; Vanderstraeten and Biesta, 2006), little research has been conducted which highlights the link between the culture of the learning environment and those specific qualities of interaction between participants which would seem to effect human development. According to the theory of MLE, (see above), it is these specific qualities of interaction or mediation and the
relationships between people which create the right conditions or the right environment for human development (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994). MLE thus provides the mediator with a conceptual framework for developing a conscious awareness of the potential power of this interaction and its subsequent impact on human development.

In the previous chapter, I described the pilot study which led to this further in-depth investigation. My original question for research was to explore the notion that the relationships between people in what appeared to be a successful learning environment, could be analysed according to MLE. Conventional research methods for exploring incidents of MLE were rejected as being too individualistic and clinical to illuminate the rich and complex nature of the setting and the social interactions of its participants. Instead, I chose to use an ethnographic methodology to tell the story of my own observations of the daily practices of the organisation, the stories of the trainee chefs, and the story of conducting the study.

Beyond the mediation that I observed in the relationships between people, the data revealed that the trainees felt it was the rich and complex culture of the learning environment itself that made a greater impact on how they felt they had changed through their experience of learning to become chefs in the apprenticeship at Fifteen London. Their stories revealed that as they came to know the culture of the community, and developed the skills of the professional chef, they felt competent to think about their future in a more optimistic manner, and therefore reach out to other possible worlds (Bruner, 1986). The changes described in the trainees’ stories in the pilot study correspond to the notion of the trainees mastering what Vygotsky describes as, *psychological tools* (Wertsch, 1979). That is, they developed their own perceptions, memory and knowledge in relation to the culture of their learning environment (Kozulin, 1998, p1). In this sense, the skills and knowledge of the professional chef become the tools for cultural transmission, providing the novice chefs with the opportunity to think about their lives in a more optimistic manner.

The innovative environment described in this inquiry therefore represents an unusual learning situation. For rather than providing a training for the conditioning of a mindless activity (Marx, in Kozulin, 1999), the organisation is providing an education. It thus
demonstrates learning in a vocational environmental model of education, rather than training in a vocational setting. Therefore, the setting for this in-depth investigation is defined here in the following three ways: firstly, in the culture of the learning environment; secondly, in the context for learning; and thirdly, in the relationships between people.

But what, I wondered, are the specific qualities within this dynamic environment which allow, assist and encourage these individuals to move from being newcomers to being old-timers? Two strands of the study began to emerge and preoccupy me: that of the learning environment; and the relationships between people. It seemed to me that these two perspectives needed to be defined within a model of education which would pay equal attention to both the essential elements of the context for learning and the qualities of the interpersonal mediation between its participants, and which I learnt had contributed to the life changes of the people who had shared their stories with me.

This chapter therefore describes the journey on which my research of relevant literature has taken me in the intervening period since completing the pilot study in 2005 and this present inquiry. Therefore, in the tradition of narrative research, I have chosen to put this into context by telling the story of my developing thought processes during this time by describing how I struggled with and vacillated between theoretical and methodological frameworks in which to communicate my growing and changing ideas. Furthermore, this chapter describes how I came to select and define the terms and concepts with which to convey to the reader the specific aspects of the situation I choose to illuminate in my thesis.

Indeed, it would be easy to assume that one’s theoretical perspective stays the same over time, and that once an opinion or position about a particular aspect of the subject of the inquiry is reached and documented, such a position does not waver; and to fail to recognise that our thought processes shift and alter along with the nature of the subject we come to know. To presume this would be to negate the human aspects of the researcher as the instrument of the inquiry, the complexities of academic research and ethnographic research in particular. We need to stay consciously aware not only of the changing nature of the subject under investigation over time but the changes in ourselves as well (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000; Denzin, 2001).
During this period, a detailed research journal documented my reading for the study and growing theoretical ideas. These research notes became a rich resource to explore what became a personal journey of growth and discovery as I found myself questioning the parameters and limitations of a wide range of theoretical ideas and findings of recent studies which have battled with questions of a similar nature. Extracts referred to and used in the following discourse are taken from entries written in this ongoing journal from towards the end of the pilot study in August 2005 until January 2007.

The original aim of the pilot study had been an attempt to define the specific nature and qualities of interaction between the participants within this environment and furthermore, to investigate whether these interactions were instrumental in bringing about the perceived changes described to me in the participants’ stories. This perspective was engendered by a life-long interest in the theory of MLE which suggests not only that the human brain is malleable but that we are all capable of permanent cognitive change provided we are exposed to sufficient and specifically targeted intervention (Feuerstein and Rand, 1997). Feuerstein’s interrelated theories are explained above. However, the stories that were told to me in the pilot study revealed that in addition to the nature of the interaction between participants, it was also the culture of the organisation which seemed to have made a huge contribution to the life-changes of its participants. It was thus at the end of the pilot study that my research reading turned to the nature of the learning environment.

When reviewing learning environment models for the pilot study, I considered the dimensions of four models developed from a sociocultural perspective. These were: Powerful Learning Environments (Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney, 1975); The Modifying Environment, (Rynders, Feuerstein, and Rand, 1997); The Powerful Institutional Environment, (Wolins in Beker and Feuerstein, 1990), and The Competence, Learning, Intervention, Assessment Model (CLIA), (De Corte, Verschaffel, and Masui, 2004). Whilst each model reflects some aspects of the culture which was the subject of the study, it was felt that none of them pay sufficient and specific attention to the various qualities of different types of mediation between the participants that I wanted to emphasise. Nevertheless, rather than go back to these models for this present inquiry, I found I needed
to go still further back to the inspiration for these models to find the answer to my question: *What are the qualitative conditions within the learning environment which allow cognitive change to occur and, how can we define them?*, and for this, I needed to understand the historical context of the sociocultural movement and thus the genesis of the work of Lev Vygotsky.

6.2. Socio-cultural theory

Vygotsky’s short but brilliant life gave our generation the gift of a number of ideas which have fascinated and occupied some of the greatest educational philosophers of the past seventy years (Kozulin, 1999). These ideas have generated a number of models of the learning environment which emphasise a consideration of three essential factors - the culture of the environment; the nature of the activity; and communication between people (Engestrom and Middleton, 1998; Engestrom, 2005; 2001). Together, they underpin the current activities and preoccupations of the sociocultural movement in educational theory which is concerned with the relationship between culture and learning. Sociocultural theory is therefore a gestalt, that analyses the complexities of both the individual and social elements which contribute to human development (Kozulin, op-cit).

Vygotsky was only in his early twenties when he made the important statement that,

‘*(T)he social dimension of human development is primary and that psychology should focus its attention on uniquely human higher mental processes*’,

(Kozulin, 1999, p110).

To develop the rich ideas implied in this statement, and together with his two younger colleagues, Leontiev and Luria, Vygotsky formed the now famous ‘troika’ (Kozulin, op-cit) to create a rich and diverse research programme. Meeting once or twice a week in a basement room in the Institute of Psychology in Moscow, this trio later expanded to form a group of eight. This commune of colleagues worked both collaboratively and separately to develop and research different aspects of Vygotsky’s growing ideas for a new direction in psychology, which is one reason why it is difficult for the generations of researchers who
came after him to put the development of Vygotsky’s theories into a chronological and historical order (Kozulin, op-cit). Tragically, Vygotsky’s life was cut short by tuberculosis before he was able to fully develop his theories and it is the people who came after him who brought many of his original ideas to fruition. Indeed, the translations of his work from the original Russian and the interpretations and reinterpretations of it since have generated a range of theories of what is now referred to as, a socio-cultural perspective in psychology.

However, for a long time Vygotsky’s ideas were not taken up by western psychologists and educators. It is only now, as more and more in Europe and the US we are faced with the breakdown of the conventional family and mono-cultural communities that we rightly turn our attention to an educational philosophy which places the role of culture and its historical context as central to the development of the human condition (Kozulin, 1999; 2003; Sternberg, 2004; Bruner, 1987).

However, in what has been described as, ‘our copyright generation’ (Wertsch, 1998), the work or creativity of an individual is seen as a product, a commodity, separate from the culture in which it is generated. Sociocultural theory challenges this philosophy by positing that this is not possible; that we each develop according to the influences, practices, customs of the culture to which we are exposed. Indeed, Shakespeare’s and Milton’s work are examples of how even these great authors took their inspiration from the earlier work of other people (Wertsch, 1998, p18). The way we learn and what we learn are therefore dependent first on what is referred to as the interpersonal relationships between people and then on the intrapersonal level of internalised thought (Vygotsky, 1978; Engestrom, 1981; Daniels, 1996).

To support this recognition of the multi-faceted complexities of human development, Vygotsky uses a beautiful analogy. It serves as a vivid warning against the decomposition of the complex mental whole of human development into its elements by using the relationship of water on the one hand and the elements of hydrogen and oxygen on the other, suggesting that knowing the chemical composition of water gives no understanding of the rich concept and many qualities of water (Vygotsky, op-cit; also see Wertsch, 1998, p18).
Human development in sociocultural theory is therefore learning within a culture, taking on the habits, customs and practices of those already within the environmental system, and those who are more competent, experienced and familiar with how things are done (Vygotsky, 1978). This puts development into a social framework, unlike Piagetian theory which sees the stages of individual human development as the opening of a flower over time. In contrast, sociocultural theory suggests that human development is dependent on more competent others to mediate how to act in the world and learning therefore relies on communication and interaction within the social group (Kozulin, 1994). Interestingly, although the work of Vygotsky and the social behaviourist, Mead (Mead, 1934) were never compared by their contemporaries it became evident over time that there was an interesting parallel in their approach to language as an instrument of, ‘external regulation of behaviour’ (Kozulin, 1999, p83).

The multi-cultural society in which our generation finds itself therefore highlights the need to consider the notion of a sociocultural approach in education (Kozulin et al, 2003). In summing up the importance of Vygotsky’s work to every generation which followed his, the editors of Mind In Society wrote in their summary:

‘His legacy in an increasingly destructive and alienating world is to offer through his theoretical formulations a powerful tool for restructuring human life, with an aim towards survival.’ (See Vygotsky,1978, p133).

Thus, this study is rooted in the tradition of social cultural theory, which suggests that the complexities of human development rely on a number of interrelated factors of a social cultural nature. Furthermore, important questions relevant to contemporary research centre around the recent and renewed interest in Vygotskian theory and its three major components of Psychological Tools; Mediation; and the Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, in the context of this ongoing inquiry, it is argued that the psychological tools (Kozulin, 1998) can be described in the knowledge and skills of the professional chef; mediation in the scaffolded apprenticeship and the hierarchical culture of the kitchen and pastoral support (also see Rogoff, 1990); and, the Zone of Proximal Development in the quality of the specific mediation offered by participants to trainees and the high expectations and value placed on the potential abilities of each individual.
6.3. Vygotsky, Dewey and Action

The pilot study revealed clearly that knowledge in this environment appears to be through the experience of learning. That beyond the interpersonal mediation of a task between people, the experience of doing that task over time becomes the intrapersonal level of understanding and therefore leads to a deeper and more internalised level of knowledge. There appeared to be a strong relationship between the activities of the professional kitchen and the process and acceptance of trainees into the culture of the kitchen. Furthermore, there was an acknowledgement by the participants in the pilot study that, further to a new task being mediated to them by a more competent ‘other’, a lack of experience meant a lack of precision and efficiency. Consequently, experience in actually doing the task - that is, practice - produced a greater competency and proficiency. In other words, it does not matter how good the mediation between people, it is only through the experience of performing an activity that true competence and knowledge can be achieved. That is, there is no substitute for experience.

‘We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.

(Aristotle, 384-322 BC).

In Vygotsky’s first ideas for theorising the relationship between the subject, the object and activity, the object became a cultural entity - ‘the object orientedness of the action became the key to human psyche’. However, within this notion, the unit of analysis was still individual (Engestrom, 1981, pp 210-213). It was Leontiev who took up this idea and developed what is now referred to as ‘Activity Theory’ and explicated the crucial difference between individual action and collective action (Leontiev, 1981; Nardi, 1996; Engestrom, 2001; 2005).

Engestrom in turn extended Leontiev’s model further to produce a collective activity system where the focus now became the interrelationships between the individual and his community and described the complex relationships of interrelated activity systems (also see Rogoff, 2001; Daniels, 1996; 2001; 2004). Thus now, in what is referred to as the third generation of Activity Theory, Engestrom’s model provides a language of description to look at how people act within an organisation or system and engage with the tensions and contradictions within it. These ideas have generated a huge number of studies in a wide range of communities. In these diverse studies which describe a variety of both school and
vocational settings, the focus for research has shifted from the development of individual cognitive function to the development of cultural identity (Rogoff, op-cit). It was felt that perhaps this inquiry could add to this body of work.

However, during this period of research relevant to the notion of activity, my reading also turned to the work of John Dewey and his ideas for Transactional Realism which suggests that meaning and consequently knowledge comes from the interaction between a person and their activities within the environment (Dewey, 1997). The key area of the learning process for Dewey is the interaction between the organism and its environment (Biesta and Burbules, 2003). Human action, Dewey argues, is always a construction of human nature and its environment, both natural and social (Biesta and Burbules, op-cit, p10). This interaction, which later in his work Dewey would call, the ‘transaction’ is an adaptive process in which the organism seeks to maintain a dynamic balance with its ever-changing environment. Dewey’s transactional realism is therefore a construction located within this transaction, born of both the organism and the environment striving to adapt towards each other in an ever-changing process.

‘In the transactional framework of Dewey’s approach organising a context of learning means creating opportunities for participation in particular practices’, (Biesta, 2006, p20).

Thus, knowledge for Dewey comes from the learning experience located within this transaction and is constructed through the experience of ‘doing’ an activity within the social group rather than being mediated by a more competent other.

But are not these two giants focussing on the same aspects of development? It seemed to me at this point in my understanding that despite the different perspectives in the philosophies of Dewey and Vygotsky, both define the central components of the learning process as being the interrelationships between the organism within its social group and the context of the learning environment. It therefore appears that these two philosophers have a great deal in common. Indeed, a review of recent literature related to Dewey’s ideas reveals that there are a growing number of studies which discuss the parallels between some aspects of the principles and philosophies of these two giants (Edwards, 2005; also see Prawat, 2000; Biesta, 2006). It is thought that one reason there has been so little focus on these similarities in the past has been that their work each developed within a different
school of thought (Biesta, op-cit). Furthermore, it has been conjectured that Vygotsky would have met John Dewey when he visited Moscow and was consequently influenced by some of Dewey’s ideas (Prawat, op-cit). One result of this current discussion is an identified need for further research into the meeting of minds in both sociocultural theory and the pragmatism of Dewey to expand our understanding of these ideas (Biesta, op-cit).

These interesting parallels helped shape a greater awareness of the complexities of the relationship between human activity and learning and the difficulties all researchers have in both understanding and communicating it, whatever their perspective. I felt confused between the idea of turning my attention fully towards Dewey’s pragmatism or developing my ideas within a sociocultural approach and the principles of activity theory.

But on 14th March, 2007 at the launch of OSAT, Oxford Centre for Sociocultural Activity Theory Research, the keynote speaker was Roger Saljo. A lifelong advocate of sociocultural theory and a colleague of Engestrom’s, he made a strong case for the changing face of knowledge and learning in the 21st century, highlighting the challenges for the academic world to address these changes within their chosen methodology (Saljo, 2007).

Firstly, he suggested that learning as a collective phenomenon is a relatively new idea and that we are still struggling to understand the implications of this idea for both research and pedagogy. He suggested that learning has now become future orientated, and therefore, knowledge has also changed, reaching out to new horizons and using technology to create new kinds of knowledge. Moreover, in accepting that there are different perspectives in different theories of educational theory he suggests that perhaps now is the time to shift our agenda and our attitude towards developing a more revisionist approach to educational research. Taking up a challenge posed by Bruner, he suggests research should be seeking ways to ‘cultivate the alternative’ by asking ourselves, what does this other tradition say about knowledge? What can I learn or develop from this perspective or this argument to fit into my own theoretical perspective and my own epistemology?

Saljo uses this open and questioning approach to emphasise that what is important for meaningful research methodology is that our chosen units of analysis frame those concepts we choose to examine. That is, the metaphors and the concepts we select in order to describe our thesis are paramount (Saljo, 2007; Sfard, 1998).
For we do not see learning, we see the results of learning: the outcomes, the changes in behaviour, attitudes and motivational levels, their aptitudes and the ability to adapt within the culture of the community (Ames and Ames, 1989). Therefore, what we see is the practical concrete object, which then becomes the unit of analysis (Saljo, op-cit). Therefore, our units of analysis must objectify or reify that which we choose to examine; that is, make concrete the concept of inquiry. This helped me realise that whilst I had been trying to understand the principles of the two philosophies of Dewey and Vygotsky, I was struggling to apply an ‘either/or’ approach. I came to realise that perhaps this is not always possible or helpful in our research, since in order to fully understand a concept we must first accept that different perspectives can be helpful to illuminate different aspects of what we need to understand.

Further to this and as so often in the past, Bruner’s words provide both encouragement and wisdom when he says:

‘The study of the human mind is so difficult, so caught in the dilemma of being both the object and the agent of its own study, that it cannot limit its inquiries to ways of thinking that grew out of yesterday’s physics. Rather, the task is so compellingly important that it deserves all the rich variety of insight that we can bring to the understanding of what man makes of his world, of his fellow beings, and of himself. That is the spirit in which we should proceed.’ (Bruner, 2002, p.xiii).

Thus encouraged I kept reading. I still wondered at this point in my research, what precisely are those elements within the learning environment which allow, assist and encourage an individual to move through the dynamic process of being a newcomer in a community and how does s/he become a fully accepted member of that community and what is the catalyst for change? Furthermore, at what point does a newcomer become a fully legitimised member of the community and what are the conditions for acceptance? And at what point is s/he considered to be an expert in their chosen field? I continued my research for an interpretation of activity in the community in which to frame the inquiry and it was with these questions in mind that I came across a recent study based on the theory of Situated Learning which was thought to be helpful in framing this inquiry (Cockbill, 2005).
Based on Lave and Wenger’s work related to situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; and communities of practice, (Wenger, 1998) the study describes a secondary science classroom and the peripheral participation of a group of children in the community of scientists. The following section describes the underlying principles of this approach and its relevance to this inquiry.

6.4. Situated Learning

The sociocultural perspective of this inquiry appears to strongly correspond to a sociocultural theory of learning called Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This theory suggests that a participant takes on an identity and active role as a member of the community from the moment s/he enters it. As the participant moves from a peripheral role to a more central position s/he becomes familiar with the mannerisms, language and activities of the culture. In this dynamic framework, the ‘newcomer’ becomes an ‘old timer’ and thus moves towards full participation within the community and its activities, making way for further newcomers at the periphery of the community.

Situated Learning is concerned with the connecting issues of sociocultural transformation and the, ‘changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice’, (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p49). In this approach, an emphasis is placed on the skills which are acquired in the process of becoming part of the social interaction for which the situation exists. Instead of analysing the specific cognitive processes and conceptual structures of the individual, it asks what kinds of social engagements provide the proper context for learning to take place. This seemed to answer the dynamic and societal component of the learning environment I was seeking, since in Situated Learning an emphasis is placed on skills which are acquired in the process of becoming part of the social interaction for which the situation exists.

For example, in a science laboratory the accoutrements of Bunsen burner, test tubes, goggles, etc., give a peripheral role to the novice apprentice (see Cockbill, 2005), and provide what is referred to as, ‘legitimate peripheral participation’, a notion central to the theory of Situated Learning to describe the limited but legitimate engagement of the newcomer in the field of the expert (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The concept of Legitimate Peripheral Participation describes the relational character of knowledge and learning, concerned with the following -
• the relationship of knowledge and learning
• the negotiated character of meaning
• the nature of the learning activity within a specific culture
• understanding knowledge rather than receiving it
• requiring activity in and with the world
• understanding that agent, activity and the world are part of the same process

(Taken from Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp 31-33)

Thus, in the context of a professional kitchen, which is the central aspect of the community in this inquiry, the accoutrements of chef’s ‘whites’ (overall, shoes, apron and hat), as well as a personal set of knives and a section at which to perform simple but essential tasks are all factors which allow the novice apprentice chef to participate in the activity of the community and the complicated process of producing a beautiful meal on a plate for the paying customer.

6.5. Learning and knowing

In the apprenticeship model, researchers insist that there is very little observable teaching:

‘[T]he basic phenomenon is learning. The practice of the community creates the potential “Curriculum” in the broadest sense - that which may be learned by newcomers with legitimate peripheral access. Learning activity appears to have a characteristic pattern. There are strong goals for learning because learners, as peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning itself is an improvised practice: a learning curriculum unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice’, (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p93).

Hanks defines learning as,

‘(A) way of being in the social world, not a way of coming to know about it.’ (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p24).
Lave and Wenger emphasise their use of the term, ‘situated learning’ to mean not merely a generalisation for a concrete case of apprenticeship but a theory of situated activity in which ‘learning’ is seen as a transitory concept or bridge between cognitive processes and social practice, (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p34).

‘In our view, learning is not merely situated in practice - as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere; learning is an integral part of generative social practice in a lived-in world. The problem - and the central preoccupation of this monograph - is to translate this into a specific analytical approach to learning.’ (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p35).

They emphasise the importance of recognising the complexities and diversities of different communities of practice by arguing that the theoretical significance of situated learning lies in the richness of its interconnections between the historical, cultural and social aspects of the community. By shifting the concept of learning to mean learning in a social world instead of learning for abstract knowledge, Situated Learning defines a framework for discourse in which to consider the notion of the social world in relation to the nature of learning.

Furthermore, they argue that learning through legitimate peripheral participation is a way of understanding learning that takes place, ‘no matter which educational form provides a context for learning’, and making a fundamental distinction between learning and intentional instruction. Thus, they imply that intentional instruction may not in fact be the source of learning and suggest that,

‘(T)he analytical perspective of legitimate peripheral participation could’.... ’inform educational endeavours by shedding new light on learning processes, and by drawing attention to key aspects of learning experience that may be overlooked’, (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p40).

Taking their argument for defining learning as a social activity a step further, an important question for research might therefore be to ask whether in fact young people are generally taught what they need to know in order to fully participate in society (Bannister, 1981).
Lave and Wenger argue that viewing learning as legitimate peripheral participation is a useful framework to raise questions about schools as communities of practice to determine what students learn and what they do not, and to investigate what learning means for the students within a community of practice.

Legitimate Peripheral Participation

Legitimate Peripheral Participation is thus an ‘analytical viewpoint on learning’ rather than a set of techniques for pedagogy (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p40). It provides a way of understanding the dynamic process of ‘becoming’ rather than a static end product. The authors suggest that as participation continues on its dynamic process in the natural course of social interaction with others, it changes the community as it does so. This corresponds to Bronfenbrenner’s notion of the dynamic development of the organism within the environment when he states,

‘From the beginning, development involves interaction between the organism and its environment: the external becomes the internal and transforms it in the process’ (and), ‘since the relationship is reciprocal, the organism affects its environment and thus the internal affects the external. Thus transforming its environment in the process.’ (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994, p 572; also see Fullan, 1993).

The term legitimate peripheral participation was developed from a number of notions to denote the dynamic positioning of the individual within a community of practice. The concept of ‘legitimate’ in this context means that a newcomer’s role is part of the community from the moment s/he enters it. This notion suggests a correspondence to mediation of a feeling of belonging and Feuerstein’s notion of cultivating in the individual a feeling of value (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994; see above). Thus, the concept ‘periphery’ in LPP does not mean marginal but rather suggests a process of constantly moving towards full participation and thus a more experienced position, illustrating the dynamic complexity of the social order within a given context. It seemed to me that this hierarchal aspect of legitimate peripheral participation strongly corresponds to the ‘brigade’ of the professional kitchen, which has a structured hierarchy of positions and responsibility in the workplace, an important dimension of the world of the professional chef, and discussed in detail below. Furthermore, Rogoff argues that learning is transformation
through social engagement and that the end product of the educational experience is social participation (Rogoff, 1990, p192). Therefore, to understand the idea of education and learning as social participation, our focus of attention must shift from individual development to cultural transmission and shared practice.

6.6. Apprenticeship

This process of becoming is highlighted in the renewed interest in apprenticeship as a model for learning. Research has shown that apprenticeship provides young people with a second chance for success and the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification (Postlethwaite and Maull, 2003). This corresponds to Bathmaker's findings that some students see the move to further education as an opportunity to make a fresh start after unsuccessful school experiences (Bathmaker, 2001; Postlethwaite and Maull, op-cit).

Moreover, in 2004, the Tomlinson report on the opportunities for 14 -19 year olds in the UK made a strong case for the need to develop an apprenticeship model within a diploma framework and the education system, and with the involvement of employers (Tomlinson, 2004). He reported that Britain was at the time far behind its European competitors who have recognised the benefits of such a model to both education and industry.

Recent research on apprenticeships uses case study evidence show how Lave and Wenger’s framework can be developed by identifying features of expansive and restrictive forms of apprentice participation in different industrial settings (Fuller and Unwin, 2003; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Fuller and Unwin suggest three interrelated themes underpin an expansive/restrictive continuum for learning through apprenticeship - participation; personal development; and institutional arrangements. They argue that whilst recognising the relevance of Lave and Wenger’s perspective to understand what is involved in apprenticeship learning through shared activity in traditional practices, their own particular interest for research centres on apprenticeships in advanced industrial societies like the UK. Their research focuses on three industrial sites using Modern Apprenticeships, and includes a consideration of the role of formal, vocational training to Modern Apprenticeships, and its relevance to practice. They argue that formal training makes sense of the lived reality of what they term as, contemporary apprenticeship.
In using the term *contemporary*, they make the distinction between contemporary, industrial apprenticeship, and the traditional craft apprenticeships cited in Lave and Wenger’s example of five traditional but diverse apprenticeships (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, p 408), which were felt to resonate so clearly with the apprenticeships I observed in the setting of Fifteen London. Indeed, in the case of Hutchin’s narrative of naval quartermasters’ apprenticeship, formal off-site learning for apprentices was regarded by their masters in the workplace as irrelevant to the lived experience.

‘... the two quartermasters with whom I worked most closely said they preferred to get their trainees as able-bodied seamen without any prior training in the rate. They said this saved them the trouble of having to break the trainees of bad habits acquired in school’, (Hutchins, cited in Lave and Wenger, 1991, p 73).

The relevance of vocational training specifically to apprenticeship at Fifteen London is discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

However, despite the differences between traditional and contemporary apprenticeships, Fuller and Unwin conclude that an expansive approach to industrial apprenticeship, with a mixture of formal and informal learning, is most likely to create the conditions for apprentices’ personal development. They further conclude that the UK’s Modern Apprenticeship is doing little to expand the character of apprentices’ journeys from newcomer to mainstream participation (Fuller and Unwin, 2003, p 423), and that learning opportunities for apprentices created within the Modern Apprenticeship scheme varies widely across industrial settings (Fuller and Unwin, op-cit). In 2009, Modern apprenticeships have now been superseded by The National Apprenticeship Scheme (NAS), which has become the standard form of delivery of apprenticeship training across industries. The current state of apprenticeship in the UK is discussed more fully in the closing chapter of the thesis.

To emphasise the diversity of apprenticeships across contexts, Lave and Wenger cite and compare five studies of apprenticeship in contrasting communities of practice. These are, the apprenticeship of Yucatec Midwives whose skills are passed on informally from mothers to daughters (Jordan, 1989); the apprenticeship of Vai and Gola tailors who learn their skills piecemeal in a sequential manner (Goody, 1989); the apprenticeship of naval quartermasters...
who have a structured training of duties referred to above (Hutchins, 1993); the apprenticeship of meat cutters who are given increasingly difficult skills to learn (Marshal, 1972); and the apprenticeship of non-drinking alcoholics who learn through discussion and participation (Cain, 1991). All these studies illustrate the value of the specific and diverse skills necessary to each different community of practice, and emphasise the different types of learning required in different apprenticeships and communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 2001). That is, knowledge and skills essential for succeeding in one community may be quite different from knowledge and skills required in another.

However, despite the diversities in all these apprenticeships, the authors suggest a selection of objects of analysis in which to ask four essential questions for situated learning. These are, access into the community; the conflicts and tensions of everyday practice; motivation; and personal identity. These four questions seemed to resonate with some aspects of the theory of mediated learning experience that I wanted to explore within what Lave and Wenger describe as, ‘the process of becoming’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp 100-110). They were helpful in framing the culture of the setting used in this inquiry, to describe the system by which this community organises their experiences in transaction with the social world (Bruner, 2002, p35).

By bringing these four essential questions to our attention Lave and Wenger have opened the discussion for perceiving these conditions within the framework of MLE. This helped pave the way for further analysis, in which it is argued that although these questions constitute the essential conditions for a community of practice, it is the relationships between people in a community which affect intellectual, social and affective development in the dynamic process of ‘becoming’.

This mediated process of change is acknowledged by Lave and Wenger when they state,

‘A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and the world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice.’, (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p98).

To emphasise the human relationships between people in the community, the following section considers these four questions of situated learning in relation to the theory of MLE and cognitive modifiability.
6.7. Four Essential Questions for a Community of Practice

1. Access into the community

How does a newcomer gain access into a community? S/he arrives in a community which is based on practices and traditions which may not be immediately transparent. Artifacts and tools are strange and unfamiliar. The newcomer needs to understand the history and activities of the community to gain access but has to rely on interpretations and explanations of artifacts which are controlled by human interaction.

Knowledge, ‘[K]annot be viewed as a feature of an artifact in itself but as a process that involves specific forms of participation, in which the technology fulfills a mediating function. Apprentice[s] ‘not only have access to the physical activities going on around them and to the tools of the trade; they participate in information flows and conversations, in a context in which they can make sense of what they observe and hear’ (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p102).

It is learning how to participate in the community which is of interest here.

For example, in a community of practice, a more competent ‘other’ would share information with the newcomer about the artifacts and technologies of the community. Within a community of practice or apprenticeship model, the more competent other(s) would be the participant(s) who was/were more familiar with how things are done. However, further to allowing access to technical information about the practices of the community, MLE provides an insight into the history and meaning of the artifacts and practices of the community. It thus provides the newcomer with a more significant notion - a feeling of belonging, an important concept generated according to this approach by mediation of sharing (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994; see above).

Artifacts combine the two characteristics of ‘invisibility’ and ‘visibility’ - invisibility in the unproblematic instruction of an activity and, visibility in the form of an extended sharing of and access to information about the community and the meaning of its artifacts (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). But it is argued here that it is the mediator - the old-timer - who regulates and controls this transparency by helping the newcomer to understand the
meaning of certain cultural practices and traditions, encouraging a need to look beyond the practical tasks of the here and now, to the deeper meaning or implications of what is being learnt, and so towards a more optimistic future (Seligman, 1991).

However, Lave and Wenger remind us that because access is controlled by more competent members of the community, the traditional master/apprentice relationship does not always lead to such transparency. Furthermore, communities have different methods and traditions for gaining access (Jordan, 1989; Marshall, 1972), and we know from research elsewhere that power and control are inherent in all organisations (Fullan, 1993). Regulation and control of knowledge and skill is a valuable notion within the theory of MLE but it does not always correspond that the master is a good mediator or helps the apprentice’s understanding of the community (Becker, 1972).

"Taken very broadly, transparency is a way of organising activities to make their meaning visible" (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p 105).

Bruner discusses the importance of understanding the meanings and significance of artifacts within a community in his essay on what he calls, ‘folk psychology’ (Bruner, 2002). In Vygotskian terms, such newly learnt skills become the psychological tools which allow the individual to then progress to a higher level of thinking (Kozulin, 1998). Certainly, in the context of the community which provides the setting used in this inquiry, it would seem that in making sense of what they observe and hear in the workplace of the professional kitchen, the trainee chefs - the apprentices - are able to contemplate using these newly learnt skills to access other worlds and discover other ways of living (Mayes, 1996).

Therefore it would seem that interpretation of cultural practices rely on the quality of mediation between participants, such as mediating meaning, and mediating to newcomers a feeling of belonging, since it is only when we fully understand the local customs and practices of a community that we are truly able to feel ourselves to be legitimate participants included within that environment. All these considerations are central to the essential question of access to a community of practice.

2. Conflicts and tensions of everyday practice
The conflicts and tensions of everyday practice could be interpreted as the instruments for providing the positive stress required to promote problem solving behaviour in the newcomer. Furthermore, a positive stress is one of the indicators for creating a modifying environment (Beker and Feuerstein, 1990). Since one of the major goals of MLE and a major tenet of Structural Cognitive Modifiability is promoting an increased adaptability through mediation of an optimistic alternative (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994; Tzuriel, 1991), such tensions can provide an opportunity for mediation of challenge, overcoming obstacles to gain success and experience competence and pride in a job well done, thus engendering a feeling of completion of a task in the novice practitioner.

As the newcomer is accepted into the community, and the complexity of newly learnt concepts increases, the more experienced participant monitors the community’s expectations of the novice participant’s competence throughout his apprenticeship. However, in the tensions and conflicts of everyday practice, an apprentice may be expected to perform actions beyond his/her competence. Regulation and control of the apprentice’s capabilities is balanced against the complexity of the task. This conflict and tension between the learning processes of the apprentice and the needs of the enterprise of the community correspond to the ‘near’ and ‘distal’ factors in the Zone of Proximal Development (Kozulin, 1998; Rogoff, 1990) reflected in the notion of mediation of challenge and goal orientated behaviour.

3. Motivation

Extrinsic Motivation was demonstrated in the pilot study by apprentices wanting to gain a vocational qualification and an assured future. This extrinsic motivation is quite different from the positive stress of hard work and challenge described to me in the stories of these same participants later in their training, which appeared to have also generated intrinsic motivation and self worth. Of interest here are the elements within the learning community which have induced this commitment and intrinsic motivation described in the pilot study. Indeed, it would seem impossible for an individual to act of his/her own volition without some internal need or desire to do so. Why is it that some individuals are motivated to succeed more than others, and what is it about an activity which makes it worth while to them to persist? How do we turn a passive and negative human being into a motivated, autonomous and purposeful one?
An excellent summary of some of the approaches into research on motivation by Ames and Ames indicates the complexity of the issue (Ames and Ames, 1989). Here, the influences of other people, feelings of self-efficacy, curiosity and arousal, persistence, goal-orientated behaviour and environmental conditions are just some of the factors addressed in which to discuss how to generate intrinsic motivation; an attribute acknowledged to be one of the most powerful influences on learning (Williams and Burden, 1997).

A purely cognitive view of intrinsic motivation would centre around individuals making decisions about their own actions. However, this view does not take into account the affective factors within the social context which have induced that desire for action. Williams and Burden present a dynamic definition of motivation which has four stages: Firstly, cognitive and emotional arousal; secondly, a conscious decision to act; thirdly, a period of sustained intellectual and/or physical effort; and lastly, reaching a set goal (Williams and Burden, op-cit). Implicit in these four stages is social interaction and cognitive volition, and the role of the ‘significant other’ to influence this process.

It would seem that it is the ‘significant other’ which brings us back to the central premise of this thesis and the three essential characteristics of MLE - intentionality and reciprocity, meaning and transcendence. That is, in order to generate motivation, the mediator needs to make clear the reason for the task or endeavour, to make sure that the mediatee understands the task; to make sure the mediatee understands the meaning and cultural significance of the task; to make clear though his/her communication and actions why this particular task, and this particular endeavour is important and relevant to the mediatee’s life and well being.

Such mediation highlights the theory’s major objectives for this approach, being firstly to create intrinsic motivation through the formation of good working habits and secondly, task intrinsic motivation - that is, learning for the pleasure of learning and subsequently, goal orientated and goal achieving behaviour, looking beyond the here and now, towards the ‘big picture’, or the purpose for a course of action, essential attributes for sustaining motivation in the learner.

Further to these essential aspects, other important parameters within MLE are evident within the language and concepts referred to in the research literature on motivation. For example, mediation of competence or, what has been referred to as, ‘effort attributional feedback’ to the novice practitioner by the mediator has been identified as a powerful tool in generating
self-efficacy and motivation to succeed leading to a higher skill than didactical instruction (Schunk, 1989). Feelings of competence and self-efficacy allow the individual to equate effort with success (Bandura, 1977). Indeed, a huge body of research elsewhere has shown that motivation has a strong correlation to learning (Ames and Ames, 1998; Haywood, 1980). That is, if a novice practitioner makes an effort and is rewarded with either an improved performance or a recognition of this sustained effort by a significant other, s/he will be encouraged to persist and be optimistic about his/her potential to change (Seligman, 1991). If however, such effort is not rewarded with either an improved performance or recognition of an effort by others, they will not persist, but give up, thinking, ‘why try if I know I will fail?’ Or, ‘Why try if no one will notice that I have tried?’, (Haywood, op-cit). These factors seemed to resonate with some of the stories told by the trainees who shared with me their experience of formal education before they entered the vocational training within the organisation which provides the setting for this thesis.

Organisational researchers elsewhere have been interested in employee commitment and motivation for a long time. A meta-analysis of recent research published on commitment and motivation in organisations led Meyer and his colleagues to define commitment as one aspect of motivation. They describe motivation as, ‘an energising force - it is what induces action in employees’; and they describe affective commitment as having a strong correlation to performance, ‘a force that binds the individual to a course of action that is relevant to a particular target’, ((Meyer, Becker and Vandenberghe, 2004, p992). Energy and emotion then, lead to motivation and commitment, and bind the individual to a particular course of action.

In the huge range of theories of motivation, the theory of ‘flow’ offers a clear definition (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi and Nakamura, 1989). For example, stories told to me by the apprentice chefs in the pilot study revealed that when they were fully involved in an activity in the kitchen, they felt themselves to be in another world, and time lost meaning for them. Such total involvement in the task corresponds to the notion of the ‘flow experience’; that when people are fully absorbed in what they do they are highly motivated. Research into this notion of ‘flow’ reveals that common dimensions of such an experience are that people feel: ‘all their minds and bodies are completely involved in what they are doing; they know how well they are doing; they are not worried they will fail; time passes quickly; they lose self-consciousness and stress of everyday life’, (Csikszentmihalyi and
Nakamura, op-cit, p54; also see Montgomery and Melchor-Beaupe, 2004). It is thus the pleasure and enjoyment in the activity which the authors claim are their own reward.

In this section on motivation I have attempted to unpick a few of the broadest definitions of mediation in relation to the needs of the newcomer, the social context of learning and the community of practice. In doing so, I have discussed only one perspective of the human relationship within a mediated learning experience. However, when we speak about the newcomer needing to have a belief in his/her own abilities, we must also include by implication both the belief system of the mediator and the core values of the community. The following section considers the notion of the need for intentionality and reciprocity in relation to the social group of a community of practice.

Intentionality and reciprocity

Intentionality and reciprocity are the cornerstones of cognitive education and the theory of MLE. Kahan challenges Mancur Olson’s premise that individuals can be expected to act consistently with the interests of the groups to which they belong by making the case for what he terms, ‘creating’ rather than mediating an atmosphere conducive to generating reciprocity and trust and which he terms the, logic of reciprocity (Kahan, 2003).

‘In collective-action settings, individuals adopt not a materially calculating posture, but rather a richer, more emotionally nuanced reciprocal one. When they perceive that others are behaving cooperatively, individuals are moved by honor, altruism and like dispositions to contribute to public good even without the inducement of material incentives.’ (Kahan, 2003, p71).

He goes on:

‘...spontaneous cooperation of this sort breeds more of the same, as individuals observe others contributing to public goods and are moved to reciprocate. In this self-sustaining atmosphere of trust, reliance on costly incentive schemes becomes less necessary. By the same token, individuals who lack faith in their peers can be expected to resist contributing to public goods, thereby inducing still others to withhold their cooperation as a means of retaliating. In this self-sustaining atmosphere of distrust, even strong (and costly) regulatory incentives
are likely to be ineffective in promoting desirable behaviour (Kahan, 2003, p72).

It would seem therefore that a sociological stance on the idea of reciprocity would suggest that it is the community itself which engenders feelings of reciprocity and action. However, it is argued here that any new community is made up of a group of like-minded individuals, where values are established within the ethical practices and culture of that community. Only then, over time, can the community itself generate such ideas through common practice and expectations. Kahan goes on,

‘...spontaneous cooperation of this sort breeds more of the same, as individuals observe others contributing to public good and are moved to reciprocate (Kahan, 2003, p72).

Thus Kahan emphasises that reciprocity is a cultural and motivating force, which makes a huge contribution to society and how we transfer our ‘folk culture’ both to each other and the younger generations which come after us. Therefore, if we are to seriously consider the societal aspects of human development as paramount, then we must take these ideas further by creating educational communities in which reciprocity and trust are considered vital components in the raising of our young.

4. Personal Identity

The last but certainly not the least essential question to consider within the model for a community of practice is personal identity. In the MLE model, this would be developed through mediation of individuation and psychological differentiation, and also mediation of sharing, both of which engender the most important ingredient for developing a personal identity, that of a feeling of belonging, of being counted.

Certainly, the pilot study revealed that the apprentice chefs felt a strong identity with the community. However, the pilot study further revealed that beyond having a strong identity with the organisation, the more experienced participants felt a recognition and responsibility for their role in sharing their knowledge, expertise and cultural identity with the newcomers. In the relationships between people the central notion of reciprocity and trust is paramount, as the newcomer becomes accepted and valued by more experienced members of the
community. Thus encouraged, the newcomer feels able to avoid feelings of rejection and neglect, and perceive themselves as separate, articulate and independent entities (Tzuriel, 1991).

This mediation corresponds to the central notion of legitimate peripheral participation, where each individual is valued and accepted as a fully legitimate and entitled member of the community from the moment s/he enters it, of being counted and making a valuable contribution to the enterprise of the community. In this, more than anywhere else in the theories of Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994) we see a clear parallel between the essential questions of motivation and personal identity in creating a community of practice, and the need for reciprocity and trust between people.

6.8. Summary of chapter

This literature review began with an examination of the origins of the sociocultural movement and the range of theoretical models it has generated (Engestrom and Middleton, 1998; Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; De Corte, 2004). It was found that whilst all sociocultural models emphasise the general mediation between individuals, none pay sufficient attention to the specific qualities of mediation which I want to emphasise. Research of the development of activity theory systems were helpful to my understanding of this genre and its relevance to the nature of the environment in this inquiry, but similarly do not provide a detailed framework in which to identify, analyse and discuss the specific MLE between participants.

Dewey’s pragmatism was also helpful to clarify my understanding of an alternative perspective concerning the nature of the relationship between action, knowledge and environment which helped me understand that despite using different terms and metaphors, the different genres are not so far apart as had originally been thought. This new understanding of the complexities of social research highlighted the need to be open in our thinking and consider aspects of other genres which fit in with our own epistemology if we are to move forward in our thinking.

Situated Learning offers a framework for understanding learning in the community; the process of ‘becoming’; and legitimate peripheral participation; that seemed to relate to a
number of aspects of this inquiry that I want to emphasise. Furthermore, the four essential questions for a community of practice provide a useful set of conceptual tools on which to build an argument for suggesting that the essential parameters and goals of MLE can be described within a wider discourse for the learning environment model.
Chapter Seven - The Research Design

7.1. Introduction

Having made my ontological and epistemological position clear, I now turn to the study itself, and therefore begin the chapter by clearly stating the research questions which have guided this inquiry.

The main purpose of my research was to illuminate in as much detail as possible the culture of the apprenticeship model of ‘Fifteen London’, and what actually takes place there in the processes of novices learning to become chefs. As a major part of this illumination process, a specific research question emerged, namely, whether the two theoretical perspectives of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) could provide useful frameworks for making sense of what was happening, and if so, what each had to offer in terms of furthering our understanding. Thus, the research had a twin focus, of examining what was taking place at Fifteen and of exploring the practical utility of two well-known theoretical perspectives.

The purpose of this anthropological study is therefore to explore how cultural values and practices are transmitted by old-timers to newcomers in the day-to-day activities of their community of practice; and in the informal dialogues observed between participants in these activities to throw light onto how learning occurs by means of social participation. It was felt that an understanding of the relationship between these perspectives would throw fresh light onto our understanding of what goes on in the learning process and therefore of relevance to practice elsewhere.

The main focus for research here therefore is not a developmental or longitudinal study of a group of individuals as they each travel along their own trajectory towards full participation; although the experience of three successive cohorts of apprentices learning how to become professional chefs provides a rich culture in which to observe how cultural transmission occurs in the hierarchy and interactions of old-timers and newcomers in their community of practice. Nor is this the study of an apprenticeship model; although the
organisation offering the bespoke apprenticeship referred to in this setting provides a fascinating setting in which to explore how situated learning occurs in the field of the expert. Although these two perspectives helped inform my understanding of what I observed, they were not the main focus of interest.

Instead, I choose here to explore a different perspective, one that uses a number of lenses through which to illuminate the complexities of learning as social participation, as people go about their business in the day-to-day practices of their community. These lenses focus on different aspects of learning as social participation in the culture of the community; and on the informal dialogues witnessed between its various participants. These dialogues include those observed between various stakeholders in the community: the professional chefs; other key participants and old-timers in the community; and the apprentices - one key aspect of this community already covered in the pilot study described in chapter five. Although I am not going to focus exclusively on the apprentices’ perspective here, I will draw from the pilot study’s findings from time to time to illustrate a description of various aspects of the dynamic interactions witnessed in the course of the study.

In summary, this research is concerned with illuminating how learning occurs by means of both situated learning in a community of practice, and by means of the specific qualities of mediation witnessed in the relationships between participants; and exemplars of both these perspectives are described in the data. The thesis therefore uses a research design that emphasises the dynamic complexities of learning as a natural phenomenon of social participation and the important role that the quality of human relationships plays in human development. This chapter describes the research design employed that explores these questions, and the methods employed for both data collection and analysis which follow on from this specification. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of any one methodology, I make the case for using an ethnographic approach to explore complex questions about how people learn in a community of practice.

The study uses observations and participant-observations of five different aspects of the community as a means of collecting data for this qualitative study. This chapter discusses why other methods of data collection were rejected; and furthermore, why these chosen methods were felt to be most helpful in addressing the specific and complex issues raised in the research questions, and how the issue of trustworthiness necessary in all interpretive research was met in the research methods.
I describe how data collected over three cycles of apprenticeship in the five micro-settings of the community was analysed according to both the frameworks for situated learning and the parameters of MLE to demonstrate how elements of both perspectives illuminate the complexities of the learning process itself.

Two aspects of the culture of the setting are therefore of interest to the study: firstly, exploring how knowledge is transmitted in different aspects of this community of practice as apprentices learn to become professional chefs; and secondly, exploring whether the *quality* of the intervention between old-timers and newcomers in a community of practice can be analysed according to the framework of MLE, and furthermore what might be the implication of this analysis for learning in the real world. It was felt that such a study would throw fresh light onto the some of the complexities of human development when perceiving learning as social participation.

The chapter continues with a discussion of important ethical considerations of conducting educational research, and makes clear my responsibilities as researcher according to the ethical policy of The School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter (Appendix I). These responsibilities concern my obligations to the organisation which provides the setting for this case study and the many individuals who shared their experiences with me. To set the scene what follows, the final section of the chapter presents a description of the setting in which this research takes place and outlines how the study is presented in chapter eight.

7.2. Methodology

There is considerable debate over what constitutes good interpretation in qualitative research and an emerging consensus is that all inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003b, p 420; also see Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The personal experience we bring to our research therefore dictates the kind of inquiry we choose to conduct. It follows that the questions we ask in qualitative research and the methods we use to conduct research define the nature of its findings (Wellington, 2000). However, the essence of good qualitative research design is that it should simultaneously be open-ended and rigorous, and ‘do justice to the complexity of the social setting under study’ (Janesick, 2003, p 46).
The notion of ‘symbolic interactionism’ or, putting oneself in the place of the other as a theoretical perspective remains pivotal to our understanding of peoples’ lives and cultural practices ((Mead, 1934; Crotty, 1998).

Methodologically, symbolic interactionism directs the investigator to take, to the best of his ability, the standpoint of those studied (Denzin, 1978, p99).

Symbolic interactionism considers interaction and participation in social practices as a major factor in how we learn from one another, from a small child acting out the role of others and learning to think about how others think and act, to participating in other peoples’ worlds to explore the meanings of their cultural practices.

Methodologically, the implication of the symbolic interactionist perspective is that the actor’s view of actions, objects, and society has to be studied seriously. The situation must be seen as the actor sees it, the meanings of the objects and acts must be determined in terms of the actor’s meanings, and the organisation of a course of action must be understood as the actor organises it (Psathas, 1973, pp 6-7).

Therefore, the setting being entered into by the researcher should not be criticised or prejudged by the examiner, least of all by someone from outside its own culture (Psathas, op-cit; Denzin, op-cit). Instead, the culture is to be observed as closely as possible in an attempt to find out the actors’ perspectives. This theoretical perspective is the origin of ethnography, adopted and adapted by sociology (Crotty, 1995).

In social research, ethnography refers to the interpretation of various perspectives and interactions of social groups. It draws on insights into a social world through participation and understanding of that reality.

‘Understanding comes more from the act of looking over the shoulders of actors and trying to figure out (both by observing and conversing) what the actors think they are up to.’ (Schwandt, 2003).

This is the approach taken here.
A major premise of using an ethnographic methodology in social research is that by entering into a close and relatively prolonged engagement with the everyday lives of people, ethnographers gain a better understanding of their subjects’ beliefs, motivations and behaviours than by using any other approach (Hammersley, 1992; Tedlock, 2003). However, in conducting ethnographic research a number of difficulties arise that need to be acknowledged by the researcher (Pring, 2000). In the following pages I present some of the difficulties which need to be met when using an ethnographic approach, and describe how these were met in my own methodology.

(1). *Firstly*, as participant-observer, the researcher is considered both an insider and outsider by the social group, as s/he strives to understand that world s/he chooses to represent and not his/her own. Indeed, the dual role of the ethnographic researcher is to become both interpreter of participants’ lives and author of the study s/he chooses to conduct (Hammersley, 1992). This requires a careful positioning by the researcher, and a self-consciousness about how the methodology is applied.

A detailed and reflexive journal reflecting my thought processes helped to build up documentation of not only what was done, but why it was done, at every phase of the research process (Hammersley, 1993). Keeping a reflexive journal is an important element in building up the documentation required for trustworthy qualitative research (Denzin and Guba, 1985). Throughout this long investigation, my reflexive journal allowed me not only to keep track of my growing theoretical ideas, but reflect too on my ethical positioning as researcher, and so guard against *bias or skewedness* which can easily occur in the data as a result of intimate relationships which develop in the natural course of interpretive research (Lincoln and Guba, op-cit). It documented my growing ideas for how I might present the data in such a way as to illuminate the aspects of the setting I sought to emphasise through my scholarship. Examples of several excerpts from this journal can be found in Appendix (V).

(2). *Secondly*, research data in ethnography is defined by its own negotiated meanings for the culture of the community and in collaboration with its participants (Pring, 2000); and therefore cannot be easily generalised to other social settings.

There are two considerations for generalisability of findings in ethnographic research, and therefore of interest here. The first consideration for generalisability is the relevance and
dangers of overstating findings of small case-study research as empirical evidence; and secondly, the theoretical implications of its findings (Hammersley, 1992).

For example, data recorded in this small case-study is concerned with understanding how learning occurs in the social practices of a bespoke apprenticeship programme, and describes certain events that occurred within a particular time-frame which therefore cannot be representative of apprenticeship generally.

One way of generalising findings from such a small case study could be to adopt a probability method, which requires a meta-analysis of findings from a number of similar small ethnographic case-studies (Hammersley, op-cit). Indeed, Pring argues that

‘No one situation is unique in every respect and therefore ... research can be illuminative’ (emphasis in the original) ‘or be suggestive of practice elsewhere’

(Pring, op-cit, p 131).

This is the view taken by Lave and Wenger, who find features common to five different cases of traditional apprenticeship to develop a framework for situated learning which includes what they term four essential questions common to all learning communities (Lave and Wenger, 1991). These essential questions - access into the community; the conflicts and tensions of everyday practice; motivation; and personal identity - were discussed in the literature review of this thesis and provide a useful framework for discourse in which to consider various aspects of a community of practice. These questions helped to frame this inquiry which uses five different aspects or micro-settings of the community used in this case study. These four essential questions become instrumental again in this thesis when I generalise the findings from my own investigation and which are discussed in chapter nine; and demonstrate how findings from this case study might be illuminative for practice elsewhere.

The second consideration for generalisability in ethnographic work is the theoretical insights it can provide (Hammersley, 1992). This ethnographic study takes a cultural perspective of MLE by throwing light onto the informal dialogues observed between participants within their community of practice; thus highlighting both the humanity of personal relationships that develop between people as they go about their daily activities, and opening up a wider discourse for understanding how situated learning occurs in a community of practice. Ways
in which the theoretical findings from this case study might apply in other educational settings is discussed in the final chapter of the thesis.

(3). The third identified difficulty of conducting ethnographic research is that the researcher’s participation within the setting changes the situation to something else (Pring, 2000). The impact of the researcher on the social group cannot be denied (Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994; also see chapter two above) but Pring argues that it is easy to overemphasise this impact:

‘There is not the objectivity in the sense of an observer recording what is the case, insulated from that which is being researched into. But one can exaggerate the problems. The social setting being investigated, if well established, is rooted in traditions which are not to be easily shifted by a stranger in the midst’ (Pring, op-cit, p 108).

Indeed, my aim in conducting this investigation was to learn what was going on in the natural cultural transmission of practices in Fifteen London, which I felt would have been extremely hard to do had I taken a more objective stance in my methodology. Indeed, the guiding principle of all qualitative research is that it is concerned with a descriptive, value-laden and subjective view of the world. My research questions were to understand what was going on in this community’s cultural practices, with the prime purpose of finding out how newcomers become fully legitimate participants in the course of their natural day-to-day activities; and I felt that I could only achieve this by taking an ethnographic positioning and entering the culture of Fifteen London: by ‘putting oneself in the place of the other’ (Crotty, 1998, p 75) and by ‘getting inside the way people see the world’ (Hammersely, 1985, p 152).

However, a challenge for all qualitative research is that reliability depends on the quality of the methods of data collection and analysis. So, whilst acknowledging that all interpretive research is partial and subjective, reliability in qualitative research comes from repeated observations; and whether other researchers using a similar methodology might make similar observations and come to similar conclusions (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

The issue of reliability poses problems for those of us who choose to use a purely ethnographic approach in the ‘proper study of man’ (Bruner, 2002) but want to claim
trustworthiness in the world of educational research which still tends to adhere to the disciplines of science (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003a; Hammersley, 1992). This ongoing challenge is explained by Eisner when he says:

‘Our official text is’... (still)... ‘proportional; we try to put our experience into claims that propositions can carry. We also try to quantify the qualitative features of our experience’. ... ‘Put another way, we report the temperature even when we are interested in the heat’ (Eisner, 1997, p 7).

However, it seems that whatever qualitative methodology is adopted by the researcher, trustworthy data is always tempered by the meaning it holds for the participants concerned and how it is interpreted by the author. The researcher therefore needs to reflect on how best s/he might explore, interpret and describe the complicated process of representing and interpreting other peoples’ worlds whilst simultaneously giving serious consideration to all the dimensions s/he chooses to illuminate in his/her scholarship.

Therefore, whilst recognising the limitations of any one methodology, a naturalistic ethnographic approach was felt here to be the best way in which to explore the complex issues raised by my research questions - to learn about what was really going on in the transmission of culture at Fifteen London and understand the lived experiences of its participants. This study therefore aims to illuminate both the cultural and interpersonal complexities of learning as social participation by following the experiences of a group of individuals who choose, of their own volition, to become professional chefs by undergoing the demanding apprenticeship in the culture of Fifteen London. And this is the manner in which I proceed.

7.3. Methods

Observation in ethnographic research is defined as a systematic data collection approach in which researchers use all their senses to examine people in natural settings or naturally occurring situations (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Angrosini and de Perez, 2003), and understand the ‘natural’ behaviour of people (Hammersley, 1992).
Data Collection

Dense data was collected and accumulated over a period of four years from late 2003 until 2007 by means of participant and non-participant observations and narratives recorded by hand, examples of which can be found in Appendix IV. These observations of five key aspects of the community followed the training of three generations or cycles of apprentice chefs from their initial enrolment as legitimate but peripheral participants of the community of practice of Fifteen London, to become fully trained chefs in the field of the expert, thus making room for the next cohort of newcomers at the periphery of the community.

An important aspect of ethnographic research is that the ethical considerations of entering other peoples’ worlds overrides all others (Pring, 2000). This implies not doing anything to make those being researched uncomfortable or embarrassed (Angrosini and de Perez, 2003). The ethical responsibilities of conducting educational research are discussed in section 7.6 of this chapter.

These considerations were kept very much in mind throughout this long investigation. Therefore, it was decided that for this research study, although electronically recording the informal dialogues witnessed between people rather than relying on observations and field notes would undoubtedly have made the data more critically reliable, I was conscious that it would have also been extremely invasive for some participants to know that as I moved about their community, and followed and participated in their various activities, I was taping or filming their conversations.

Indeed, I soon learnt that in conducting ethnography, however much collection of data is planned, like so many moments in ethnography, it is often serendipitous (Pink, 2001). That is, ethnographic research requires the study of situations that would have occurred without the ethnographer’s presence, and therefore, the adoption of a role within that situation designed to minimise the researcher’s impact on what occurs is essential (Hammersley, op-cit). Therefore, whilst recognising the limitations of relying on one means of data collection, I felt that for the purposes of this research study, simple observations would be the most valuable way in which I could document the natural interactions of people in their cultural practices. However, I was aware that as sole researcher in this project I was totally responsible for how data was collected. I needed to bear in mind the question of whether another researcher with a similar world-view might find similar phenomena of interest in
the data as it presented itself in my observations, and consequently come to similar conclusions in his/her analysis. The important issue of trustworthiness in educational research is discussed later in the chapter.

Another difficulty was that established methods for the collection and analysis of data concerned with MLE seemed out of step with the cultural perspective taken in this case study. For example, the Mediated Learning Experience Scale records the frequency and repetition of the various parameters of MLE observed in mediator/mediatee interactions and then is analysed by identifying which parameters are observed to be used more frequently than others (Lidz, Bond and Dissinger, 1991). Similarly, Kaufman’s ‘wheel’ uses a framework in which to record by observation the various parameters and intensities of mediation supplied by the mediator and then analysed by imposing a second wheel or framework over the first, to ‘match’ how these various interventions might affect specific cognitive weaknesses of the subject identified earlier by means of dynamic assessment (Kaufman, 2001). Both these methods have shown to have a strong application in clinical settings, where enhancement of identified cognitive weaknesses is the aim of a prescribed programme of intervention (Lidz, 2005; Kaufman, op-cit; Lidz and Elliott, 2000).

In contrast to these rather clinical and scientific approaches for assessing MLE and its relationship to cognitive development, this ethnographic case study emphasises a socio-cultural perspective, which seeks to understand how different qualities of mediated learning occur naturally in the informal dialogues between people and in the process of becoming a fully legitimate participant in a community of practice. So, whilst acknowledging the strengths of established methods for measuring MLE for the enhancement of cognitive weaknesses, I choose here to tell quite a different story, by using peripheral participation as a legitimate base from which to conduct my observations of the natural interactions of people in their cultural activities (Angrosini and de Perez, 2003; Adler and Adler, 1994).

Therefore, two guiding principles for data collection were formulated as questions and were used in my observations in the following way:

1. In the context of the activity, are the behaviours of, and/or the verbal or non-verbal communications by ‘the more significant other’ towards the ‘less significant other’ indicative of particular aspects of mediation according to the MLE framework? And furthermore, 2. in the context of the activity do the verbal or non-verbal communications
and/or reactions of ‘the less significant other’ indicate that they have understood the significance of that mediation towards them, and so modified their behaviour accordingly?

Data Analysis

Raw data was then shared and discussed with an independent researcher not involved in the research process, and analysed according to the frameworks for both situated learning and MLE. This practice allowed me to reflect on my own preliminary findings before discussing them with the organisation used in this setting, and where possible with the individuals concerned. This ongoing dialogue between myself as researcher, and the organisation and its participants, ensured an open and ethical relationship was maintained throughout the investigation. The ethical obligations and responsibilities of using sensitive data in educational research are discussed below in section 7.4.

Following Lave and Wenger’s example of using case studies of apprenticeships to illustrate the indivisible character of learning and work practices, five significant aspects of one community are used here to explore the historic and cultural complexity of learning itself. Taking Lave and Wenger’s ideas for a community of practice one step further, five diverse aspects of the setting, or micro-settings as they are described here, emphasise the indivisible character of the mediation between people and the nature of their learning environment to ‘help[s] to make obvious the social nature of learning and knowing’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p61).

Three perspectives of each micro-setting are therefore considered in an analysis of the data: firstly, the nature of the community; secondly, the various parameters of MLE observed in the relationships between its participants; and thirdly, my ethnographic positioning as participant-observer. Drawing on dense research data accumulated in my observations over a four year period they combine to tell the story of the training process itself, from selection through to Graduation.

The study therefore offers descriptions of five aspects of this learning community to demonstrate how the culture of the community and the mediation between people work together to support, generate and sustain changes in the human condition. Two areas of interest are identified in the data: (1) The cultural practices of the community, analysed according to the framework for situated learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and (2) the
relationships between people, analysed according to the twelve parameters of MLE. A comparison of key elements found within both perspectives suggests a symbiosis that throws fresh light onto our understanding of how learning occurs in social participation.

Each micro-setting describes the nature of one key aspect of the community as it was experienced. But further to these descriptions, I use the term critical incidents to present specific dialogues or incidents observed in the relationships between people within these micro-settings to illustrate the various qualities of mediated learning observed between participants within this community, and the rich and complex nature of the story I choose to tell.

The critical incidents selected to be included here, and described in the study below, are therefore representative of a large number of such incidents witnessed by means of participant and non-participant observations in each of the five micro-settings, and recorded in my field notes in the three successive cohorts of apprenticeship followed in this investigation (see Appendix IV). The main principle for selecting these specific incidents was whether they were representative of what I observed in the three successive cycles of the apprentices’ training experience, and how certain meanings and practices were made transparent to newcomers in their informal dialogue in the natural course of their activities. The second principle for selection was to explore whether these informal dialogues were felt to be representative of the quality of the different qualities of mediation I witnessed over the three successive cycles of training.

Trustworthiness

The process by which we make claims for the trustworthiness of our interpretations in qualitative research is the critical issue, not the search for an objective truth (Riessman, 1993). Trustworthiness is vital in interpretive research to evaluate a study’s worth, achieved by establishing credibility; transferability; dependability and confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p 300). These concepts were helpful in building the research design used here.

Credibility, according to these methods, comes from prolonged engagement in the field and persistent observation. The literature on credibility tells us that engagement should be long enough to allow the researcher to become orientated to the situation; the researcher should blend into the culture of the setting and so not distort the quality of the data; the researcher
should rise above his/her own preoccupations and preconceptions; and allow the researcher to build trust with those s/he observes (Lincoln and Guba, op-cit).

Credibility in this case study is met by accumulating a rich source of data by means of numerous observations of cultural practices over a four-year period following three consecutive cycles of apprenticeship training. This thick description offers what is described as a means of transferability; a way of describing a phenomenon in sufficient detail that its circumstances, people and settings can be transferred to other situations (Lincoln and Guba, op-cit; Holloway, 1997; Geertz, 1973). Two further conditions of trustworthiness - Dependability and confirmability - were met by regularly sharing data with an independent researcher not involved with the research process.

Triangulation, considered an important aspect of confirmability, involves using multiple data sources to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon explored. Some see triangulation as a test of validation, but Algen argues that it is not always possible when using different sources to make sense between different accounts in the data, or assume that a weakness in one method will be compensated by another method (Angen, 2000). ‘Validity’, Bruner tells us, ‘is an interpretive concept, not an exercise in research design’ (Bruner, 1990, p 108; also see Janesick, 2003; Richardson, 2003). However, in all interpretive research, and ethnography in particular, the important issue for maintaining triangulation is that the investigation should be rich, well developed and comprehensive; and reflect a triangulation of sources of observations: at different points in time; of both macro and micro perspectives of the situation under investigation; and by comparing interpretations of people with different points of view (Lincoln and Guba, op-cit; Angen, op-cit; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003a).

Confirmability here therefore is met by regular feedback from, and discussion with participants from across all stakeholder groups throughout the four years of this investigation across the community who contributed to the data in some way, either through my observations of their practices, or by offering their own interpretations of what occurred and contributing to how these should be presented in the data.

However, Morse identifies a number of interesting drawbacks and problems with member checking (Morse, 1994). These include the notion that different stakeholders in a community may have different views of what is a fair account of what happened, and that
some members may strive to be seen as good people, just as researchers strive to be seen as good scholars. Such political forces are present in all organisations and communities of practice and need to be considered sensitively in our arguments (Friere, 1973; Wenger, 1998; Fullan, 2003). However, such dialogue and reflection leads to a richer and more developed understanding of complex phenomena (Morse, op-cit).

Feedback from actors in the research setting therefore offers an opportunity for the researcher to understand what participants meant by their actions, correct errors or wrong interpretation of the data, and allow them to offer additional information which might throw further light onto an interpretation of specific data. It also allows the opportunity for the researcher to share his/her preliminary findings, and collaborate with participants to ensure that data reflects an adequate account of what is being explored (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Hammersley, 1993). The section below offers a discussion on the ethical implications of these important issues.

7.4. Ethics

The ethical considerations of conducting educational research override all others (Wellington, 2000), and although every effort must be made to encourage collaboration with those being researched, the researcher should remain aware that s/he is still in a privileged position since it is the researcher who actually does the research, and disseminates its findings (Angrosino and de Perez, 2000). Moreover, it is difficult to predict in ethnographic research how a researcher’s presence in the culture of what is to be explored may impact on the lives of those being researched (Angrosino and de Perez, op-cit).

‘Openness and disclosure; reference in social studies to participants instead of informants; models of collaborative research that incorporate informed consent; all are components of [ethnographic] research, whether academic or applied, federally or privately funded, that is fully current with developments taking place in the world we study and the professions that study it. Informed consent may only be a convenient summary term for what has taken place in biomedical and social science research, but when its spirit is implemented it results in better researchers and better research’ (Fluehr-Lobban, 1994, p 8).
Therefore, discussions between myself and the organisation allowed everyone concerned to fully understand the implications and shared responsibilities of participating in the research process. This necessary awareness of all parties of the complexities of ethnographic research is emphasised by Angrosini and de Perez when they say:

‘It is difficult to prepare an informed consent when one cannot even begin to anticipate the possibilities which might flow from personalised interactions’.... ‘the researcher does not want to retreat to the objective cold of the classic observer role, but neither does he or she want to shirk the responsibility for doing everything possible to avoid hurting or embarrassing people...’, (Angrosini and de Perez, 2003, p137).

Therefore, the ethical principles which I found most helpful to guide my conduct as ethnographic researcher in this study were that I should (1) act towards others as one would wish they would act towards oneself, without bias or prejudice; and (2) conduct research in such a manner that it might be considered representative of the culture observed, and morally defensible in the ‘political contexts in which we have to conduct educational research’ (Pring, 2000, p 140; also see BERA, 2000; 2004).

A detailed agreement of ethical consent was consequently drawn up and duly signed in accordance with the ethical guidelines laid down by The School of Education and Lifelong Learning (SELL) at the University of Exeter between myself as researcher, and the Director of Fifteen Foundation responsible for the apprenticeship at Fifteen London; and individual agreements were drawn up between myself as researcher, and each participant observed and/or interviewed for the duration of the study. In accordance with these agreements, all descriptions and data used in this study have been included with the express permission of the organization and with the individual permission of its participants, past and present. All names of individuals have been changed in the thesis to protect their identity with the exception of Jamie Oliver and Fifteen London, since it was agreed that the celebrity status of both made it almost impossible to disguise. A signed copy of the ethical and confidentiality agreement agreed with the organisation can be found in Appendix II; an example of a signed copy of an agreement with an individual participant can be found in Appendix III; and a signed copy of the ethical approval awarded by the University of Exeter required to conduct this research study can be found in Appendix I.
The sensitive ethical and moral issues surrounding all educational research were compounded here by the celebrity status of this community and its individual participants; and further compounded by the participants’ willingness to speak openly to me either informally in the course of their daily practices, or in semi-structured interviews conducted towards the end of this investigation. Their openness was in sharp contrast to what I had been led to expect in relevant literature concerned with the need to foster ‘rapport’ between the researcher and the participants of a research setting (Oakley, 1981; also see Finch, 1993). Therefore, my ethnographic positioning meant I felt an even greater responsibility of the need to be scrupulous and reflexive in my conduct. Sensitive issues surrounding the good name of the organisation and its participants were taken into account in agreements with both the organisation and its individual participants (see Appendices 306 and 309), and every effort was made to ensure that these agreements were honoured in my own behaviour. Transcripts of interviews, and preliminary written accounts of observations were shared with individuals and groups of individuals at every stage of the thesis as it developed. These writings were regularly circularised by email where appropriate, or by hand in face-to-face meetings with the individuals concerned to ensure that everyone understood what was written, and had the opportunity to criticise, reflect and comment on how they were represented in the data. Moreover, sensitive issues pertaining to data included in the study were raised periodically in both feedback meetings with representatives of the organisation, and with the individuals concerned.

7.5. The setting

Conducting the major part of their business in the city of London, this growing organisation occupies ever-increasing office space yards away from the Fifteen restaurant which represents just one of the public faces of the organisation and a major focus for this study. Outside, on this quiet back street and a step away from the bustle of central London, participants from this ever-growing organisation are seen hurrying to and from the restaurant to the office, or office to office, greeting each other as they go about their business, mobile phones to ears. Chefs and trainee chefs in their kitchen whites are seen going on shift to the kitchen or towards the office, stopping for a word or two with friends and colleagues, to gossip or have a quick cigarette.

In order to understand this community, one needs to see it in its wider context and understand the kind of world its participants inhabit. For this is a world of good food, fine
eating, cookery books and celebrity, as well as that of the harsher realities of social responsibility and changing young peoples’ lives. Thus the fruits of talent and celebrity and the goals of social enterprise and education coexist to serve one another in a privileged and dynamic environment brought into existence through persistence, energy, passion, hard work and co-operation. Fifteen Foundation is a registered charity and a major artery of an international organisation comprising a number of food related companies with a shared history; and it is in the context of this community of communities that this study is set.

7.6. The five micro-settings

The five narratives presented in Chapter Eight tell the story of one complete cycle of training from selection through to Graduation. Using my understanding of all these settings, these five narratives describe critical incidents to illustrate how the informal dialogue observed between participants can be analysed according to the parameters of MLE.

The first micro-setting presents my observations of the three stages of the selection process. It illustrates how selection is made on the basis of candidates’ enthusiasm for food, personal attributes, general demeanour, and whether, in the judges’ opinion, they have the potential abilities to become a good chef. The selection process therefore serves as an exemplar of the culture of the environment, since novice participants are selected not on their prior knowledge or experiences, but on the basis that they appear to have the potential to develop the abilities required to adapt and ‘fit into’ the community.

The second micro-setting describes the trainees’ formal training at college, where trainees firstly learn the basic skills of Health and Safety, the minimum requirement for working in a professional kitchen. They are then qualified to enter the kitchen for part of their working week. This second narrative uses the story of one group of trainees at the stage in their training when they are learning to balance the expectations of college with the expectations of the professional kitchen. It uses critical incidents to describe their working practices within this environment and their growing expertise to become chefs.

The third micro-setting describes ‘service’ shifts in the professional kitchen. It describes the structure of the ‘brigade’, or hierarchy of the master/apprentice relationships in this environment and uses critical incidents observed there to illustrate how mediation between
people effects the process of ‘becoming’ a legitimate participant, a notion central to Lave and Wenger’s argument for situated learning.

The fourth micro-setting presents one sourcing trip, to illustrate what is considered to be an important aspect of training where trainees learn the provenance of produce used in the kitchen. It offers a narrative of my experience when I accompanied one group of trainees on a sourcing trip to Tuscany. Visiting Tuscany is always considered to be a highlight of the training programme which is timed to coincide with an important point in the trainees’ development when they are beginning to understand the quality and integrity of fine produce. Visiting Tuscany, its vineyards, and meeting the wine growers there was to have a profound effect on many of the young people who were exposed to this experience, as well as myself, and so helped to shape this study.

The fifth and last micro-setting describes the environment of the general office where practical and welfare issues are administered and illustrates how the culture of the general office and its key participants have a pivotal role to play in the trainees’ social and emotional development.

The study therefore starts at the beginning of the training cycle with the selection process, and follows the trainees’ experiences, as it does my own. An analysis of the implications of my findings from these experiences are then discussed in Chapter Nine.
8.1. Micro-setting one: the selection process

As described above and outlined briefly here again for clarity, the selection process at the time of the study was in four stages. Each year, hundreds of paper applications arrive at the office of the Foundation from a number of sources - probation and youth offenders services, prison services and welfare organisations, and many other young people download the application form from the Foundation’s website. The precise number of applications varies widely from year to year, from nine hundred the year that the training programme was broadcast on television, and the first year of the study, to one hundred and twenty applications two years later. A paper selection reduces this number for first interview, but this number also varies from year to year. Those applicants referred directly from probation and welfare services are given priority for the second stage of selection, an interview with the Foundation.

The main criterion for every stage of selection is always can they demonstrate a passion for food, and do they need us? That is, would they make it without us? In this way, only young people who had experienced trouble in the past or tell stories of failure to get started in other programmes or endeavours are accepted. One or two young people from more stable backgrounds might be included if they are considered likely to be good role models for the group.

Sixty candidates are then selected to go through to a second interview, what is referred to as the ‘tasting’ test. Following this, thirty likely candidates are then invited to attend a three-day challenge weekend in Wales for the third and final selection of twenty successful candidates who two weeks later enter full-time training. The unsuccessful ten remaining candidates who attend in Wales are usually offered an interview in a conventional training programme in catering and hospitality at vocational college. The following narrative is an account of the selection process as it was experienced at the time of this study.

The first and second interviews at that time were conducted at the vocational college where trainees completed NVQ levels I and II as part of the programme. For this formal part of the programme, trainees follow an accelerated and bespoke training, designed by the college for the Foundation. Following their completion of NVQ I, trainees enter the professional
kitchen for the first time. The relationship between college and the Foundation is therefore very much a partnership, and teacher-chefs at college are involved in every stage of the selection process. The rest of this chapter is an account of my experience of this process and each stage is discussed separately here below.

1. The first interview

Early one cold February morning in 2004, as I walked the short distance from the Underground station to the large and impersonal surroundings of the college campus I was struck by its marked contrast to the small inclusive atmosphere of the office and the kitchen of the restaurant. It was early in my relationship with the Foundation, so many of its practices were still new to me, and this was to be my first observation of the whole selection process. Although by this time I knew the offices of the Foundation, and had been in the restaurant kitchen a number of times, I still felt very much a newcomer in other aspects of this organization.

A long line of cold and anxious-looking young people, many without coats or jackets to protect them from the sharp wind whipping round the corner of the building, stood with me outside the doors, waiting to be allowed into the comparative warmth of the building. A big pink sign stuck temporarily across the glass door told us that we were waiting at the right entrance.

Like them, I was early. One of the participants from the Foundation arrived and recognised me waiting outside. She greeted me and led me into the comparative warmth of the building and, a few minutes later all the applicants filed in, gave their names at the reception desk and were invited to take a seat on rows of chairs which had been set up for the purpose.

In what I learnt was the Hospitality and Catering Department of the college there was an outer area used today for reception and an informal dining area for meeting and waiting. There was a real buzz amongst the Foundation’s participants as they moved through the reception area, an atmosphere of new beginnings, and a strong sense of purpose. Other familiar faces smiled at me as they walked past. I realised with surprise that some of them were chefs that I had met in the kitchen, looking so different and very young out of their chef’s whites. I was invited to observe what I wanted and taken to meet some of the judges.
A very large room has been partitioned into small compartments for conducting interviews. The judges sat at tables in pairs opposite the candidate. Judges included chefs from both college and the professional kitchen, trustees of the Foundation and key personnel of the organisation. I learnt later that the organisation encourages participants to take part in the selection process since it offers an insight into the dual function of the Foundation: training young people to become highly skilled chefs qualified to serve the fine food industry but furthermore, changing young lives in the process.

The judges had been directed to ask candidates similar questions of the following nature: what they liked to cook; who they enjoyed cooking for; what triggered their interest in cooking; why they enjoyed it and what they hoped to get out of the training. As I listened to the judges’ comments, it seemed to me, at the time of writing, that a further criterion for selection might be ‘likeability’ in the candidate. This observation seemed strange until I learnt through my own experience that in a professional kitchen, people work in close proximity for long periods of time. In the culture and practices of a professional kitchen, I can understand how ‘likeability’ and a sense of humour might become increasingly helpful attributes during a busy service when natural tensions in the dynamics of personal relationships can become strained.

After a short lunch break, I went to sit in reception where six current trainees, already working in the kitchen and half way through their training, acted as guides to show candidates where to go whilst they waited to meet the judges. They had been told at the beginning of the day to talk to the candidates, make them feel comfortable, answer any questions and tell them what to expect. Their comments and exchanges were scribbled directly in my journal as they were overheard. I have included them here as they were written at the time, since it seems to me their impact as an example of the hierarchy of the apprentice model is self-evident. An analysis of the quality of mediation offered by the trainees towards the candidates throughout their communication is also documented.

**Critical Incident (1)**

‘Candidate 1 to trainee 1: “...I’ve just found out I’m dyslexic.”
Candidate 2: “Yeah...Do we have that writing “shit”??”
Trainee 1: “No! Most of this group cannot read and write...you get lots of help...did you know Jamie’s (Jamie Oliver) dyslexic...?”

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(Mediation of Sharing; Mediation of Belonging)

Candidate 2: “Do you get paid while you are training ...how much?”
Trainee 1: “You get housing benefit, travel and that, but you don’t have time to spend your money! You’re working too hard! You get obsessed with food!”

(Mediation of meaning; Mediation of the Awareness of the Human Being as a Changing Entity)

Candidate 3: “I suppose you get passionate about cooking....?”
Trainee 1: “Oh yeah!...you can’t imagine...!”

(Mediation of Transcendence)

Trainee 2, joining in: “Cooking is a great way of life - its all about passion, travel, good living...you have to concentrate, but that’s OK...”

(Mediation of Transcendence; Mediation of Meaning)

Trainee 3, joining in: “There’s plenty of ways to make money in this business. Last week I went to the fish market and saw how the deals are done.”

(Mediation of Transcendence: Mediation of Sharing)

Trainee 4: “It’s very exciting. You get the full range of emotions - it’s difficult, it’s fun, it’s exhausting, it’s great, it’s....all of it!”

(Mediation of Transcendence: Mediation of Meaning)


Of interest here is the opportunity that this experience provides the current group of trainees to observe these candidates, these newcomers, and pass on the knowledge of the community they have acquired and reflect on the changes in their own development since their own
interviews the previous year. And we know from research elsewhere that MLE effects the mediator as well as the mediatee (Kaufman, 2001; Lidz, 1995). It can therefore be assumed that the dialogue between the candidates (the newcomers) and the trainees (the participants) served as a learning experience for both. Moreover, the trainees’ participation in and contribution to the activity of the selection process implies a feeling of belonging to the community of practice; and sharing in the activities of the enterprise which goes far beyond what mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity might imply. In such a dialogue, mediation is not consciously and specifically directed from one individual to another, or even from one individual towards the group, but nevertheless is permeated throughout the culture of the community in the activities of its participants.

The second interview: the taster test

It was now February 2005, and trainee recruitment time again; a busy time of year for participants in the Foundation, when the existing group of trainees selected last year have completed NVQ 1 and are now working in the kitchen. As these trainees become more experienced and knowledgeable in how things are done, they make room for the newcomers who come after them, emphasising as they do so the hierarchical system of the apprenticeship model.

I had been asked by the organisation to teach the trainees thinking skills to support their learning and so today was to help judge the tasting test for the new intake of trainees that I would be working with. The ‘demo’ kitchen where the tastings were conducted is ‘high-tech’ and I joined the other judges to watch from raised platform desks with individual television monitors. Occasionally, we were handed a ‘taster’ spoon, on which a beautifully prepared and presented concoction of something wonderful, perhaps a scallop, pomegranate juice, and salad herbs laid out a white china spoon to stimulate the taste buds. Tasting these samples ourselves helped us understand how some of the candidates said the foie gras tasted like ‘cheese’ or perhaps the scallop tasted ‘salty’. We do not look for knowledge in the candidate, we look for curiosity, passion - the ‘WOW!’ factor, the excitement.

Two of the youngest trainees from the current group had been selected to work beside the professional chefs to prepare food samples offered to this year’s candidates. I had followed both these young trainees’ development from their selection the previous year and throughout their training whilst collecting data for the pilot study. Now, here they were in
their chefs’ whites, competently acting out their part to allow the candidates to feel relaxed and comfortable. The following excerpt is taken directly from my journal and records my impressions of them both.

‘They looked confident, professional and clean. The boy, Stuart, had been seriously underweight when he first came to us and now looks healthier and stronger. The girl, Vicky, has lost that anxious nervous look I first noticed in her behaviour at interview. She looked totally confident in what she was being asked to do. She seemed calmer and her skin is clear. They both looked bright, fresh, motivated and fully engaged in the task. Their demeanour towards the new candidates was a pleasure to watch. It was quite humbling to compare them now to how they had appeared in their own interviews exactly one year before.’


The following dialogues are examples of what was recorded in my journal in this setting. The different qualities of mediation applied by one set of participants to another has been added here to identify how these dialogues can be analysed within the theoretical framework of MLE.

Critical Incident (2)

‘Vicky: Hi...(offered hand to shake) “…my name is Vicky and this is Stuart. We are last year’s trainees. We’d like you to taste this, and tell us what you think.” She indicated a plate with two china tasting spoons which held a prepared combination of foods.

(Mediation of a feeling of belonging, intentionality and reciprocity, meaning)

The candidate tastes. They give him time, offering water between mouthfuls, offering the bin to spit if the candidate demonstrates that he does not like it. They gently prompt the candidate with comments such as:

“What do you think…?”
“Do you like it...?  
“What do you like about it...?  
“Which do you prefer...?  
“Why...?  
“What can you taste in there...?  
“Anything else...?

(Mediation of regulation and control)

It was noted that the judges tried not to intervene at all (representing mediation of competence by the chefs towards the trainees).

After the candidate has finished the taster, Vicky asked the candidate if s/he would like to know what they were eating. Now it was Stuart’s turn to speak:

“You were eating raw scallops with lemon, olive oil, cranberries.....”, etc.

All this was explained fluently and confidently, with no hesitation or sloppy sentence formation.

In between interviews was a five minute break to give judges time to evaluate the candidates and give each other feedback. It was then that the hierarchy of mediation was most obvious.

Mark, the training Manager, said to Trainees.

“Well done, guys. When they, (the candidates), say nothing, don’t rush them, but try and get them to think of all the different flavours. And don’t tell them they can spit it out until they show that they are not going to swallow it, but don’t let them choke!”

(Mediation of competence; regulation and control)

And later:
Mark to Trainees: “Com’n guys! These new guys need you! Take up the challenge! Seize the day! Seize the moment!

(Strong mediation of regulation and control; challenge; mediation of an optimistic alternative)

Mark to Chefs: “Guys - try to keep your marking consistent. Compare these marks to the ones you gave first thing this morning. I think you need to modify them - you were a bit too generous in some cases and hard in others.”

(Mediation of regulation and control)

Chefs to Trainees: “That was good, but get them to say what they think they can taste.”

(Mediation of competence; regulation and control)

After the next interview, Mark gave both chefs and trainees further feedback, thus:

Mark to Trainees: “Wonderful! Much better! Do you see what I mean? That was really great...”

(Strong mediation of competence; mediation of optimistic alternative)

To chefs, “...wasn’t that great?” (prompting mediation of competence from chefs to trainees),

Chefs to trainees: “That was wonderful - you are really getting into this now.”

(Strong mediation of competence)

Stuart started getting restless mid morning, walking away from his station behind the taster table, sitting down during the interviews and not contributing
to the discussion after each candidate left the room. So whilst Mark is talking to Vicky and the chefs, he uses a different style of mediation with Stuart:

Mark to Stuart: “Stuart! What are you doing, mate? Why are you sitting down? Com’n! You’re working here. You need to stay focussed”.

(Strong mediation of regulation and control)

Stuart: “I’m tired. I had a late night.

Mark: “I’m not interested. Com’n! I need you to do this now!

(Strong mediation of regulation and control; challenge; a feeling of belonging)


These critical incidents can be unpicked both within the theoretical frameworks for a community of practice and MLE. And whilst these incidents have been analysed here within the parameters of MLE, there is another, and perhaps more meaningful agenda within the MLE framework. For what is being clearly mediated here by all the judges and chefs towards the trainees, is their clear intentionality and the reciprocity or feedback expected from their mediatees at this point in their understanding. The Trainee Manager also provided trainees with mediation of meaning - that is, what is expected of them and why - and mediation of individuation and a feeling of value and worth to the community. Thus from the beginning, trainees have legitimate periphery participation in the community of practice. Here, we have an example of how and why the theoretical frameworks of MLE and situated learning work so well together to serve one another; and helps illuminate what happens in the learning process of the newcomer as s/he travels along his or her trajectory of development towards full participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Feuerstein and Rand, 1979).

At five o’clock the last of fifty-five candidates leaves and we take all the notes, scores and photos into the large reception area. We lay everything out on a long table to select thirty candidates to take to Wales for the last part of the interview process. The two main criteria for selection still apply here: how much do they need us, and how passionate are they about
food. The preferred referral institutions, Probation and Prison Services, do not apply at this level of selection. Some preferred applicants are rejected as being too challenging in terms of reform within the given time-frame, as Fifteen London only have eighteen months to get a young person through training and into the industry. Or, some of these applicants do not really seem to be passionate about food; and this passion or lack of it is clear to those of us observing as soon as candidates are around food in the demonstration kitchen. We share some of our observations of all the candidates’ attitude to the food offered and scrutinise their suitability for the programme. Now the ‘likeability’ factor comes into play, and experienced judges rely on what they describe as, ‘gut instinct’ for who would be most likely to fit into the ‘family of Fifteen’ and cope with the rigours of accelerated training. The main body of successful candidates selected to go to Wales are those individuals who told stories of negative experiences at school or personal difficulties.

The following year, and after I had watched the taster interviews for the third time, my reflections on the day were again documented in my journal on my journey home.

‘Observing another cycle of the ‘tasting’ process today gives me the opportunity to see the process of selection repeated. Again, in their kitchen whites, knives at hand, it is last year’s two trainees in the demo kitchen with the candidates who impress me most, and confirm that this aspect of the programme at least appears to be the dynamic interaction between both legitimate peripheral participation and mediated learning in the hierarchy and culture of the professional chef. The trainees’ accoutrements of the trade (knives, chopping board, fine produce) are the tools of Wenger’s description and the vocabulary, manner, even the way they stand after three or four hours on their feet reminds me how the successive generations of trainees take on the mannerisms, artifacts and body language of the culture. It is fascinating to witness it all happening again, and have the relationship of these two theories illustrated again so vividly, here, in front of my eyes.

(Research journal, 16th February, 2006).
3. Third Interview: a challenge weekend in Wales

Thirty candidates, five trainees to mentor the candidates; three professional chefs; two teaching chefs from college; key personnel and I travel by coach to arrive in Wales at about five o’clock on a cold afternoon in early March. It is two weeks since these thirty young people had learnt by telephone that they had been selected to go to Wales. Some of these young Londoners, more used to an urban setting, had never been to Wales before, or even travelled outside London. Others had been abroad on holiday but not to a rural setting and seemed ill-prepared for what was to be a muddy trip to the countryside in winter. When we arrived at the Scout accommodation which was to be our home for the next two days, it was getting dark and starting to snow.

Trainees and candidates worked together to empty the coach’s hold of bags, pots, pans, condiments and spices, flour, rice and the other accoutrements which had been brought with us for the basic tools of a professional working kitchen. A large gas heated barbecue was carefully lifted down from the coach and placed in the cobbled courtyard. Candidates were quickly organised into three groups of ten and given specific tasks to organise the scout hut for our requirements. The team working in the kitchen area were given chef whites to put on, and in two hours, the chefs, trainee chefs and these candidates had transformed the sparse and unwelcoming space of the scout’s kitchen into a hub of activity, warmth and life.

Thus, similar to the five apprenticeships described by Lave and Wenger, every candidate participated, however minimally, in the culture of the community emphasising as they do so legitimate periphery participation in the enterprise of the community (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Significantly, each candidate was to be judged on how much and how willingly they participated in all these activities described here.

Whilst all this was going on, and until the building warmed up, the judges stood around in their coats and gloves clutching hot drinks, or smoking cigarettes outside in the cobbled courtyard, watching the candidates behaviour. I was introduced to the people whose company were responsible for operating the challenge weekend, and the team building tasks planned for the next two days. Every year, these same people generously give their time and resources to the Foundation. Their experience and expertise in recognising the personal attributes required for this demanding programme are greatly respected by the Foundation.
Therefore, from the first moment we met to board the coach that morning and throughout the weekend, the demeanour of each candidate became crucial to their selection.

The preparation of food is very much a part of the whole Wales experience. Candidates are expected to make themselves useful, offering to do whatever needs to be done at the time, making a contribution to the group and the activities. The first evening, two trainee chefs worked in the kitchen attended by the applicants preparing the salad, potatoes and helping the other chefs getting the barbecue ready for the lamb which was to be our supper. Everyone else, chefs, trainees and candidates stood around outside enjoying the fierce heat from the barbecue and, as a comparative newcomer myself, I felt the impact of this shared experience as Jamie Oliver joined in with the cooking and joking, passing us food as he did so and wanting to know about the progress of this study.

The mediation offered by the more experienced participants towards the newcomers through this experience was not always direct, not was it individualised, but nevertheless, its message was very clear to most of the candidates. It was as if the old-timers, those more familiar with how things are done were setting up the right conditions or atmosphere for meaningful learning to take place through cultural transmission, even in this preliminary experience of the community. This would correspond to creating the conditions of a modifying environment (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997). In a subtle, indirect way, it was as if the old-timers were saying to the candidates: *this is who we are; this is how things are done in this community; and this is what we expect of you too; so make an effort to show us how you can learn to adapt to fit in with us and perhaps there is a place here for you.*

This phenomenon could also be interpreted as providing newcomers with aspects of MLE, specifically mediation of intentionality and reciprocity; mediation of meaning; mediation of challenge; mediation of regulation and control; mediation of an optimistic alternative; mediation of belonging; and mediation of sharing. These qualities of mediation are thus implied in the ongoing practices of the community, or what Bruner refers to as the folk psychology of the community (Bruner, 2002; Olson and Bruner, 1996). It seems to me therefore, that as we *reflect in action* the impact of what we do, while we do it (Schon, 1991), we also mediate to the learner - consciously or unconsciously - that which we need him/her to understand.
Out of thirty candidates attending Wales that year, nine were female. A professional kitchen is a tough environment, and often male dominated. I learn in the course of my investigation over the next few years that female chefs are enormously respected in the world of chefs, but they have to make themselves heard. Judges therefore look for those girls who are not intimidated by others and can stand their ground with the boys. However, not everyone in a kitchen needs to be noisy, and strength of character does not equate to a loud personality. It is acknowledged by the judges that a quiet person can make a huge contribution to the team but they also have to learn how to gain respect from their peers.

The following morning, my journal describes the first activity of the day, a bread-making demonstration to the candidates. My journal recorded the following:

**Critical Incident (3)**

‘Jamie’s communication was direct and clear. He began by explaining that the preparation of food, and bread in particular is the ‘stuff of life’. As he worked the flour and yeast together, nothing was measured, everything was proportional. Very touchy feel-y. He explained plainly but effectively that, “when yeast had a dump, it gives off carbon dioxide that…”’.

*While he talked and worked, he made lots of eye-contact with the candidates, encouraging their questions with further open-ended questions. At different points in the demonstration he included members of the team from different levels of the organisation into the dialogue, first trainees, then chefs, then to us, the participants. At each stage of the preparation he handed the bowl around to us all: “feel it, smell it, touch it, love it...when food is prepared with love you can taste it...”’.*

*Candidates were asked to organise themselves into pairs to make their own dough. They worked really hard, aware of Jamie’s presence. They were then asked to put all their dough balls together for them to prove whilst we went outside for the second activity of the morning. One applicant had made his name out of dough as if he was in a pottery class at school. Another would not put his dough with the others’ until Jamie had seen it, and I overheard Adam, a trainee say quietly to this candidate,*
“We’re doing all this as a team here, mate”.

‘Jamie called out to the group: “Bring it all together here, that’s right. Cover it all with foil whilst we go out”. Another candidate said loudly, “I don’t want to put mine with the other guys’ shit!”, but Jamie said, “We’re all passed that individual thing here, mate, com’n, put it here with ours’.’

(Mediation of intentionality and reciprocity; mediation of sharing behaviour; mediation of a feeling of belonging; mediation of regulation and control; mediation of meaning).


The participants communicated in their mediation to the candidates that the intention was to show candidates that the meaning of the shared activity of food preparation goes far deeper than merely demonstrating a recipe for technical expertise, or providing the next meal; it was mediated to these newcomers as the stuff of life itself.

In the activities that followed over the next day and a half, it became increasingly obvious to the judges who were the dominant personalities in the group. Some would shout out good ideas to their team mates but no one listened. But others waited and organised their team mates quietly when they ran out of ideas. It therefore took a lively debate between the judges to agree who should be finally offered a place on the programme.

In this micro-setting I have described the three key stages of the selection process. In doing so, I have attempted to give the reader an insight into the culture as it was experienced and the impact it made on both the candidates and myself. Moreover, it was through this experience that I began to understand the multilayered cultural and historical complexities of this learning environment and it is to mediate to the reader the meaning of that experience that this description is intended.

8.2. Micro-setting two: vocational college

Two weeks after they met their mentor Jamie Oliver in Wales, and had the excitement of being told they had gained a place on the Foundation’s training programme, the twenty newly selected trainees find themselves back in a formal learning environment at college.
Until they have achieved their NVQ level 1 in Hospitality and Catering these young people cannot enter the professional kitchen.

There are two strands to formal training for NVQ I and II: practical sessions, practising how to make dishes according to a recipe and method, and completing a set of worksheets. These worksheets include recipes based on these practical sessions, and explain the meaning of vocabulary, descriptions of sauces, procedures and methods of cooking. Sessions at college cover both these strands, but completing the worksheets for the file are problematic for many of the trainees. Help for dyslexic students is offered by college to those who are willing to admit that this aspect of training is difficult for them.

At the beginning of their training, the Foundation provide each trainee with a basic set of knives in a canvas case which s/he is expected to treat with great care and respect. If these knives are lost, trainees are provided with a replacement set but expected to pay back their value to the Foundation by having a small amount deducted from their wages each week until the full amount is paid. Money matters are discussed in more detail below in 8.5., the micro-setting of the Foundation office.

Knives represent a chef’s tools of the trade, and trainees are expected to always keep their knives clean, sharp, and ready for use; and always take them to wherever they work, college and kitchen alike. Over the years of the study, I often saw trainees looking through trade magazines or the internet, in order to select knives to add to their set or replace those already given. Chefs learn from each other which manufacturer of knives are the best for specific procedures, and selection and the sharing of information about knives becomes an ongoing dialogue.

For the first three months of the programme, trainees attend college four days a week and on the fifth day, they are exposed to one of the many other aspects of education and support offered by the Foundation. These days may include workshops or counselling about substance abuse; money management; housing advice; and social welfare. Another day they may be taken on what the Foundation call, ‘sourcing trips’; farms and factories who manufacture or rear the many fine produces used in the restaurant such as lamb; poultry; pork; cheeses; jams and conserves, to name a few. Each year, a highlight of training is a sourcing trip to Tuscany which is the subject of micro-setting 8.4. described later in this
chapter. But for the moment, to these novice apprentices at college, the promise of Tuscany is still a distant dream.

For some of these young people, who admitted they had not fully participated in formal education for many years, the structure and discipline of college can represent a challenge. They learn that if they do not arrive at college, their absence is noticed. Moreover, from the moment they begin training, these young people are reminded that they have been selected for training in preference to many others. On many occasions I witnessed conversations between participants in which a trainee was told that they would be risking their reputation with the Foundation and subsequently their apprenticeship if they do not comply with the rules. The industry of fine food takes time-keeping and reliability very seriously and therefore, so too does the Foundation. Playing truant like a schoolchild is therefore not an option. Some in the group however, find conformity easier than others and as the group get to know each other they learn to trust the system they find themselves in, and see their time at college as a necessary and essential first step.

In the four years of collecting data for this study, I observed many training sessions of the novice trainees working with their teacher-chefs at college. My research journal documents details of a wide variety of dialogues and incidents of shared practice and instruction between the teacher-chefs and their students. In the following narrative I describe one such example which would seem to illustrate some of the most powerful aspects of this micro-setting.

At the time of the session described here, trainees had successfully competed their NVQ I one month before and just begun training for NVQ II. As a consequence, and in addition to still attending college for formal vocational training one day a week, they were now getting used to the routine and demands of professional life. On this particular day at college, they were learning how to fillet a whole plaice, de-boning, skinning, and cleaning the fish in preparation for a dish. All fine restaurants butcher and prepare their own meat and fish and so these procedures represent a defining aspect of training.

The preparation of the complete dish was demonstrated by Michael, the teacher-chef, in the ‘demo’ kitchen, and trainees sat at elevated desks in front of monitors to watch him. Two trainees assisted Michael at the demonstration bench. From where I sat, I was able to observe the trainees’ varying levels of attention to what was presented. Some were fully
engaged in what Michael was doing, watching their monitor screen, and writing in their files. Others watched Michael without referring to their monitor or writing in their files. One or two were not fully engaged in either, but sat distracted and fidgety. Throughout the demonstration of first the knife skills required for filleting the fish, and then the recipe for the dish, Michael gave a detailed and continuous commentary of what he was doing, and why he was doing it, only pausing to write the recipe on the whiteboard as he proceeded. His manner was quiet and methodical, and he was able to keep most of the group focussed without needing to raise his voice. Sometimes, he would ask the group a question, which I assumed at the time referred to prior knowledge, drawing in those trainees who did not seem to be fully focussed, reminding them they would be making the dish themselves later in the morning.

When the dish was finished and on the plate, trainees were invited to come down to the demonstration bench to examine its presentation on the plate more closely and taste each component of the dish, discussing its textures and flavours. I learnt through my own experience that such analysis of a dish is the shared language of chefs. After a brief break the trainees were told to put on their chef whites for the practical session. I followed them into the training kitchen to watch what was to follow, and see how these novice chefs were to put into action what they had just been taught.

In the kitchen, and in their chef whites, it seemed to me that these young trainees appeared visibly more relaxed and confident than in the previous session. Moreover, my journal records that what immediately impressed me was their apparent focus and discipline, and sense of anticipation. They stood to attention at their stations, looking like chefs, knives in hand, waiting to be given their ingredients and their first instruction. ‘Yes, chef!’ tells the teacher chef that any instruction given has been heard and understood. In a busy professional kitchen such disciplined and immediate feedback is vital to the head chef in charge of what is called the pass from the kitchen to the restaurant, so these trainees need to learn the meaning and significance of such prompt communication. In this manner the discipline of ‘the brigade’ or hierarchy of the kitchen is instilled from the beginning of training. The brigade of the kitchen is discussed in more detail below, in the micro-setting of the professional kitchen (8.3.).

The trainees worked in pairs to make the dish. As one partner prepared the other ingredients, the other filleted the fish, a tricky and delicate operation. Some trainees
watched their partners do this, or talked the other through it. Trainees were reminded to get their jacket potato into the oven to bake whilst the other procedures were carried out. All the while, Michael quietly and calmly walked around the room, pausing at each workbench, checking that each trainee with a filleting knife was holding first the knife and then the fish correctly, feeling for the end of the bone, where to make an incision in the skin, etc.

As I circulated the room, trainees proudly showed me their fillets as they waited for Michael’s critique: first looking to see whether the fillet had come cleanly off the bone; then whether they had wasted any fish when they skinned the fillet; and whether they had trimmed the fillet properly so it was ready for the dish. As he carefully handled the fillets, so not to bruise the flesh, he examined their work, sometimes pointing out where it could be improved.

Michael told me that in a professional kitchen, this entire dish should take no more then twenty minutes. These apprentices were today given an hour and a half in which to learn how to do it.

Aristotle tells us,

‘We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence is not an act but a habit.’,

and by the time these novice chefs graduate they are expected to perform all the skills learnt at college at a vastly accelerated rate.

While I watched these young people I was reminded at the time of what a trainee from the previous year had told me of his experience of trying to get faster in the skills and practices of the kitchen:

‘It doesn’t seem to matter how much I practice, I can’t do it as fast as the chefs’... (the old-timers)....’ How do they do it! I watched Giovanni making gnocchi this morning and it looked so easy! Mine end up all right but it takes me too long. I need to get faster. But I try and try and I still can’t get anywhere near as fast as him!’

(Research Journal, 29th April, 2005).
Timing in all things culinary is vital to both the success of the dish and success of the enterprise of the restaurant; but good skills are the first and most essential aspect of training and thus the prime focus of this learning experience.

As the trainees finished their dishes, Michael asked for them to be brought to one workbench, ready to be discussed. Trainees immediately began to clean their workstations, with little or no prompting from Michael to do so. In one or two cases, it was interesting to see that partners regulated one another, complaining when they needed help to wash up, or pointing out that they had already done the bulk of the cleaning on their own. Nothing was left unclean. The gas hobs, the work surfaces, utensils and dishes were all washed and dried. Michael inspected each cleaned station as he moved around, checking that utensils and condiments had been put away.

**Critical incident (4)**

This done, everyone turned their attention to the dishes. Michael paid meticulous attention to the comparative quality of flavours, textures and overall appearance of the dishes and marks were awarded accordingly. The following dialogue was recorded in my journal. The qualities of mediation are added here for clarity and emphasis.

Michael: ‘Whose is this? Sam and Pete. Who did the spuds? It’s a good dish, Sam. But the potato lets it down. It should be far smoother. Maybe another few minutes cooking time before it was mashed would have helped.’

And Michael to Tim: ‘Did you do this sauce? It tastes good, Tim, but it’s a bit oily. See how it’s separating here? We shouldn’t see that. How much did you use?’

(Mediation of competence; regulation and control)

*As the discussion became more general, trainees discussed the dishes with each other.*

Tim to Danny, another trainee: ‘*Look at how much olive oil the chefs use in the kitchen! I bet they (the chefs) would use more than this in their dishes.*’
Danny: ‘Yeah, but he was talking about it separating, wasn’t he? Maybe you needed to mix it for longer so it’s really blended. And in sauces it depends on what the other ingredients are, doesn’t it? We had olives and anchovies in the sauce here, so I suppose they have lots of oil in them as well, don’t they?’

Tim: ‘S’pose so. I love decent olive oil. This oil isn’t nearly as good as the oil we use in the kitchen.’

Danny: ‘What...the Fontodi?’

Tim: ‘Yeah.’

(NB ‘Fontodi’ oil from Tuscany is a particular brand of cold pressed virgin olive oil of the highest quality used in the restaurant only to finish a dish and dress salads before the ‘pass’, so it is used sparingly and treated with great respect by the kitchen. Another good but less expensive oil is used in the restaurant for cooking).

Tim: ‘Did you hear what happened the other day?’

Danny: ‘What?’

Tim: ‘George and Matthew cooked their breakfast sausages with Fontodi before the early shift! Both giggle.

Danny: ‘Did Alfie (Head Chef) go mental?’

Tim: ‘Yeah.’ They both giggle again.

Danny: ‘Blimey. They won’t do that again.’

(Mediation of meaning; reciprocity; sharing and a feeling of belonging)

Tim: ‘Are you on tomorrow?’ (meaning ‘on’ the rota for the kitchen shift)
Danny: ‘Yeah’.

Tim: ‘In the morning?’

Danny: ‘Yeah, Breakfast. And I’ve got a meeting with Carri (the trainee chef) first about the shift I missed last week’.

(Mediation of sharing; regulation and control)

‘Michael interrupts them.

Michael: “Guys! Listen. You need to go and get your folders and write this recipe up now. Please do not leave the room before doing it. Karen, show me your folder so I can see how you wrote up last week’s work. If you have forgotten your folder again it just gives you more to do next week.”

(Mediation of intentionality; regulation and control)

(Research Journal, 6th May, 2006).

It would seem from this incident that these trainees are already beginning to develop an identity with kitchen practices, but have to reconcile the demands of the workplace with formal training. This tension increases as trainees are expected to juggle individual meetings in regard to practical issues or personal development; the demands of their teacher chefs at college; and the expectations of professional chefs in the workplace.

In this section I have endeavoured to provide the reader with an understanding of the college training environment at the time, using the example of one critical incident to illustrate the nature of the mediation between people within that environment. In the next micro-setting (8.3.) I describe my first experience of being in the working kitchen which coincided with that of an earlier group of novice trainees. It illuminates the key differences between the cultures of the training and professional environments, and consequently the nature of the mediation between people within those different environments.
8.3. Micro-setting three: the kitchen

Introduction

In the previous two micro-settings, I described the selection process of candidates, and the vocational setting of college, where newly recruited trainees take NVQ Level I to be eligible for employment in the professional kitchen. They are then qualified to join the professional chefs as legitimate participants in the workplace, the professional kitchen, which provides the third micro-setting presented here. The professional kitchen is at the very heart of the training programme of Fifteen London, and the ‘engine room’ of the organisation, and it is here, in this environment, that these young people serve their true apprenticeship.

To set the stage for the drama of the working kitchen, the following narrative begins with a description of the physical space of the professional kitchen and the restaurant it serves. It goes on to describe my own personal experience of this environment, and then presents critical incidents which occurred during these many observations that would seem to illustrate not only the mediation between people that I want to emphasise but also Lave and Wenger’s four essential questions for Situated Learning (see above). Like the previous micro-settings described above, this narrative draws on incidents and experiences recorded directly into my field notes and research journal during the course of conducting this study.

The Restaurant

The restaurant is located in a quiet backstreet in the city of London, and its clientele are a lively mix of local business people, those who appreciate authentic Italian cooking as well as tourists and sightseers from all over the world.

The restaurant is on two floors and each floor functions more or less separately, serving different kinds of food. The front entrance from the street leads directly into the trattoria, which serves rustic Italian cooking. Strings of chilli and peppers hand on hooks over the counter where guests are first greeted by a luscious display and aroma of fresh anti pasta laid out along a long bar. Cooked peppers, aubergines, courgette, green olives and lemons nestle in vast terra cotta dishes, glistening in olive oil and fresh herbs. These beautiful dishes jostle for space along the bar with plates of lemon tart, chocolate mousse and perfect brownies. Behind the counter, five or six chefs and trainees busily produce grills, pasta and
other simple fare for the trattoria customers. Fresh pasta is prepared here early every morning, and during the breakfast shift, when it is always busy. One or two chefs, sometimes professional, sometimes trainee, stand at a wooden table making pasta. Over the years of this study, I learnt that everyone from the kitchen loves taking their turn to make the pasta: sometimes linguini, sometimes gnocchi, ravioli or other pasta that I had never seen before. Customers enjoy watching this activity from their tables, or as they are walking past on their way in or out.

The trattoria is not big, and its customers sit at tables serving about sixty people in all. There is an atmosphere of constant activity and purposefulness about this environment which is very attractive. This is the setting for informal meetings between participants from the office; and sometimes I had meetings there myself with key participants to talk about the progress of this study and later discuss my work with trainees.

The following extract recorded during an observation of the action in the trattoria, whilst not an exemplar of mediation, would nevertheless seem to suggest not only the results or consequence of mediation between people but also situated learning and legitimate peripheral participation.

’I was due to meet Mark’, [the trainee manager] ‘at one o’clock, but he was held up by a trainee who needed to see him. I was shown to a table upstairs’, [in the trattoria] ‘and fed olives and bread until he arrived’.... ‘From where I was sitting, I could see Phil and Bob working behind the bar. These are two of the six graduates from last year who are now employed as professional chefs in the kitchen. When I first met Bob last year, he was a fidgety lad who swore a lot and who the chefs needed to constantly keep in line. At the time, Bob told me that he had not done a full day at school since Year Five. But today, watching him in the restaurant, he was as focussed and involved when I left, three hours later, as when I came in. No chatter to the others, no distracted or inappropriate behaviour, but total absorption in the task, methodical, controlled and constant; busily going about the business of food preparation, in full view of the whole restaurant. It was impressive.’

(Research Journal, 22nd April, 2005).
A staircase from this upper level leads downstairs into the fine dining restaurant, where the main drama of the kitchen environment is played out. Down here, dining guests are welcomed by a small reception area which leads into the main restaurant. Similar in size to upstairs, this space is not large, and tables of two and four are spaced out along both sides of the room.

Contemporary white furniture and dark tables and floor combine artistically with graffiti carefully painted on the walls. It all gives an impression of youth, vitality and urban culture, the essence of the life of this place, since many of the professional chefs, visible from the restaurant into the open kitchen, are as young as the trainees they teach.

The Main Kitchen

On first acquaintance, the kitchen appeared to me to be a strange world of huge steaming pots; slippery floors and small spaces; a hive of perpetual motion and activity.

The following description was written in my journal at the end of the first day in the kitchen for a new group of five inexperienced trainees who had just successfully completed their NVQ 1, the basic requirement for working in a professional kitchen.

‘The kitchen is very crowded and surprisingly small, today having fifteen people in it instead of the usual ten. Basically oblong in shape it has stations or sections for different food preparation, and I was told that these walkways are wider here than in most kitchens to accommodate the number of people in the space. Each station is handled by at least two people and each chef has a different speciality. It’s very hot near the ‘hot’ section in the middle of the kitchen and it’s much quieter than I expected. I stand up all day so time passes slowly; my feet hurt and my back aches.

‘The kitchen is open along one side to the restaurant so that paying customers can see chefs working. To comply with Health and Safety regulations I was handed a set of kitchen whites to put on. Today, in addition to the professional chefs and some of last year’s graduates, five of the new trainees were in the kitchen for the first time, as was I. When I arrived at eleven o’clock in the morning these new trainees had been “prepping up” for two hours, cutting and
chopping herbs. There was nowhere for me to stand let alone sit, and I propped myself against a pillar out the way. Someone politely pointed out that I should be sure to keep both my feet firmly on the floor for my own safety. Everyone was very friendly and totally focussed on the task in hand. No one seemed to mind if I squeezed in to hear instructions or dialogue. The trainees remembered me from previous meetings and we exchanged sympathetic smiles from under our black paper hats. They looked as overwhelmed as I felt and I sensed their awe and disbelief that after all their hard work at college, here they were, in the kitchen at last. The staff made them feel included and part of the team, quietly telling them what to do. Last year’s graduates gave them plenty of attention and explained what was being done as they went along. No one expected very much of them on this, their first day at work beyond peeling, fetching, watching, chopping, but by the end of the shift at three o’clock they had all ‘had a go’ at plating up or preparing dishes to serve in the restaurant. Now and then I was fed mouthfuls of perfect food to try - it was all totally fascinating."

(Research Journal, 1st April 2004).

In describing this particular micro-setting it is not my intention to suggest here that the professional kitchen of Fifteen London is representative of all kitchens, nor that the experiences of the apprentice chefs described here are typical of all apprentice chefs’ experience across the industry. In this sense, I can only illuminate what I came to understand of this particular learning environment as it was experienced. Furthermore, it is a premise of this thesis that the more I learnt about the diverse nature of the wider community of Fifteen London and the other aspects of the programme, the more it seemed to me that it is the combination of many influences in this community which contribute to these apprentice chefs’ professional education and personal development; and it is this cultural perspective which I choose to emphasise here. Indeed, I learnt through my experience that all professional kitchens are different and so too is the structure and hierarchy of the ‘brigade’, the team of chefs who work there. The brigade of Fifteen London is described in the following section.
The Brigade

The professional kitchen is a tough working environment of long hours, hard work and discipline. It is therefore not a coincidence that like the army, the hierarchy of the apprenticeship model is called the brigade. In the structure of the 'Brigade', the Head Chef or chefs are in charge of 'the Pass' - that is, checking each dish before it goes out into the restaurant, and Sous Chefs or acting Sous chefs are in charge of each section, namely, Grills, Hots, Pasta, Colds and Pastry.

*Table (1)* below illustrates the hierarchy of the brigade and in the kitchen as it was explained to me on the day of this first experience there. There are some senior or sous chefs in the kitchen who are recruited from the industry in the usual manner. Group A chefs are graduates from the first cycle of training two years earlier who are now employed in the kitchen; group B are experienced trainees from the second cycle of training waiting to graduate in a few weeks and go into the industry; and group C are new trainees from the current cycle of training.

*Table (1):* The Brigade on 01.04.04

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Grills</th>
<th>Hots</th>
<th>Pasta</th>
<th>Colds</th>
<th>Pastry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sous Chef</strong></td>
<td>Group B trainee</td>
<td>Group A Graduate</td>
<td>Group A Graduate</td>
<td>Sous Chef</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Group B trainee</strong></td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
<td>Group B trainee</td>
<td>Group B trainee</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Group C</strong></td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
<td>Group C trainee</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Tim, a graduate from Group A, described the kitchen to me in the following manner. His observations were used in the pilot study, and included here since it would seem to emphasise the growing maturity of this young man so clearly, and the hierarchy of the apprenticeship model and cultural transference relevant to this section of the study.

‘*Everyone in the kitchen is like a family because you spend so much time together, more than you do with your own family. It’s like the Big Brother House - you have to get along. And because of that you realize that some people have weaknesses in certain areas and you try and back them up. It’s*
almost like being in a family business. Jamie has acted like a father figure to me. In fact, so have all the people here. It’s as if they are saying to me: “make me proud”. That’s the approach used by everyone here. And now I am trying to encourage new trainees, to make them understand how important it is to graduate and do well. You have to be one of the team in the kitchen, because without the others, the kitchen wouldn’t work’.


Tim’s description of his own experience of the kitchen demonstrates his acknowledgement of the influence of the brigade on a young chef, and the cultural and social aspects of this environment. Indeed, it would seem that the demands of the enterprise of the professional kitchen environment are its participants’ best regulator. The profession requires that each participant on duty in the kitchen that day - and that includes every apprentice working on that shift - is expected to fulfil his or her role to the best of his or her ability. That implies arriving on time, every time; alert and ready to work, clean and tidy, shaved and prepared to do what needs to be done for the duration of an eight hour shift. Any failure to fulfil these professional obligations is noticed and documented accordingly. Trainees who do not comply with this code of behaviour are given three warnings, after which they are permanently off the programme. But in most cases, trainees either become so passionate about food that they cannot wait to get into the kitchen or they learn very quickly that working a full shift after a late night out is not a good experience. Sometimes an inexperienced apprentice might be sent home before the end of the shift because either the chef in charge of the brigade thinks that they are not pulling their weight or thought to be unwell; and the kitchen is not an environment for those who cannot fully participate or do whatever needs to be done.

Many of these young people had in their past been in the habit of not turning up to work or school but suddenly they find that if they do not arrive for work, someone notices, that they are counted. They were now expected to demonstrate a responsibility to their colleagues in the brigade. That is, that they are valued for the positive contribution they are now qualified to make. Their absence is not only inconvenient, it means that other members of the team have to do their work. The chefs recognise that such conformity is hard for some of these novice apprentices. Nevertheless, they also know that the industry will not tolerate individuals who are not fully committed to their work, and the combined role of the brigade
is to prepare these young people for employment outside the protection of the nurturing learning environment of Fifteen London.

Respect is a word frequently heard being used by the professional chefs in regard to the trainees’ progress: respect for the produce used in the kitchen; their peers, their superiors, in their demeanour, enthusiasm, their commitment to the programme, their ability to conform to the brigade; their ability to follow instructions for service and their motivation to learn. Moreover, the notion of respect is a key issue for the trainees when they attribute merit towards the professional chefs. Each group of trainees has their favourite chefs, those whom they would choose to be their mentors and with whom they prefer to work. However, I learnt that some chefs, particularly the younger less experienced professional chefs, have to work extremely hard to gain the respect of the trainees, for in many cases, these talented masters or young chefs are the same age as their apprentices.

I would suggest that the peer mediation and the hierarchical support of the brigade described here corresponds to Vygotsky’s general notion of mediation between people where a more skilled individual mediates to a less skilled individual, and where the Zone of Proximal Development describes learning supported by a more competent other, encouraging the learner to go beyond what is known (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978).

The following critical incidents were selected from many noted dialogues and incidents observed in this environment which would seem to exemplify the key aspects of mediation and participation which I choose to illuminate. They happened on either my third or fourth visit to the kitchen when I was becoming used to how things were done there, and moreover, participants were becoming more comfortable with having me around during a busy shift. Consequently, my observations of what was happening became clearer, and therefore more accurately recorded in my journal; and it became easier for me to identify what was happening in what appeared to be the organised chaos of the working kitchen.

**Critical incident (5)**

In the first example presented here, I watched the actions of a recently graduated chef, at the end of her training, who was awaiting placement in the industry and who was given full responsibility for the ‘hots’ section: grilling and frying meat and fish dishes. This section is a great responsibility in a fine dining kitchen since these dishes made there have an
immediacy and a timing element which requires a great deal of expertise from the assigned chef. This newly qualified chef worked very hard throughout the lunch shift, when service is from about twelve midday until three o’clock, talking very little to others and concentrating on her work. There was an economy of movement in her actions as she worked first with one pan, and then another, demonstrated a total confidence in what she was doing, almost like a choreographed dance routine. All the written orders were passed from the waiter in the restaurant, to the head chef and then to her were clipped above her section at eye height for easy reference. She did not speak very much to the inexperienced trainee assigned to her section during the ‘heat’ of service; but the trainee stood close by her, like me trying not to get in the way; but he watched all her actions very carefully. Occasionally, she asked him to pass a utensil, or fetch her something from the cold room. But beyond these cursory instructions, very little discernable mediation was observed. Indeed, she was much more concerned about the quality of the dishes she was preparing for the pass than the tuition of an apprentice.

When things quietened down a little bit, she seemed more relaxed, and paid the trainee more attention, quietly supervising him making up a few plates for the pass. This kind of shared activity offered in the natural course of the day’s work corresponds to the apprenticeship of the Yucatec midwives which is described by Jordan and used by Lave and Wenger to illustrate different kinds of apprenticeship where,

‘Apprenticeship happens as a way of, and in the course of, daily life. It may not be recognised as teaching effort at all.’ (Jordan, 1989, p 12).

Lave and Wenger use Jordan’s example of situated learning of midwives to illustrate the difference between learning and teaching, a notion which is discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

**Critical incident (6)**

On the same day, in the second critical incident presented here, an older and more experienced qualified chef continually gave his assigned trainee specific tasks to complete which would contribute to the completion of each of the orders. This particular trainee was rather nervous on this, her first day in the kitchen, but the experienced chef to whom she
was assigned gave her lots of positive verbal feedback for her efforts; constantly talking to her. He showed her how to do things thus:

‘First we will do this...’, ‘then we will...’, ‘after that you will have a chance to...’.

Specifically indicating mediation of competence; intentionality, reciprocity and meaning; mediation of regulation and control; mediation of goal seeking and mediation of challenge. Here, in contrast to the first incident described above, it was far easier to identify clear examples of applied mediation.

Nevertheless, it seemed to me that the first incident was no less powerful or meaningful for the young inexperienced novice chef than the second. These two contrasting styles of mediation or examples of cultural transference would seem to illustrate that mediation does not always have to be verbal to make an impact, and that non-verbal mediation and mediation by example is perhaps the clearest indication of where and how the concepts of cultural transference, MLE and situated learning work together and overlap to effect cognitive modifiability of the human condition.

The following extract from my journal describes the same novice apprentices later in the year when they have had a few months experience of the professional environment.

‘The level of mediation from the chefs to the more experienced trainees is quite different now. When I last saw these same trainees at work some months ago, the level of mediation could be described as 5/5; this week it is 2/5, and the trainees are now being given far more responsibility. They are now getting involved with the actual cooking, rather than just carrying and fetching, and the dialogues between master and apprentice have become more technical.’

‘For example, they are heard discussing the meaning and effect of subtle differences of temperatures, measurements, timings...Last time I saw these trainees, the discussions between master/apprentice were focussed on kitchen procedures, routines. Today, the mediation is still encouraging and nurturing but mediation of regulation and control is offered differently, sometimes harshly, sometimes with humour, but generally offered in an inclusive manner.'
Comments like: “Oi! What are you doing here mate?!” or “What’s this, then?” still regulate the actions of the trainees but it is now offered in such a way as to allow the trainees to feel that they are part of something; and that they are making a contribution to the work of the enterprise. At this stage in their training a chef might be heard guiding a trainee through a cooking procedure by their observation of the trainee’s performance, rather than the trainee watching the chef’s performance, and there seems very little discernable mediation to record here beyond mediation of competence and mediation of regulation and control.’

(Research Journal, 5th July 2004).

This difference would seem to indicate a higher level of expectation of the apprentices by the master chefs now that they have had three months experience in the kitchen. Indeed, I learnt that the kitchen is no place for those who do not or cannot work extremely hard and sustain concentration for a whole shift, day after day, and some trainees have now left the training programme as a consequence; either because they realise they do not want to become a chef or because they cannot demonstrate a commitment to the demands of both the programme and the working environment. Moreover, there is now a pressure of expectation of these apprentices to make a contribution to the enterprise of the kitchen which corresponds to the zone of proximal development where the tension between what is known and what is yet to be known is what Rogoff refers to as, scaffolded learning (Rogoff, 2001).

On my various visits to the kitchen over the course of this study, I have spent a great deal of time watching the activities in the pastry section. Located at the end of the main area of the kitchen, it is cooler and quieter here than in the middle of the kitchen, where the drama of producing dishes on ‘hots’ and ‘grills’ is played out. Here, on pastry, it is a constant hive of quiet preparation: filling jars of fruit, bottling, freezing, drying, baking and chopping. Even during the service of the lunch ‘shift’ these activities continue, since the busiest time for service on pastry is at the end of the first customers’ pudding order. This is the place where ice cream is made, chocolate melted, where fruit is preserved and vegetables pickled. It is where beautiful cheeses are carefully cut and arranged on smooth wooden boards for customers, with small slices of fruit or celery and pickles before the cheese is lovingly wrapped up again in damp muslin and stored away in a dark wooden drawer, and where I
decided that if I was ever to become a working chef this would be where I would want to be. It is also generally acknowledged by the profession that the pastry section is far more scientific than any other. For example, in grills, food can be touched and prodded to check its readiness to no ill effect, but in pastry - which covers all desserts and puddings - everything is measured, weighed and timed, and there is therefore little margin for error.

On one particular day, a pastry chef called Ernie was proudly telling me about the talents of the young graduate, Tammy, who was working with him that day. As Tammy, smiling, went about her work, he told me that she had recently been given the opportunity to do a trial shift at a famous London restaurant. The restaurant had liked her and offered her a place working there for three months, which would provide her a wonderful career opportunity. As he told me this, it was clear by their shared demeanour that they had a good working relationship. It seemed to me that his praise and pride, even though it was offered vicariously through me, indicated his belief in her ability to do well and gain the career she wanted. His commentary is also a clear indication of mediation of competence, trust, and mediation of sharing in her achievements.

However, on the same day, and later in the shift, my journal records the following dialogue between this same master chef and his apprentice which would seem to indicate a further clear example of mediation but of quite a different nature.

**Critical incident (7)**

Ernie to Tammy: ‘Get some mint and put it on there...’
*Tammy bends down and opens the cold cupboard and takes a handful washed and prepared mint out of a box. Some of it falls on the floor and she picks up the leaves and puts them back into the box from the floor.*

Ernie: ‘Now throw away the whole lot...

Tammy: ‘Why?!’

Ernie: ‘Because you put it all back from the floor.’

*Tammy hesitates. She looked at him. He stares back.*
Ernie: ‘That’s the way it goes sometimes, mate.’

Tammy silently throws it all away and gets out another box.


This exchange shows strong mediation of regulation and control and an unspoken shared understanding of health and safety issues. Furthermore, in recognising this cultural aspect of the professional kitchen he was teaching her a rule which went far beyond the here and now, transcending this incident to establish a rule for other occasions. What Tammy did in putting back the mint in the box was instinctive, and demonstrated that she had not yet learnt to resist putting it back. But by mediating this rule in such a manner, Ernie was mediating to her that she be sure to remember this incident and why she should not do the same again another time, and it was clear to me by her demeanour that she understood this.

No further reprimand or comment was made by either of them and after ten minutes or so I moved away to observe another area of the kitchen.

I have included examples of master-apprentice relationships here to illustrate that in a community of practice the relationships and communication of one individual towards another varies according to individual need, experience, knowledge and expertise, and circumstances; and these variations and permutations were played out again and again over the course of the study.

This third micro-setting presented the ‘engine room’ of the learning environment, the working kitchen. It is here that these novice chefs fall in love with food, and where the true drama of the apprenticeship is played out. It began with a description of the restaurant that is served by the professional kitchen, and was followed by a description of the brigade or the hierarchical model of the team of professionals who contribute to the enterprise. In presenting all the components of this setting: the restaurant; the kitchen; the brigade; and examples of critical incidents recorded there, I have tried to illustrate that ultimately, it is the complex interrelationships between people that build a community of practice.

The fourth micro-setting described below (8.4), tells the story of my experience on a visit to Tuscany with a group of trainees and key personnel. It was in Tuscany that these novice
chefs, having completed months of hard work in the kitchen, were to learn about the provenance of some of the Italian produce used in the kitchen. This sourcing trip was to have a profound effect on many of the trainees, and by implication for the development of this study.

8.4. Micro-setting four: the sourcing trip

Introduction

Throughout the programme, trainees are taken on a number of outings referred to as sourcing trips, where they learn at first hand the provenance or source of the produce used in the kitchen. These visits are thought to engender in the trainees respect not only for the expertise demonstrated by farmers and producers, but respect for the best of produce itself. Moreover, it is assumed that a chef who understands how his produce is reared will learn to respect and value it, and take greater care in how it is prepared as a consequence.

To understand the full significance of this aspect of training, it needs to be considered in the light of the twin core beliefs of the organisation of Fifteen London that are its driving force. Firstly, that it is possible and desirable to train any young person who has expressed a prior interest in becoming a first class chef serving the fine food industry. Secondly, the organisation claim to have an overriding and abiding passion for the integrity and purity of the very best produce available.

Diverse sourcing trips may vary from visiting a sheep farm in Wales to a rare pig farm in Essex, a herb farm or an abattoir; or visiting a berry farm in Wiltshire to see how fruit is grown and preserves are made; or visiting the fish market in London to witness how fish is selected and traded. I learnt that for many of these young Londoners, learning about the industries of food and the traditions of rural communities is a stimulating and novel experience.

The rural communities who grow the organic produce served in the restaurant, generously give their time and expertise to the trainees’ development and so make a significant contribution to the work of the Foundation. And through these experiences, trainees are exposed to a wide range of skills and traditions by people who, like those in Fifteen London, share a passion for good food. Passion is a word much used in the production and
preparation of fine food in this community of communities, and individual producers, passionate and knowledgeable about their own specialist area, pass on or mediate that passion to others.

The education of a first class chef entails far more than learning how to cook, and these sourcing trips provide valuable learning experiences. A good chef needs to know how to select produce, know the current market value of produce, and make a financial success of the enterprise of the restaurant. S/he needs to learn how and where to buy the best and freshest produce available. S/he also needs to learn how to calculate the exact monetary value of any dish, so that when it goes out of the kitchen to the paying customer, s/he knows the exact profit made from that one plate. Another set of skills requires knowing how to store produce, and understanding its shelf life. For example, a chef needs to know the optimal age when to buy and then when to use a Parmesan cheese, or how long to hang game. I learnt that these are the skills which define a first class chef; and are what makes the difference between an average professional kitchen and a successful first class professional kitchen serving the fine dining industry.

However, these are all skills which most chefs, having come through the usual apprentice model elsewhere, have taken years to accumulate. I was told that Fifteen London aims to condense the equivalent of ten years of accumulated knowledge about produce into an eighteen months training, but, of course, it is accepted that such accelerated learning cannot compensate for professional experience. Furthermore, in many cases professional chefs recruited in the usual manner told me that they never had the opportunities these trainees are given, nor had they been to see the producers that these young trainees visited. I was told that many of these professional chefs learnt about the provenance of and care for produce from their seniors or masters in the kitchen in the traditional apprentice model; and if they went to France or Italy it was because they chose to do so of their own volition and for their own professional development. In contrast, in the training programme of Fifteen London, trainees are taken to visit these producers as part of their training.

These points raised one or two questions in my mind. Firstly, do the more experienced chefs who have come through the ranks of the professional kitchen resent the accelerated training and knowledge these young apprentices are provided through this exposure? And secondly, do these young and inexperienced trainees really appreciate the value and privilege of these experiences in the unique apprenticeship model of Fifteen London?
In regard to the first question, I learnt that individual chefs and key participants (such as a sommelier or member of the management team) who take a particular interest in the trainees’ development often accompany trainees on trips to Tuscany and elsewhere. These and other opportunities arise for the Head Chef to include his team members to accompany him on visits to producers and importers for the restaurant, and so the shared values of the participants of this community are emphasised. I was told that these visits can be a good experience for all; allowing an opportunity for both trainees and colleagues to communicate away from the tensions of the kitchen and working environment, and get to know each other as individuals. There is therefore a strong incentive for chefs particularly to take an interest in the trainees’ development and enhance their own development in the process.

In regard to the second question, at the beginning of the programme, trainees appreciate a break in routine from college, a day out, fresh air and new experiences. This notion would correspond to mediation of novelty and complexity, applied in order to sustain the mediatees’ interest and keep them stimulated and attentive. It is only later on, and as trainees become more experienced in the kitchen, that the sourcing trips begin to take on a more significant meaning for their development. Knowledge acquired on such trips has an accumulative effect, which at first is quite subtle. But as trainees learn more about the culture they have entered they seem to acquire a stronger sense of identity with both Fifteen London and the wider community of the profession. They grow in stature and self-image, and their changed behaviours and attitudes towards the produce used in the kitchen would seem to indicate that now they have become more knowledgeable about the workings of this privileged community, they can now also feel themselves to be legitimate members (Wenger, 1998). These changes in self-worth become evident in their expressive language, which reflects a growing vocabulary of concepts and a growing repertoire of psychological tools with which to differentiate and substantiate their comments, and it is these important but subtle changes that allow them to adapt to a higher level of functioning (Kozulin, 1998). Moreover, and importantly, these changes are also reflected in a higher expectation from other participants in the workplace, as the trainee or novice practitioner takes on the skills of the expert.

Trainees therefore change from novice participants on the very periphery of the community to more experienced participants who have earned a more central role in the community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). It is this notion of feeling they have earned something. They begin to see that their investment of hard work is bearing fruit.
This idea strongly corresponds to the goals of mediating transcendence and goal seeking, setting and achieving according to mediated learning experience (see above), looking beyond the here and now of the experience. Trainees also develop a growing awareness and recognition of these changes in their own development. They have gained new knowledge and expertise, and therefore feel they have a right to be accepted as legitimate members of the community. Such self-awareness of perceiving the human condition as a changing entity is significant to their motivation and optimism about the future, referred to in this approach as the goal of another aspect of MLE, mediation of an optimistic alternative (Feuerstein, Tannenbaum and Klein, 1994).

So after they return from a sourcing trip, trainees feel able to confidently discuss their experience amongst themselves and their colleagues in the kitchen as one professional to another; and moreover, explain to me, a lay person, exactly what they had learnt on a sourcing trip, and why they needed to learn it. And it is in these changes as legitimate participants within the community of practice that these young people demonstrate structural modifiability in their social, intellectual and emotional development.

One example of these significant and meaningful changes was illustrated to me in the following manner.

After a visit to an organic poultry farm one group of trainees enthusiastically explained in detail to me how they had learnt to compare the merits of a free-range organic chicken and a battery-reared chicken by handling and seeing at first hand the difference in the quality of each - bones, flesh, skin, liver and other major organs. Mediating the need for comparative behaviour teaches the individual to learn how to discriminate and critically appreciate something; and this meticulous and careful analysis helped these trainees to appreciate the quality of the poultry used in the kitchen and learn why such care in rearing organic poultry is desirable. Other such sourcing trips offer trainees similar insights into a range of traditional values and practices, which this same group told me are in danger of being lost forever in the harsh economic reality and the commercial drive for ever more cheap food for the wider market.

Here we have a clear example of where and how such visits provide specific mediation in context, infused into the communication between novice and expert. Such mediation is
effective on a number of levels: technical, in the acquired knowledge it affords, and
cognitive, in the skills of comparison and discrimination it develops.

However, it would seem that what these young people learn in regard to the value of
traditional practices has a deeper cultural significance. It serves the individual trainee’s
acquisition of knowledge and ability to select only the best quality of produce, but at a more
meaningful level, it helps trainees understand the importance of and need for preserving the
communities of these rural enterprises, and share in the responsibility of society for their
very existence. Furthermore, these experiences teach the trainees that the future of
communities that use traditional methods for raising and growing produce can only be
assured as long as there are customers and enterprises that value and support their
endeavours, their traditions and their specialist expertise, handed down from generation to
generation.

There is therefore a strongly reciprocal economical, cultural, and ethical interest shared
between the enterprise and ethos of the restaurant and the enterprises and ethos of these
producers, and it is with all these thoughts in mind that this fourth micro-setting is
presented.

Tuscany

From the very beginning of training, trainees are told that provided they meet the
expectations of their training, they will be travelling with key participants on a sourcing trip
to see wine and olive oil producers in Tuscany, Italy. Inclusion on this trip is therefore
conditional on two practical points; one, that their passport is in good order and two, that
they have not been excluded from the trip because of a lack of discipline or attendance either
at college or on shifts in the kitchen.

Throughout the course of this study, the trip to Tuscany was always referred to as a seminal
point of training, and I had been told by key participants that it was on this trip that trainees
began to ‘get it’. I was curious to find out what was meant by ‘getting it’, so one year I
travelled with a group of key participants and trainees to Italy to find out. And indeed, the
data revealed that this trip seemed to represent a highlight of the whole learning experience
for many of these trainees, and came to the very heart of the thing, not just for the trainees,
but also for me.
I also learnt that this trip provides an opportunity for Jamie Oliver to spend time with the trainees. Over the course of three days, he and other key participants encourage trainees to think about and talk about their personal ‘five year plan’; that is, their ambitions and dreams, what they propose to do following Graduation a few months later. The goal for such intentional and targeted mediation is to motivate trainees to think about their future, to sustain focus and work hard, complete their training, graduate, and stay in the industry. It also assures these trainees that Fifteen London will always offer support and guidance to Graduate chefs of the programme who choose to seriously pursue a career in the fine dining industry.

Such conscious and intentional mediation would seem to be significant on many levels. Primarily, it represents meaning, helping trainees to understanding the purpose of the training and what it can lead to; it represents intentionality and reciprocity, indicating to the trainees that Fifteen London need to know that the trainee shares the same goals as Fifteen London for their professional development; and transcendence, encouraging the trainee to think about the deeper significance of this learning experience and what it comes to represent in terms of how the trainee might choose to live his or her life. And, viewed in this light, it would seem that this dialogue represents an example of a powerful mediated learning experience (see above). Furthermore, it indicates goal seeking, goal setting, and goal achieving behaviour, encouraging the trainee to look beyond the ‘here and now’ towards an optimistic future, one in which they can envisage themselves as fully legitimate participants in a community of practice: the world of fine food. Therefore such intervention also suggests strong mediation of an awareness of the human being as a changing entity; as well as mediation of the search for an optimistic alternative.

However, the construction of meaning I placed upon these issues came later in the study, and it was my participation on one such sourcing trip to Tuscany in December 2004 that I too began to ‘get it’, as the following narrative reveals. Similar to the previous micro-settings described above, this fourth micro-setting uses data recorded directly in my research journal at the time, and presents critical incidents which would seem to illustrate those particular aspects of this setting that I choose to emphasise.
Tuscany is a region of Italy with a rich agricultural tradition for producing some of the finest wine and olive oil in the world. The people of Tuscany are both proud of their culture, and their commercial abilities to meet international and local demand for their products. For three days and two nights I travelled with a group of trainees, the head chef at the time, and other key participants, as guests of the wine importers who organised our itinerary. Everywhere we stopped we were treated to extraordinary hospitality and generosity. The following description from my journal on the morning we arrived demonstrates my first impressions and helps set the stage for what follows.

‘I had forgotten how beautiful Tuscany is in the winter; you can see the bones of the place. The soil is every shade of brown, from dark chocolate to rich red fading to orange and back through brown again, clean and empty after the summer green has been tidied away. Trees, golden, or empty; their bare branches stark against the blue-grey of the olive groves. Soft and misty colours, familiar and unfamiliar to English eyes more used to the water-colour palette of the British landscape. The bare vines, stubborn, old and patient, wait for their final pruning before the new growth of the spring, as they have done for generations. From the window of our coach, I can see the soft undulating curve of the land; fields a patchwork of colours; pink tiled roofs, perching on the hilltops, overlooking the rich and fertile soil of Tuscany. Wisps of smoke drift upwards to meet clouds or mist that fill the hollows and dips in the land - too gentle to be called valleys, and I fall in love with Italy all over again. We have all been awake since four o’clock this morning, and as we drive higher and higher, the coach falls silent. People are either asleep or drinking in this view.’

(Research Journal, 29th November 2004).

Our first stop that day was as guests at a beautiful vineyard who hosted a wonderful five course lunch with different wines for each dish. For many of these young Londoners who had only been in the Fifteen London kitchen a few short months, and never been abroad before, this lunch was an entirely unfamiliar experience. Trainees and key participants sat together at four or five round tables, where each place was set with a number of glasses and
crisp white linen napery. I sat with some of the trainees, the trainee manager and the sommelier from the restaurant, Phil, who told us stories throughout our meal about the wonderful wines from this region and this vineyard in particular. The trick to tasting, he told us, is only to sip each glass of wine offered, and sip water in between mouthfuls. He taught us how to identify subtle differences in the acidity, the mellowness or maturity of the wines and, how to look at it critically in the glass, how to recognise its body and clarity. Such critical and careful analysis demands a rich vocabulary of concepts and terms, and over the following days, these terms became spontaneous parlance for many of these young trainees.

Beyond the professional knowledge that this fascinating commentary offered, Phil’s easy and relaxed manner indicated mediation of a feeling of belonging: putting the trainees at their ease; and mediation of sharing, since it was obvious from his demeanour that like me, he was having the time of his life and he wanted to share his enthusiasm with us all. The world of fine wine is clearly his domain, his comfort zone, and his enthusiasm was infectious. I watched the trainees’ reactions to him as they were served dish after dish; and their eyes widened as the filled wine glasses got bigger and bigger. Some seemed overwhelmed with the occasion and were a little quiet but listened and watched intently, others feigned nonchalance but appeared to be impressed by the hospitality we were offered. Some just sat absorbing their surroundings and eating everything put in front of them. But as the meal progressed, Phil’s mediation and demeanour affected all the trainees’ behaviour and responses to this experience, and they seemed to visibly relax and start to enjoy themselves.

Critical incident (8)

We went to many other wine and olive oil tastings over the three days we were in Tuscany. It was on our journey to one of these winemakers, that two key participants stood up in the coach and told the trainees to observe not only the winemaking process we were about to see, but to look carefully at the owner of the vineyards; the man whose hard work and dedication goes into producing the fine wine purchased by Fifteen London and others, and sent all over the world. The following comments were jotted down as they were spoken, and would seem to illustrate the mediation between participants which I choose to emphasise here, and observed on so many occasions throughout the course of this study.
'When we get there, guys, I want you to really look at Serafino, the winemaker. He is a master of his trade. You will see his fine clothes, his polished shoes, but what you will not see, and he won’t tell you, is that he has been up since four o’clock this morning, tending his vines and olive groves. He works hard, every day, every single day, seven days a week; and he passionately loves this land. It has been in his family for generations. His father, grandfather and great-grandfather before him have tended these vines. Talk to him, ask him about his family, his life; ask him about the land; he’s proud of what he has and he’s right to be proud. This is the finest piece of land in the whole Chianti region of Tuscany.'

(Research Journal, 29th November 2004).

When we got back on the coach after our stop there, the trainees excitedly told me what they had learnt about the winemaker’s family, about how long the land has belonged to them and why Serafino said he would never leave this place. Some of the trainees told me that they found it almost incredible to think that he knew that his family and forefathers had worked the same piece of land for so many generations.

On the second day, before we stopped to visit yet another of the fine olive and vine growers in the region, we were told about the old man whose family had owned this land for many generations. He never married and consequently had no direct or suitable heir whom he felt he could entrust to tend the vineyards in the manner he wanted. So when he died, rather than leave the land to a member of the family he could not fully trust, he left all his land and all the vines to his head gardener, whom he knew would continue to tend the vines as lovingly and carefully after the old man’s death, as he had during his lifetime.

What was the purpose of telling this story to the trainees, and what was its significance? In the context of these trainees’ young lives, just starting out in the world of fine food, its telling would seem to imply mediation of a moral or a lesson; that compared to the permanence of the land one human life is transitory, a link in a chain, and that we humans are merely custodians of the land for those who come after us. This interpretation would correspond to mediation of goal seeking, goal setting and goal achieving behaviour which requires planning, representation and visualization.
This story of the gardener’s inheritance reminded me of another story referred to so often in the literature on mediated learning to illustrate the meaning of striving towards something we can only visualise in our minds. It concerns another old man who is planting a Johannes bread tree. ‘Someone passes by and asks, “Why do you plant this tree? You know that you won’t be able to eat the fruits since it takes seventy years until the tree bears fruit.” He responds, “Yes, but if my parents would not have done what I do, I wouldn’t be able to eat such fruit.”’ (Feuerstein, Klein, Tannenbaum, 1994, p.45; also see chapter 4.8. above).

Listening to the gardener’s story as it was told on the coach, and later reflecting on the parallels between these two stories, I began to understand why this trip is so valuable for the trainees’ development, and I too began to ‘get it’. It is not only learning about the production of wine and oil, as wonderful as this is. It is the opportunity for these young people to glimpse another way of being in the world and offers an example of choosing to live another way of life.

Before our meal was served at the gardener’s wonderful vineyard, trainees were taken down to the vines and olive groves to walk on the land, handle the vines, and pick the olives. And after a substantial and delicious lunch there, we were given the privilege of watching the selection of this year’s olive oils for use in the restaurant. Small glasses of freshly pressed oil, from deep yellow to bright acid green, were lined up along a table for the tasting, with plates of rough white bread to clean the palate. We stood around the table whilst Jamie and the head chef selected, blended and discussed the various qualities of oils which had been harvested and pressed on different days. Two trainees were invited by the chefs to join them and give their opinion, and encouraged to taste sample pieces of bread dipped into the oil, which demonstrated their legitimate participation in the activity and also mediation of sharing and belonging.

It was explained to us how the colours and intensity of flavours of oil change depending on which day of the harvest the olives are picked, and which part of the olive grove has more of the day’s sunshine. Watching these two British chefs make this selection was a fascinating example of how the traditional culture of olive oil production in rural Italy is transferred to the world of fine dining far away in London. And again, it seemed to be these chefs’ careful scrutiny and discussion of the olive oil which made the greatest impression; and their critical, meticulous care and attention to subtle differences in flavour which
allowed them judge the blends and qualities of oil they needed for specific dishes on the menu in the restaurant.

The following critical incidents here below would seem to exemplify these ideas further.

The second night of our trip we stayed at a beautiful old villa, high up on a hill. The coach had to drop us at the bottom of the hill since the road up to the house was so narrow, and we all walked slowly up the hill in the fading light. We were given a warm welcome by the people there who are old friends of the Fifteen London ‘family’, and like everyone else we met in Tuscany, appreciate the work of the Foundation. From the hallway where we were greeted, we could see a group of ladies, young and old, busily working in the kitchen to prepare our supper. I was told this was to be a grand feast and they had been cooking for us all since dawn. Two of the women had spent the day making the tiny little pasta which is a local speciality, and hundreds of these were laid out, end to end like soldiers on a long table with a red and white checked tablecloth in the huge dining room.

Critical incident (9)

This is an old house with a lot of history and a very old wine cellar. Once we had been allocated our rooms, we were taken down into the cellars by Alfredo who had worked for the family for many years, to see how the wines are stored and understand their history. As we walked through the many dusty and cobweb-covered archways, it became colder and colder. This was not a thermostatically controlled modern cellar, as we had seen earlier in the day elsewhere; this was the real thing, deep and dark, and the labels on the bottles went back down the decades to the beginning of the last century. My journal explains:

‘On a visit to the ancient cellars, we were told that each year a few bottles of the best wine were laid down for the private consumption of successive generations of the winegrowers’ family, their children and grandchildren, demonstrating continuity, stability and respect for a way of life, an unchanging chain of responsibility for the land and future generations.’

And then later,
‘Jamie asked Alfredo to explain to trainees the practice of using ‘eco-biology’, the moon’s natural gravity to judge exactly when to pick the ripened grapes. After Alfredo’s explanation in broken English, Jamie asked if he might explain the process again, using his own words. Although Jamie suggested the method sounded, “a bit hippie”, he emphasised the respect we must have for a method used by wine growers for thousands of years, and a practice passed down from generation to generation since Roman times.’

(Research Journal, 30th November 2004).

In these extracts from my journal, Jamie’s repetition of the ancient eco-biological method, using language that the trainees would understand, ensured that the underlying message of continuity, stability and chain of responsibility was fully understood by trainees who may not have understood its significance in the first telling. This corresponds to mediation of meaning and also intentionality and reciprocity - that is, he was checking that the meaning and significance of the story has been understood and internalized by the trainees.

On our final stop for the last wine tasting of our trip, trainees were encouraged to discuss the wines they tasted amongst themselves: which ones they preferred, why they preferred them, and so on. I observed their lively and enthusiastic interaction from a corner of the room and thought about these same young people’s behaviour at our first meal of the trip only three days earlier. It was fascinating to see how easily they were now able to express their opinion, confidently and knowledgeably, appropriately applying a rich and diverse vocabulary of terms to describe, criticise and discriminate between the wines they tasted.

And as I watched them, and listened to their discussions, I realised that it is not enough to only share an experience, or be included in the activity, the individual needs to feel themselves to have the right to belong; and they can only feel that when they are armed with the cognitive tools and the professional knowledge they need to consider themselves fully legitimate members of the community.

Over the following weeks and months, I continued to reflect on what I had learnt about these young peoples’ experience in Tuscany. To help this analysis, I interviewed a number of graduates who had also been to Tuscany during their training who shared with me their own
responses to the experience. I conclude here with a couple of their comments as examples of the impact this experience made on them.

Joanna, a graduate of the programme and now employed in the restaurant, described to me how she felt about her visit there two years before.

‘I felt like it was home, you know? I don’t think people realize how authentically Italian the food is in the restaurant here. I was surprised how emotional I felt - I didn’t realize what an influence it would all have on me. It seemed so old-fashioned but it wasn’t just the food, it was the people, the way they live... it seemed to me to be how it should be.’


Tim, a Graduate from an earlier cycle of training and now a member of the Board of Trustees of Fifteen London, told me about his work experience in Tuscany following Graduation.

‘After I graduated I went back to Tuscany, just outside Chianti. It was really nice, really good, and it gave me a good feeling for the Italian lifestyle. Not so much the cooking, but the actual way they do things there, the way they live.’


I use the words of Frances Mayes to emphasize this recognition of the link between the food and the culture and the sense of continuity, stability and a chain of responsibility it represents, not only for generations to come but for the land itself.

‘... cooking in a foreign kitchen and discovering the many links between the food and the culture - these intense joys frame the deeper pleasure of learning to live another kind of life. To bury the grape tendril in such a way that it shoots out new growth, I recognize easily as a metaphor for the way life must change from time to time if we are to go forward in our thinking.’ (Mayes, 1996, p viii).

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Summary

I began this micro-setting with a rationale for including sourcing trips in this training programme, by describing the range of knowledge and expertise they provide. I suggested that beyond professional knowledge, these trips seem to emphasise a shared economical and ethical responsibility between the traditional practices of other communities of practice and the community of practice of Fifteen London. I then used my personal experience of accompanying the trainees on a sourcing trip to Tuscany as the setting to present some of the many critical incidents I witnessed there. They suggest that the relationships between people within this community of practice, and the complex interrelationships between people in this wider community of communities work together to change these young peoples’ lives.

I used examples of two trainees’ responses to the experience to show how in many cases it is the culture of what the trainees’ learn in Tuscany which has the greater impact, not only in demonstrating the fine quality of food and wine, but learning about the culture and quality of the lives of the people who live there and make the fine produce. The sourcing trip to Tuscany seems to offer these young people a glimpse into another world, an example of another way to live, and so inspire them to look beyond the here and now to an optimistic future. And in so doing, it is the mediation offered by the key participants in this community of practice and described above, that helps these young apprentices learn not only the finer tools of their trade, but perhaps too, the art of the possible.

8.5. Micro-setting five: The Foundation Office

Introduction

In the previous micro-settings I presented four diverse aspects of the training programme to emphasise the range of learning environments to which these young apprentices are exposed during the course of their training. But if in this construction, the workplace of the kitchen is considered to be the engine room of training, then the Foundation office is the anchor or hub that links and coordinates the activities of and funding for all these other environments. It is here in the main office that we find the Foundation ‘team’: its Director, its administrators, its fund raiser, its training manager or youth worker and the training chef. Their activities oil the wheels of the whole programme, supporting the trainees, scheduling
their activities and arranging and generating funding. Moreover, it is the function of the
team to balance all these considerations within the commercial demands of the restaurant
and the directives of its Board of Trustees.

When I first came to the Foundation some three years earlier to conduct the pilot study
described above, its business had occupied just two desks; one desk for fund raising and the
other for the training programme. Since that time, generous donations to the charity have
allowed its space to expand so that it now comprises a main office devoted to the work of
the Foundation, a large well-lit meeting room for the trainees’ use, and a small meeting
room off the main office. These improved facilities for the trainees were welcomed, since
before there had been no space for trainees to congregate between shifts in the kitchen, and
they would stand around outside on the street. Now, they are able to study and socialise
within a designated space. These improvements are an indication of the professionalism
with which the Foundation addresses all aspects of the trainees’ needs.

Over the four years of conducting this study, and similar to any other dynamic organisation,
the names or titles of the key roles in the Foundation team have changed from time to time,
and so too have the individuals who hold them. Such change, we are told, is normal (Fullan,
1993). But what seems to be unchanging in this environment of the main office is the
pivotal role that both the environment and its participants - the Foundation team - play in
the lives of the young people they serve; and it is this cultural aspect of the activities of this
setting, and the relationships between its participants that I choose to illuminate here.

The Foundation team

The trainee manager and trainee chef are the two key members of the Foundation team who
work closest to the trainees throughout the programme. It is their role to provide the
trainees access to advice, support and guidance on an intellectual, social and emotional
level.

In particular, the trainee chef’s role is to organise trainees’ shifts in the kitchen; monitor
their attendance there; support them in the workplace both in their working relationships
with the professional chefs, as well as teaching the technical knowledge of specific skills
and recipes. However, the relationships that develop between the trainee chef and the
trainees are often far more significant than these duties imply. He or she is also in the
position to act as mentor, guide or confidante, very often becoming an important role model in the life of the trainees and so provide important support for these young people’s development.

The pastoral role of the trainee manager or youth worker is no less significant. His or her role is to monitor [and document] the social and affective aspects of each trainee’s development, and therefore represents a further and important layer of support. Trainees are encouraged to seek help where needed and share their problems without fear of judgement. It is the trainee manager who is often key to helping solve personal issues which may arise from time to time. Moreover, it is the trainee manager’s role to liaise with tutors at college, social and probation workers, and communicate with parents of trainees where appropriate. He or she guides trainees through the formal process of applying for benefits or allowances; solving problems with housing, and generally helping those individual trainees to overcome or manage some of the immediate real life issues which may arise - the expected and sometimes unexpected challenges or ‘fire fighting’ when working with fifteen or twenty young people who are trying hard to change their lives.

Another more administrative role for both these key participants involves organising and escorting the trainees on sourcing trips such as the one to Tuscany described above, providing yet another opportunity for intimate interaction between all the participants in the Foundation team, the trainees, and members of the wider community of the parent organisation. Their roles and their personal attributes therefore allow them not only to become instrumental in helping change the lives of the young people they serve through the work of the Foundation, but support and influence each other as well. Further shared duties may include arranging in-house workshops conducted by specialists on a range of relevant topics such as, substance abuse, money management, anger management, motivation and healthcare. In this manner, the trainee manager and trainee chef work closely together to address every aspect of the trainees’ needs throughout their training.

The working environment of the Foundation team is an open office, situated next to the trainee’s meeting room, and trainees are free to walk in whenever they need to - to see either the trainee chef or trainee manager and discuss any issues which needs their attention. Trainees usually come in just before or after a shift in the kitchen, so that at certain points in the day, they are seen coming and going, talking to the team as they go about their business. The team’s desks are arranged so that the Foundation team all sit facing one
another. Although the administrative members of the team do not have any particular duties which necessitate getting personally involved with the trainees, the fact that they work in such close proximity to the trainee manager and trainee chef means that there is plenty opportunity to discuss and share in the daily issues and concerns surrounding an individual trainee’s progress and well being, and moreover, to have regular daily contact with the trainees themselves.

Mediation

Over the years of the study, I observed many exchanges between all these members of the team and the apprentices in the setting of the Foundation office. Yet when I came to examine the data and dialogues relating directly to this micro-setting, there was little dialogue recorded there which could be described as definitive examples of applied mediation between mediator and mediatee worthy of being considered a ‘critical incident’. However, what came through in the data was that between the various and changing individuals who worked there, was the unchanging inclusive and welcoming attitude shown towards the trainees by everyone in this setting.

One example of many such greetings to a trainee by an administrator recorded in my journal was:

‘Hi, Debs! How are you? I have been hearing great things about you! I heard you ran your own section yesterday. That’s fantastic! Well done. That’s so good! What did you make...?’

(Research Journal, 10th September, 2006).

This exchange could be described as strong mediation of feelings of competence and mediation of a feeling of belonging by the team members towards the trainees (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994). Such mediation may not have been applied with a consciously defined motive by this team member. Nevertheless, it still required that this particular team member be moved to take responsibility for how that trainee might feel when entering the office, and so act accordingly. This aspect of the micro-setting of the Foundation office is discussed in more detail below.
On another occasion, Maddie, a past graduate whose story was used in the pilot study and described above (see chapter five), came into the office. She had been asked by the Foundation to come into the office to give an interview to the administrator whose job it is to keep abreast of all the ongoing activities of past trainees. Before that meeting, Maddie came into the main office to say hello to both her past trainee chef and other participants, and share her news with us all. She told us where she had been working since graduation, who she still saw from her group of trainees, and how she felt now that she was out in the industry as a fully qualified chef. She then had a long and detailed conversation with the trainee chef about the technical aspects of her professional position, the quality of the produce used there, her responsibilities and obligations to her place of work. Watching and listening to their conversation reminded me how far this young woman had come since I had first met her three years before (see ‘Maddie’s story’ in chapter five above). Their conversation was recorded in my research journal as it was spoken.

In the following brief excerpt from that dialogue, we can find many examples of mediated learning offered by the trainee chef towards Maddie. These are included here and bracketed after each comment. Moreover, the same dialogue is also analysed here as an exchange between two fully legitimate members of a community of practice.

**Critical incident (10)**

Trainee Chef: ‘Hi, Maddie! How’s it going?’

(Mediation of a feeling of belonging).

Maddie: ‘Yeah, great….really, really great’ (grinning).

Trainee Chef: ‘You look very well. You are still working at “Tony’s”, aren’t you?’

(Mediation of individuation).

Maddie: ‘Yeah. Thanks, I feel well. And I love it there. The food there is great, and they really care about their produce, so everything is lovely and fresh….’
Trainee Chef: ‘What section are you on there?’

(Mediation of sharing; belonging)

Maddie: ‘Well…’ (shyly) ‘…That’s the thing. They have just asked me to be sous chef.’

Trainee Chef: ‘Maddie! That’s so great. I’m so proud of you! Guys, did you hear that?’ …generally addressing the other participants present in the office at the time.

(Mediation of competence; a feeling of belonging).

Maddie: ‘I know, thanks. I love it. And last night, we were short,’… (short staffed). ‘and so we had to manage without two chefs. But we did it. I never thought I would love it all so much.’

Trainee Chef: ‘I’m really happy for you. How many chefs are there in the kitchen?’

(Mediation of sharing; a feeling of belonging in the community of professional chefs).

Maddie: ‘Usually, six, but last night we were down to four and it was so mad…’

Trainee Chef: ‘But that’s how you like it, isn’t it!’…(teasing).

(Strong mediation of individuation; challenge; optimistic alternative).

Maddie: ‘Yeah!’…(laughing)… ‘That’s the buzz! You know me. Listen, I must go. I am meeting Pam to give her an interview for her past graduates’ “thingy”..’

In ‘Pam’s past graduates thingy’, we have a good example of how two participants share the meaning of one of the many practices within this community. In his description of complex practices and procedures within an established community of practice, Wenger
cites one such example in a vignette titled: ‘The “C,F, and J” thing’ (see Wenger, 2007, pp35-38). Wenger was using the community of an insurance company’s claims department to suggest that members of a community of practice do not always need to have a deep understanding of the reasoning behind certain procedures, only that in practice they need to know what to do with it and how to communicate that idea to each other. Shared jargon or slang is common within communities of practice. It is a kind of shorthand which necessitates no further explanation between legitimate participants who have a shared understanding of its meaning. Another example of this was in Tim’s description in the pilot study where he talks about ‘a quick munch’, which is slang in this setting for ‘a quick snack’. Within MLE it also exemplifies mediation of sharing; belonging and meaning.

The dialogue between Maddie and the trainee chef continued:

Trainee Chef: ‘Okay. Go on, go. Maddie, it was so lovely to see you. Come and see us again....Maddie - listen, will you come and talk to this year’s trainees for me? It would be really helpful. Could you? Have you met any of them yet?’

This comment clearly shows a number of notions within the framework of a community of practice. It indicates Maddie’s ongoing legitimacy and value as a member of the community. It indicates the inclusive nature of the Foundation’s attitude towards its graduates, and demonstrates the hierarchy of the apprentice model, and also reminds Maddie of her ongoing responsibility towards the younger generations of trainees now that she is out in the industry. It also implies on a significant level, mediation of intentionality, reciprocity, transcendence and meaning towards Maddie as an accepted, fully fledged and valued member of the community. Again, it demonstrates strong ongoing mediation of a feeling of belonging; mediation of challenge in the community’s expectation of her ability to communicate with the trainees; and a shared responsibility to and pride in the enterprise of the community. The dialogue continues:

Maddie: ‘Only one or two of them. Not really to talk to. Sure, I’ll talk to them. I don’t mind. If you think it would help. Just let me know when and we’ll arrange a date when I am not working. Bye!’
Trainee Chef: ‘Wonderful. Thanks so much, Maddie. Take care, and I will be in touch very soon.’

(Again, mediation of a feeling of competence; belonging; sharing).

This exchange seems to me to illustrate and exemplify the inclusive nature of what was described to me over the years as the, ‘Family of Fifteen London’.

The Community of Practice

The Foundation office is therefore not a learning environment in the traditional sense, in that there is no defined educational purpose or agenda. But it is nevertheless where trainees learn how to cope with any of the affective and cultural implications of altering their life’s course towards a purposeful and optimistic future. And the contribution that the Foundation team make towards the trainees’ development is often key to supporting them while they are in the process of learning how to become fully legitimate members of the multiple communities of Fifteen London, and the wider communities of professional chefs. So if, according to Wenger’s principles, the trainees described here learn in this setting how to become fully legitimate members of society, then this is indeed a community of practice, and as such is considered here therefore to be an important setting for cultural transmission (Wenger, 1998).

At the time of collecting data for this study, training each young chef from recruitment to graduation costs the Foundation twenty thousand pounds. This considerable sum is over and above the cost of college fees, travel expenses and housing benefits which are met by the trainee’s local London Authority. Each trainee selected therefore represents a huge financial commitment by the Foundation, so a decision made by the members of the Foundation team to select an individual candidate for training carries a serious responsibility.

Each successful candidate who is offered a place on the programme therefore represents not only a financial risk, but an emotional investment from the moment they are selected. Enormous ongoing optimism and motivation is therefore required by the team in their endeavours to help each individual trainee overcome any past obstacles to reach graduation and change their lives. Moreover, pride in the success of current and past

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graduates of the programme is shared by every participant in the whole workforce. The Foundation team’s significant contribution in this process is shown in their keen disappointment when a trainee quits the programme before Graduation. Such loss is felt very badly by everyone who has shared in helping that particular young person overcome their individual challenges to stay on course. Over the years, I witnessed and shared in many disappointments and discussions with these key participants who would meet to reflect on the quality of their shared intervention and individual efforts to help those unsuccessful trainees stay on course. These issues are discussed more fully in Chapter Ten.

This deep emotional investment demonstrated by the key participants towards each trainee, would appear to correspond to an important notion within mediated learning experience, which is that it is the personal responsibility of a mediator to change and enhance the mediatee’s development. This notion demands that the mediator turns what Feuerstein refers to as, ‘the stiff finger of blame’, away from the child and his disabilities towards society, and towards ourselves, to say: ‘Have I done everything possible to change this child?’ (Feuerstein in Dean, 1990). But further to this, the dedication demonstrated towards the trainees by the Foundation Team that I witnessed would seem to suggest a more social phenomena, a shared goal and a strong common sense of purpose, a collaborative effort, and a cultural investment which goes far beyond the individualistic notion of mediation between a mediator and mediatee.

It is these thoughts which led me to question where the mediation between individuals stops and the modifying elements within the community begins, for over the years of this study, I learnt that not only does one generate the other, but the two are one and the same. I began to think of the concept of mediation between individuals as the glue or the catalyst that binds people together in a common culture. Moreover, I learnt over time that when considering the essential elements of the learning environment, it cannot be only setting and establishing a common ethos which changes peoples’ lives, nor can it only be establishing and sharing a prescribed set of practices; there has to be a passionate, abiding, dynamic, and ongoing need to do so. Participants need to genuinely care enough, and be prepared to make the required effort and investment, in order to initiate lasting change in human development. They need to share and collaborate on a set of deeply held beliefs, where all participants in the community are striving towards the same goals, with the same passion, energy and purpose, and ultimately are prepared to take the
same risks. These ideas are discussed in more detail later in the thesis but help here to unpick the complex and sometimes intimate relationships that I saw develop between trainees and the Foundation Team in the daily routines and practices of the general office, and which are the subject of this fifth and final micro-setting presented here.

Monitoring and Documentation

There is a constant, ongoing, dynamic social interaction between the members of the team about the trainees’ development. This process requires a great deal of collaboration and discussion by all members of the Foundation team. Office files are kept on each trainee, to document every aspect of the trainee’s life. This includes where trainees are living at any one time; who they are living with; what kind of personal support they have outside Fifteen London to sustain them through the training programme (for example, parent, partner, foster parent); what kind of challenges they have outside of Fifteen London (dependents, long journeys, outstanding loans, history of substance abuse, poor housing arrangements, etc.); contact details of their social worker or probation officer, their health and self-discipline; notes on the consistency of their attitude to and motivation for training; and their level of optimism about completing the course.

To build this profile, many dialogues and individual meetings with trainees are conducted on a regular basis. Moreover, each trainee’s professional development is continually monitored and assessed in both the kitchen by the chefs they work with, as well as the tutor-chefs at college. In this manner, and for the duration of their training, little in the trainee’s development is left unnoticed.

All the structure, discipline, regulation, expectation and communication these considerations demand is a clear indication of a parameter of mediation referred to as, developing the need for regulation and control. And to those young people who have not attended full time work or schooling for many years, this regulation and control is a hard lesson to learn. Although all trainees begin the programme with a dream to become a chef, some arrive with little sense of how to go about achieving it. In their initial training, they soon learn that in order to comply with the basic requirements of the industry, they must become organised and disciplined in all aspects of their lives. This may include learning how to plan the time and distance for their journey to both work and college. In this manner, it is made clear from the beginning, that as long as they are
always where they should be, when they should be, clean and well groomed, alert and ready to learn, they will be supported and accepted by the Foundation team; their tutors at college; their colleagues in the kitchen and the Foundation at large.

Attendance

Attendance is therefore taken very seriously by the Foundation and trainees are reminded from the beginning of their training, that as long as they always attend college and do their assigned shifts in the kitchen, or at least make the effort to telephone into the office to explain why they cannot come in, or why they will be late, they will be supported. But failure to show up at college or the kitchen, or failing to let the office know why they have not come in, is not tolerated.

Failure to ‘turn up’ can warrant what is called a ‘disciplinary’ from the Head chef which goes on the trainee’s record. Three ‘disciplinaries’ can mean terminating a novice chef’s training with the Foundation. Any lack of discipline or misdemeanour at college is handled firstly by the rules of the college and then by the rules of Fifteen London.

Critical incident (11)

At the beginning of their training, some trainees resent the level of scrutiny this implies. Indeed, one trainee who was always late for college early in his training, was heard to complain to one of his peers about the trainee manager:

‘Gawd...that Mark....he ‘phones me more often than my mother!’

(Research Journal, 19th September, 2005).

In terms of the mediation which has elicited such a response, it would seem that this comment could be described as a direct response to mediation of regulation and control, applied here by members of the Foundation team. The ultimate goal for such mediation is that the trainee will develop an internal locus of control and so learn to regulate his or her own behaviour.
Critical incident (12)

Tommy, another trainee, was causing concerns for the Foundation team for not settling down on the programme and becoming unpopular not only amongst his peers in the group but the chefs in the kitchen as well. Having completed his NVQ 1 at college with the rest of his group, and after the subsequent first weeks of working in the kitchen, he was still finding the responsibility and routine of coming into work every day very difficult. As a consequence, he missed one or two shifts in the kitchen, but without letting anyone at work know why. The Foundation are sympathetic to those novice chefs who get extremely tired during the first weeks in the kitchen whilst they are getting used to the new routine of long hours on a shift, day after day. They understand that working in a professional kitchen for a whole shift requires intense physical and mental exertion. They recognise that many of these young people may not have had experience of either sustaining sufficient stamina to work so hard for hours or needing to be responsible to anyone except themselves. However, it got to the point in Tommy’s case, where the Trainee manager needed to take Tommy to one side in the office and have a quiet word with him before the lunch shift in the kitchen, saying:

Trainee manager: ‘Listen, Tommy. You can’t keep missing shifts like you did again yesterday. You will get chucked off the programme. Don’t you realise that when you don’t come in, someone has to do your work as well as their own? It’s not fair. Because you weren’t there yesterday, Sam had to prep up for your chef in ‘hots’ as well as his own section, and never had time for a break before lunch duty. He must have really loved you’... (sarcastically).... ‘How would you feel if someone did that to you? Everyone in the kitchen tells me how you are really flying now when you do come in. You’ve just got to keep your head down now Tommy and get on with it. You are almost there...don’t you see that? When you do this you are letting yourself down... and me.’ Pause. ‘And they will really resent you if you don’t start to pull your weight, don’t you see that? You can’t just not turn up like this, we need you here. And why didn’t you answer your phone? You know you are meant to keep it on all the time in case we need you to come in. I didn’t know if you were asleep in your bed or under a bus! And I should n’t have to chase you up at this stage of training... why didn’t you call me? You know the rules.’
Tommy: ‘Oh......I didn’t realise. It was just that my alarm didn’t go off and I thought... oh well, its late...its not worth going in now. I just thought if I wasn’t there, they would just get on with it really,...you know.... I did n’t think about it. I didn’t realise they would need me there.’

Youth Worker: ‘Did you really think no one would notice? Look. You were meant to be on ‘hots’ with Carlos’ (professional chef) ‘and Sam was on Grills with Pete’ (professional chef). ‘Graham’ (professional chef) didn’t come in ‘cos he had to take his wife to a Doctor’s appointment so the kitchen was short-handed anyway. You can’t keep letting them down like this. I’m fed up with making excuses for you. If it happens again, you know you will get chucked off the course and that will be the end of it. After all your hard work... It’s up to you now. I can’t do it for you.’

(Research Journal, 1st December, 2005).

Here we have a clear example not only of mediation of regulation and control, observed on so many other occasions, but mediation of challenge and importantly, mediation of meaning, intentionality and reciprocity, and transcendence; making sure that Tommy realised the deeper significance of the effect his behaviour was to have on his reputation and on the good of the kitchen. It highlighted for him the consequent resentment shown towards him in the attitude of his peers and colleagues. In this manner, the trainee manager was making clear that such behaviour was having a direct impact on his social standing in the community.

This mediation may have provided Tommy, a potentially good but hitherto passive student, with the only ‘wake-up’ call he needed to initiate a change in his self-discipline and commitment to training. As a direct result of this dialogue, Senior chefs and the Foundation team were able to work together to focus on this weakness in Tommy’s professional and personal development. Over the following few weeks, Tommy learnt that he was valued as a legitimate contributor to the enterprise of the kitchen. He learnt to trust that his superiors wanted to help him, and understand that he was supported and valued as an individual. Moreover, he learnt that in order to be accepted by the members of the community, he needed to make an extra effort to conform, to meet the demands placed upon him; and so make a valid contribution to the workplace, the kitchen, and
indeed the community of practice that the Foundation team represents. This would suggest that just needing to know why he was resented by his peers and colleagues was enough to help Tommy understand that he needed to change his ways, and so take his place as a responsible member of the community of the kitchen; and in this manner he moved from being a legitimate participant at the periphery of the community towards full participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

However, of relevance to this thesis is that the mediation offered by the mediator (the Trainee manager) towards him, and then supported and sustained by other key participants provided the ‘glue’ or catalyst necessary for initiating the process of Tommy becoming a fully legitimate member of the community of practice in the kitchen. This notion of change is discussed in more detail later in the thesis.

Trainees’ Documentation

Trainees have to complete two files as part of the programme: one for their vocational training at college and one to record their activities in the workplace of the professional kitchen at Fifteen London. Taking personal responsibility for such documentation is considered to be good training for future employment.

Each morning at eight o’clock, as a matter of routine, and before the breakfast shift which begins at half past eight, trainees are expected to meet in the large meeting room next to the main office in the Foundation’s office suite to write up their duties in their kitchen file, but some trainees are better at keeping this routine than others. It is the trainee’s responsibility to document every shift s/he has worked, which chef they worked with, and what duties were done on each shift so that both trainees and the trainee chef can see at a glance what s/he has done on any particular section. Failure by the trainee to write up their duties in this manner may go against his/her record and so plays an important part in their completion of training. Part of the trainee chef’s role is to support any reluctant writers in writing up their shifts, reminding them which shifts they had worked that week, and which section they had been on; since the programme is purposefully structured to ensure that each trainee has experience in every aspect of the kitchen.

Sometimes, the trainee chef has to take a pragmatic view on the demands that this places on the trainees, and s/he may turn a blind eye to kitchen files of those who have a genuine
difficulty, especially if that trainee is doing well in the kitchen. Sometimes, the trainee chef is seen sitting and working quietly with a trainee to overcome any difficulty to complete the worksheets for both college and kitchen files. A trainee might be considered to be a real ‘star’ by the professional chefs in the kitchen, but may be poor at documentation. These individuals are always respected by the Foundation team for their talents in the workplace, but an incomplete restaurant file means losing marks in their final assessment by the Foundation. Importantly, such trainees would never be rejected from graduating from Fifteen London, but they would lose marks and therefore the opportunity to gain the scholarship awarded to the trainee who achieves the highest marks in the group at graduation.

Trainees are marked on their professional abilities, their contribution to the enterprise of the Foundation, their student record at college, the consistency of their commitment and dedication to their training, and the personal challenges they have overcome. Over the years of the study, these scholarships offered work placements in a prestigious kitchen abroad, in Italy, the United States or elsewhere. Such an experience provides a rare opportunity for a young and inexperienced chef which will send him or her on the demanding and competitive journey to becoming a successful professional serving the fine food industry. The promise of a scholarship abroad is often the key incentive for highly motivated and ambitious trainees to do well in all aspects of the training programme. Other trainees, whose stories contributed to the data used in this study, perhaps those whose ambitions have been of a more personal nature, told me that they were satisfied to reach graduation and an assured future in the industry. Yet what was common to all the apprentices that I met over the years in the course of conducting this study, was that they learnt to respect and appreciate the huge contribution made by the Foundation team towards their development.

Summary

In this section I suggested that the micro-setting of the Foundation office could be described as a community of practice. I described the wide range of routines and practices of the members of this community, the Foundation team; the opportunities these practices provide the participants and the trainees for developing intimate relationships; and the valuable scaffold of support observed to be often crucial to these trainees’ ability to meet the demands of the training programme.
I used examples of dialogues and exchanges between some of this community’s participants and the trainees as critical incidents in this setting to support the argument that the MLE applied in these exchanges acted as the catalyst or glue that helped bind mediatees - or trainees - to a particular course of action: that is, their commitment to complete training. I suggested that MLE is therefore instrumental in the process of helping participants become fully legitimate members of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998).

It would therefore seem in this construction, that the environment of the Foundation office can be considered on two levels: firstly, as a community of practice between its key participants, the Foundation team, whose purpose and function contribute to the smooth operation of its related communities. Secondly, and of greater significance to this study, it can be described as a community of practice that provides trainees, or those periphery members of the wider community of the organisation, with the opportunities for participation in the process of learning activities (Rogoff and Wertsch, 1984), which are to have a direct impact on how they conduct their lives. Indeed, similar to Wenger’s notion for the process of becoming (Wenger, 1998), Kozulin and others suggest that the principles of mediated learning experience and the learning activities within both the environment and this process work together to allow, assist and encourage the realisation of learning potential and the development of psychological tools necessary for higher cognitive functioning (Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman, 1979; Kozulin, 1998).

These ideas are unpicked in the following chapter which discusses the implications and characteristics of the five micro-settings presented here, and analyses them according to both the parameters of MLE and the three key elements of communities of practice: learning, meaning and identity (Wenger, 1998).
Chapter Nine - Discussion of Data

9.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented data drawn from observations of five different aspects of the community of practice, and the informal dialogues observed between their various participants. This chapter now discusses this data from a theoretical perspective to explore whether the example of what was witnessed can illuminate some of the complexities of learning as social participation. A critical reflection follows on whether the framework of MLE was an appropriate and fruitful framework in which to address the research questions which have guided this inquiry; where the MLE framework might need to be extended and adapted for practice elsewhere; and what the implications of this analysis might be for learning in the real world.

The pilot study of 2005 revealed that the trainees’ learning experience at Fifteen Foundation changed their self-image, attitudes and self-expectations. The literature review for this present and in-depth study further revealed that the key features for a community of practice could provide a useful framework in which to explore changes in the trainees’ development in the apprenticeship model of Fifteen Foundation. This chapter therefore begins with the assumption that the community of Fifteen Foundation could be described as a community of practice.

Wenger posits that, ‘a social theory of learning must therefore integrate the components necessary to characterize social participation as a process of learning and knowing’ (Wenger, 1998, p 4). These components include:

- **meaning** - learning as experience
- **practice** - learning as doing
- **community** - learning as belonging and
- **identity** - learning as becoming (adapted from Wenger, op-cit, p 5).

This chapter takes up these themes and how they relate to situated learning in the micro-settings of the community and the social interactions of their participants. *Figure (3)* overleaf shows the five micro-settings within the larger community of practice of Fifteen
Figure (3): The five micro-settings of sourcing trips; office; kitchen; college; and selection within the Community of Practice of Fifteen London provide the context for learning, where the four components of learning and knowing - meaning; practice; community; and identity are developed by means of mediation between participants through social participation.
to illustrate the complex nature of multiple memberships in and allegiance to a number of related communities of practice.

However, an analysis of the data suggests that it is the diversity of these related settings that contribute to the trainees’ experience as they learn to negotiate and adapt to the various demands that these micro-settings make on their understanding. *Meaning; practice; community; and identity* (Wenger, op-cit) therefore provide a coherent frame of reference in which to consider the changes in the trainees’ development, but emphasise explicitly the nature of learning as a process of social interaction, particularly in regard to the nature of influence of one member of the community upon another.

The five micro-settings described above suggest that a number of elements of a social, intellectual and affective nature would seem to have contributed to the life-changes described to me in the trainees’ stories in the pilot study. Of interest now therefore are those specific elements within the community which were responsible for making those changes happen. This chapter attempts to draw together the findings from this analysis which encompass both the individual and social, the intellectual and affective; to emphasise the role of the human mediator *within* the dynamics of the community of practice; and illustrate how a fusion of both perspectives might help illuminate some of the more complex aspects of the learning process itself.

The discussion then goes on to unpick the data according to the framework for mediated learning experience (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994). It explores how the mediation witnessed between participants over the course of this investigation might have affected the trainees’ development. To do so, it considers here the various aspects of MLE and analyses how the perceived changes described in the data might be attributed to one or other of these aspects.

This chapter therefore explores what appears to be the cultural transmission experienced by trainees as they move through a dynamic learning process from being newcomers at the periphery of the community towards full participation. The learning process itself is therefore the major focus for analysis and the dominant theme of this chapter.
9.2. Situated Learning in the Community of Practice

In the literature review earlier in the thesis I discussed the concepts found within the four essential questions for situated learning in a community of practice and their relevance to the thesis (Wenger, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991). The study and this chapter therefore began with the assumption that this setting is considered as a community of practice. Now, I turn again to the four essential questions for a community of practice to consider their relationship with the parameters of MLE and observed changes in the trainees’ development.

In their analysis of five diverse apprenticeships, Lave and Wenger found that despite the unique features of every community, four key features were common to all. They suggest that these key features be referred to as essential questions for a community of practice, since they are questions in which to consider the unique nature and features of the ‘process of learning and knowing’ within a particular community rather than as a prescribed set of criteria (Wenger, 1998, p 4).

These four questions concern:

1. Access into the community
2. Conflicts and tensions of everyday practice
3. Motivation
4. Personal Identity

These questions illustrate the complex relationships between people in the social activities of a community of practice, and their effects on human development. In this construction, we each have our own trajectory in a given community, and meaning and understanding come from our unique experience of and participation in the world (Wenger, 1998). Learning, meaning and identity in a community of practice therefore involves a complex set of characteristics related to participation in social contexts. These include:

- reification of the culture and artifacts of the community
- participation in one community and non-participation in another
- individual and collective participation in the activities of the community
participation evolving over time and space in the process of becoming, and in the individual trajectory of each participant
participation involving multi-membership of related communities, both local and global
accountability that comes from identity with a chosen community (taken from Wenger, 1998).

The next section of this chapter explores some of these ideas further, and asks what we as educators can learn from this analysis.

9.3. Transformative learning and Cultural Transmission

Given the significant changes in attitude, aptitude, ability and ambition observed in the trainees over the course of the investigation and presented in the data, it would be quite simple at this point in the story to summarise that the analysis according to the framework of MLE presented above makes clear the key elements responsible for the process of learning. However, it seems to me at this point in my understanding of what I witnessed, that this analysis only serves to highlight another perhaps more subtle dimension of learning, that of developing moral principles in the learner. This section discusses some of these notions to highlight the ethical responsibility of attempting to change other peoples’ lives.

As pointed out earlier (see Literature Review above), not all masters are transparent or generous about imparting the meanings of artifacts of their trade to their apprentices (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Becker, 1972). Indeed, research shows that in some cases apprentices can spend years performing the same trivial duties without progressing to more significant or challenging tasks in their contribution to the enterprise of the community (Lave and Wenger, op-cit). Power and politics exist everywhere and come into all human relationships (Freire, 1974). It is how the individual is moved to respond to this power of their own volition which is of interest here.

The data above reveals the deeper goals and purpose of the training programme. It suggests that whilst the ultimate goal of the masters’ intervention with their apprentices in the workplace is to impart the skills and technical expertise of a chef serving the paying customer in a fine food restaurant, there is something else being learned in the
five micro-settings of this community of practice. For some of the relationships which
develop in this setting hold far more significance than master-apprentice; and the
perceived changes in these young peoples’ development would seem to be far more
profound than a master apprentice relationship implies.

Research suggests that reciprocity between people is necessary in developing caring
communities (Kahan, 2003; also see Literature Review above). Kahan talks about
‘creating’ rather than mediating an atmosphere conducive to generating reciprocity and
trust. A sociological stance on the idea of reciprocity therefore suggests that it is the
community itself which engenders feelings of reciprocity and action. This would seem
to reflect some aspects of the framework for a Modifying Environment (Beker and
Feuerstein, 1990a; Rynders and Feuerstein and Rand, 1997; Sasson, 1997b). That is,
creating or setting up the right conditions or atmosphere for a mediated learning
experience to take place. The conditions for a Modifying Environment, introduced
earlier in the thesis include having (1) a high degree of openness and opportunity, privacy
and respect, responsibility and support; (2) positive stress to initiate adaptability and
change; (3) positive tension between what is known and what is new to increase an
adaptive capacity; and (4) individualised, specialised, customised mediation (Rynders,
Feuerstein and Rand, op-cit). It is this last condition, that of individualised, specialised,
and customised mediation which more than any other suggests that the individualised
quality and intensity of the human relationships between people effects change in the
human condition. ‘[W]hat is the most important’ [thing] ‘for development of potential
and learning is the quality of proximal processes’ (emphasis in the original) ‘(relations,
communication, interactions) in the individual’s educational context’ (Westling Allodi,
2007, p158; also see Bronfenbrenner and Ceci, 1994).

Moreover, situated learning is much more than collaboration alone, it is a community of
individuals with a shared history. But over time, an established community will be made
up of those who share a common history and newcomers who do not. Newcomers have
to learn to make sense of the culture they choose to enter, and moving across from one
community to another demands a significant transformation as we modulate our own
boundaries of our own identity within the social world. The allegiance an individual may
have to one community rather than another is a political force (Freire, 1974). And we
constantly monitor these boundaries by choosing, resisting, and controlling our response
of whether to extend these boundaries to take on other identities. In this sense, we are
all hybrids of our own experience of the world (Wenger, 1998). Therefore, the community of practice to which an individual may have allegiance will undoubtedly impact on the sense they may make of their place in the world. It implies the notion of choice, or conscious orientation on the part of the individual, as s/he makes a carefully considered decision concerned with which community of practice to which s/he might be exposed to is preferable, or desirable, and why this might be so.

Moreover, each one of us has our own trajectory in life, and meaning, identity and understanding of the world comes from our own experience, communication and participation in social practices (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; also see Rogoff, 1990). Therefore, if we consider the notion that learning is a social practice and central to a community of practice, then we have to consider too the notion that the interaction, or mediation between participants within that community influences not only the individual attitude and aspirations of its participants but how the culture of that community might develop over time.

Therefore, the mediator needs to be constantly vigilant to the notion that different individuals and even groups of individuals need different levels of intensity of MLE. Data reveals that individual trainees arrive at the community of Fifteen with different experiences, etiology and aspirations; and each individual’s development is dependent on the distal factors which have effected their cognitive development in the past, regarded as responsible for what Feuerstein would refer to as, *cognitive deprivation*. It is to compensate for this deprivation that MLE is applied in the social practices of human relationships, to the degree that cognitive and social development is restored and developed, and consequently so that meaningful learning can then take place to fulfil that individual’s learning potential. *Figure (4)* overleaf describes the trajectory of the individual’s learning progress, where the process of becoming is seen as a dynamic and fluid process dependent on a number of related elements.

As newly learnt fragile skills become embedded and internalised in the activities of situated learning, the newcomer moves from a more proximately attended position requiring intense MLE to full participation and autonomy. Certainly, this was my observation of the successive groups of trainees. As they became more experienced in how things were done both in the kitchen and in the wider community of the Foundation, so they needed less attention from the chefs to complete the various activities and
**Figure (4):** A graphic showing the individual’s process of becoming as a dynamic and fluid process dependent on a number of related elements within the community of practice.

*Legitimate Peripheral Participation* allows the newcomer to feel a sense of belonging in the enterprise and practices of the community, even when at the periphery of that community.

*Mediated Learning Experience* is the catalyst or glue in the relationships between people within the *modifying environment* of the community which encourages, focuses and regulates exposure to selected stimuli and culturally significant artefacts.

As the newcomer becomes an old-timer of the community, s/he transfers learnt expertise to the next generation of novices within the hierarchical model of cultural transmission.
practices of the workplace. It was revealed that MLE became minimal, a matter of masters checking each dish rather than overseeing the whole process of making it, becoming more reliant on the acquired expertise of those trainees than earlier in their training. So too, MLE was reduced in the pastoral relationships between experienced trainees and the key participants in the Foundation office, whose role it is to foster, support and monitor individuals as they progress through training to Graduation. What was significant was as MLE was withdrawn by key participants, and simultaneously focussed onto the new group of trainees taken in later in the year, those more experienced trainees from the previous group rose to meet new challenges in the social practices of the community. This would seem to support the concept of the process of becoming through social participation (Rogoff, 1990; Lave and Wenger 1991), and the scaffolded learning that takes place in the hierarchy of the workforce of Fifteen Foundation.

9.4. The goals of Mediated Learning Experience

We do not see learning, we see the reification of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Claxton, 2006), and therefore if we consider MLE as a constituent part of the learning process within a community of practice, then we have to take the aims and goals of MLE into our analysis.

Of interest here therefore is the quality of the observable changes in the trainees development as reification of their response to mediation. The goals of MLE, together with the various parameters of MLE therefore provide a coherent theoretical framework in which to discuss what happens when a group of young people are working hard to change their lives.

The general goal of the methods of MLE according to these methods is:

_The enhancement of structural cognitive modifiability of the retarded performer in his/her exposure to sources of stimuli_ (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980)

Feuerstein uses the concept ‘retarded’ to describe all performers who have not yet realised their full potential because of a lack of sufficient MLE and cultural transmission. But the formulation of this general goal sits uncomfortably with English-speaking
students of this approach. ‘Retarded’ is an evocative term, generally understood to mean lower than average human development. That Feuerstein would consider us all retarded in this sense holds little consolation. ‘Under-developed’ would seem to have similar connotations.

For example, the term ‘RETARDED (adj.)’ in the English Dictionary and Thesaurus (Collins, 2003) means, ‘Underdeveloped, usually mentally, and especially having an IQ of 70 to 85 (less than normal or average intelligence)’. The terms offered in the thesaurus section for alternatives to the verb, ‘RETARD, vb.’, would seem to be closer to the concept that Feuerstein’s methods intend, being: ‘to slow down; arrest; brake; check; clog; decelerate; defer; delay; ....impede; obstruct; sit back; stall’. Perhaps Feuerstein uses the term as a critique of society which he posits holds back potential development from what is possible under ideal conditions. If this is the case, then I would redefine the general goal of MLE thus:

*The enhancement of learning potential of the individual in relation to his/her exposure to sources of stimuli.*

The six subgoals of MLE are:

1. Correction of deficient cognitive functions
2. Acquisition of vocabulary, labels, concepts, mental operations and perceptual organisation relevant to problem solving behaviour
3. Production of intrinsic motivation through formation of habits
4. Creation of insight and reflective thinking
5. Creation of task intrinsic motivation
6. Shift from role of passive recipient and reproducer of data to role of active generator of new information

(Taken from Feuerstein and Rand, 1980, p115)

The general goal of MLE and these subgoals would seem to reflect some of the central concepts within the framework for *transformative learning* which also has at its heart the goal of developing autonomous thinking in the learner. Similar to the goals of MLE defined here, *transformative learning* suggests that learning, particularly adult learning,
needs to be defined within a frame of reference that has meaning and significance for the learner, together with a deep understanding of what is being communicated (Mezirow, 1997).

Therefore, whilst acknowledging that the goals of MLE are not unique in educational and psychological theory, their definition helps us to identify, clarify and focus on specific targets of mediation for the permanent cognitive modifiability of the human condition. Together with the twelve parameters of MLE they provide a useful didactical framework in which to discuss the dynamics and effect of those specific social interactions between people that take place in the learning process.

9.5. The framework of Mediated Learning Experience

Lave and Wenger describe a community of practice as a ‘*set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice*’ (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p 98). This section considers this aspect of a community of practice in the ‘*set of relations among persons*’ observed within the five micro-settings described above, and according to the framework of MLE.

Each of the five micro-settings described above: the selection process; vocational college; the professional kitchen of the restaurant; sourcing trips; and the Foundation office have different activities and practices and a different set of participants who are more familiar with how things are done there. It is these old-timers who provide meaning and knowledge of specific practices to the trainees, those legitimate but peripheral participants coming into each one of these settings. How these different practices are made transparent to the trainees is therefore of interest here.

The twelve parameters of MLE and the reification of their goals and targets are identified and documented above in the data within a range of critical incidents and observations, and recorded within each of the five micro-settings, and the implication of this analysis is discussed here below. However, I am mindful that the data presented in these incidents, while reflecting numerous observations across the five settings made over an extended period of time, could be perceived merely as isolated opportunities and not as definitive of what really happened there. I therefore resist calculating which particular aspect of MLE was more prevalent than others in which particular micro-setting across
the various relationships between participants. Rather, I present an overview of how I made sense of the various qualities of intervention between participants that I observed. The framework of the MLE parameters and their targeted outcomes therefore provide a coherent framework for discourse in which to consider the effect of observed interactions between participants just as the four essential questions for a community of practice provide a coherent framework for discourse in which to consider the broader cultural dynamics of the environment.

Therefore, both aspects of MLE: the various qualities of mediation and their targeted outcomes provide a reciprocal and conceptual framework for discourse that illuminate observed changes in the trainees’ development within the context of the community of practice of Fifteen Foundation. Implicit in this discussion therefore is the shared demeanour of both mediator and mediatee. Moreover, if I consider this setting to be a community of practice, then the social climate of the environment also effects the human relationships of all its participants: master and apprentice; newcomer and old-timer; mediator and mediatee. Situated Learning suggests that the practices and culture of a community is dynamic and evolving, and therefore the climate or atmosphere of the culture, and the demeanour of one or more of its participants would also have an impact upon the social identity of the whole group (Lave and Wenger, 1991). It would seem from this construction that the climate or atmosphere of the culture in Lave and Wenger’s framework could be answered by the conditions of a Modifying Environment (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997), and the demeanour of one or more of its participants could be answered by the shared reciprocity of the participants.

9.6. Interpersonal and intrapersonal mediation

As outlined above (see Chapter Six), mediation according to Vygotskian theory has two forms: interpersonal mediation - in the relationships between people and intrapersonal mediation - in the learning process of the individual as concepts and ideas become internalised through cultural transmission, and during the ongoing dynamic process of social participation (Kozulin, 1998;1999; Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, Miller, 2003; Wertsch, 1998). Both these aspects of MLE and their targeted outcomes were identified and documented above in the data, where the mediatormediatee relationships varies widely across settings. These differences are discussed in the following section.
The selection process (8.1)

For example, in the community of practice of the selection process (8.1), the hierarchal structure of participants there (namely, newcomer - candidate; novice practitioner - trainee; old-timer - experienced participant) is played out in the examples of critical incidents recorded in the data, and where an analysis of the various aspects of MLE identified there seem to suggest the ‘process of becoming’ for trainees (Lave and Wenger, 1992; Rogers, 1990). This learning is supported by the mediation offered by old-timers towards these novice practitioners in this particular micro-setting, and also by what happened when they interact with newcomers hoping to join the community of Fifteen.

This section considers what else might be happening in the learning process of these novice practitioners or trainees, as they interact with the newcomers in the practices and activities of this micro-setting; and asks how this experience might inform their self-image and self-reflection of how far they have travelled on their individual trajectory of development since the commencement of their own training twelve months earlier. The comments made by the trainees to the candidates in critical incident (1), for example, suggests a group of individuals with a strong sense of purpose, and a strong passion and motivation for the programme that they are eager to share with outsiders. Particularly, they describe how they enjoy hard work and the challenges it provides; they describe their intrinsic motivation for the task itself; and seem reflective about the changes they recognise in their own development - all of which are identifiable goals within the framework of MLE.

In this micro-setting therefore, both interpersonal mediation and intrapersonal mediation would seem to be dynamic and reciprocal and of equal importance to the trainees’ learning process on a number of relational levels. For example, in

- **critical incident (1)**, in the first interview, in the waiting area, in the dialogue between trainees and candidates: *interpersonal mediation* between novice practitioner and newcomer; and *intrapersonal mediation* between newcomer and novice practitioner (see p 161)

- **critical incident (2)**, in the second interview, the tasting test, in the dialogue between the Training Manager and trainees: *interpersonal mediation* between old-
timer and novice practitioner; in the dialogue between Training Manager and professional chefs: *interpersonal mediation* between old-timer and old-timer (see p 164)

- **Critical incident (3)**, in the third interview, in Wales, in the demonstration, in the dialogue between an experienced participant and candidate: *interpersonal mediation* between old-timer and newcomer; *interpersonal mediation* between novice practitioner and newcomer, and *intrapersonal mediation* between novice practitioner and newcomer in the dialogue between trainee and candidate (p 171)

Therefore, the deeper meaning of the mediation offered in critical incidents (1) - (3), and described above, is both reciprocally and mutually beneficial; and its value to all participants within the community cannot be over-emphasised.

Moreover, and of relevance here, is a recognition by the organisation that such interaction is a reciprocally useful resource, and beneficial for a number of reasons. Firstly, by allowing the candidates the opportunity to meet the trainees in this manner, the newcomers feel able to identify with the trainees, seeing young people who may in the past, like them, have also found life challenging for a variety of reasons. But now these same trainees feel able to articulate how they have been successful in gaining access to the community of Fifteen, becoming good ambassadors for the organisation in the process. Conversely, this same dialogue allows these trainees the opportunity to meet young people who are perhaps like they had been the year before, thus allowing them gain an insight into how much they have changed their lives since their own initial interview twelve months earlier. Lastly, and importantly, the senior or more experienced participants in this setting rely on the trainees to perform duties and routines necessary to the day’s success.

Therefore, although not offered directly, the mediation observed in the interactions between participants in the activities and practices of the micro-setting of the selection process, would seem to have an impact on the trainees’ learning process which can be analysed according to the framework of MLE. Specifically, it provides the trainees with specifically targeted mediation of the following nature: *mediation of sharing* in the selection of new candidates; *mediation of a feeling of belonging* to the workforce and so making a valuable contribution; *mediation of regulation and control* in the routines and
practices expected of them at this stage of their training; mediation of meaning of the deeper significance and ethos of the enterprise of the community; mediation of comparison of the candidates’ position to their own developing status as novice professionals; mediation of transcendence in providing these current trainees the opportunity to reflect on their individual progress along their individual trajectory of development and moreover, consider possibilities of where their learning might lead; and mediation of competence by means of the old-timers’ reliance on trainees’ developing expertise and abilities.

In this manner therefore, such mediation becomes a reciprocal process. It provides trainees with the opportunity to articulate and express their new found status as young novice chefs to the candidates on the one hand, whilst allowing the candidates the opportunity to hear from young people they can identity with on the other, and learn from them how their lives might change if they enter this community. This exchange would seem to make the community and its training both attainable and possible to newcomers, and we know from a huge body of research elsewhere that such optimism is both engaging and contagious (Ames and Ames, 1989; Seligman, 1991; Kahan, 2003; Alfassi, 2004).

9.7. Developing an internal locus of control

College (8.2)

In the second micro-setting presented above, (8.2), the mediation offered in the college experience is of quite a different nature to that of the selection process. However, the data suggests that the mediation offered there is no less important than that offered in the other settings. Here, for example, I learnt that the routine and discipline of conventional learning in college holds a significant challenge for some of the young trainees. The prime goal for this first part of their training therefore would appear to be that they learn to conform, and in so doing develop an internal locus of control, becoming self-reliant regarding time-keeping and the various demands of the course. Secondly, in order to become professional in the fine dining industry, trainees need to learn specific practices and routines, and until they show competence in these basic practices they cannot gain their National Vocational Qualification, Level 1, and so progress to commencing their real apprenticeship in the workplace.
Much of the interpersonal mediation offered by the tutor-chef towards trainees documented in the data in the micro-setting of college described above (8.2), would seem to be direct, and relatively simple to analyse according the MLE framework. What is more significant to the learning process of the trainees and perhaps harder to define here is the intrapersonal mediation which occurs internally in the trainees’ learning as a consequence of that interpersonal mediation. For example, the tutor-chef’s exacting and disciplined demeanor serves as an example for how a chef should present him/herself in the workplace. This includes always being clean and tidy - wearing spotlessly clean chef’s ‘whites’ for all kitchen duties; learning to keep the work station gleaming and uncluttered (and making sure that no unnecessary utensils are on the work station); putting all items away tidily after use; and working collaboratively with colleagues and sharing knowledge and expertise. Such collaboration or peer mediation has been shown to have a profound effect not only on the mediator but also on the mediatee (Kaufman, 2001). All these considerations imply mediation of sharing behaviour in the partnered tasks assigned to these trainees by their tutor; mediation of competence by one trainee to another; and mediation of individuation, as partners use each other’s strengths to complete their assignment and so, in this sense, learn to regulate each other.

A shared identity with the community of practice of Fifteen was exemplified in critical incident (4), where Danny and Tim are comparing their knowledge of practices in the restaurant kitchen to that of college (p 177). In the dialogue presented, they discuss the wrongful use of expensive olive oil by another trainee in the professional kitchen setting a day or two earlier. Their dialogue demonstrates their shared knowledge and humour about what the Head Chef’s reaction would be to their colleague’s misuse of expensive olive oil. Their comparison of practices in the kitchen and college settings indicates how they are learning to reconcile and balance the demands of each environment and demonstrates how their experiences in each setting influence one another.

It would seem however that the overriding quality of mediation in the micro-setting of the college environment is to help trainees develop an internal locus of control. Mediation of regulation and control is offered by the tutor chef to help trainees learn the importance of looking and acting like professional chefs in the workplace, the kitchen; Mediation of regulation and control for instilling in the trainee basic but essential routines and practices; and Mediation of regulation and control for learning how to conform to professional expectations. Here, we can see a clear parallel between the
framework of MLE and legitimate peripheral participation in the field of the expert where initially the enterprise of the community is explained to the novice practitioner in terms of basic procedural routines and practices of the workplace (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

9.8. The nature of mediation

The Kitchen (8.3)

The critical incidents (5) (p 186) and (6) (p 187) described in the micro-setting of the professional kitchen would seem to exemplify the key points I have been attempting to make in the previous sections. For example, the brigade of the kitchen clearly marks out the hierarchy and discipline of its participants in the workplace. Moreover, critical incident (5) describes mediation by example, a demonstration of meticulous focus on the importance of timings; textures; and an ability to listen to and respond to instructions from the Head Chef in charge of the pass; all skills that can make the difference between a successful dish and failure. This young master’s deep concentration on her assignment was observed to have a profound impact on her assigned apprentice’s reflected concentration and focus as he watched how she executed her task.

Lave and Wenger discuss the relationship between master and apprentice across industries in the workplace. ‘(R)esearchers insist that there is very little observable teaching; the most basic phenomenon is learning’... ‘There are strong goals for learning because learners, as peripheral participants, can develop a view of what the whole enterprise is about, and what there is to be learned. Learning itself is an improvised practice: A learning curriculum unfolds in opportunities for engagement in practice,’ (Lave and Wenger, 1991, pp 92 - 93). The authors suggest that research shows that the master is usually too distant from the apprentice to offer any discernable teaching; the master being: ‘an object of too much respect to engage with in awkward attempts at a new activity’, (Lave and Wenger, op-cit, p 92), and that in most cases, an apprentice learns his skills from other apprentices.

This may well be the case generally across apprenticeships elsewhere, but in the community of practice of Fifteen Foundation, where the goals of social enterprise are set up primarily to serve the trainees’ development, the data reveals that the master-
apprentice relationship in this workplace at any rate, often holds special significance for
the trainee.

For example, critical incident (6) (p 187) in the micro-setting of the kitchen describes an
exchange between a young trainee on her first day in the kitchen and an experienced
master chef, held in high esteem by his co-participants, and whose demeanor towards his
assigned apprentice suggests a sensitivity to how overwhelmed this newcomer might be
feeling. This second example of mediation in the workplace is far more transparent and
easier to define: it is procedural; sequential; and for some trainees like the one described
here, perhaps more accessible to this novice at this stage of her learning. These two
contrasting styles of mediation indicate quite a different approach, both valid; the second
being more suited to some trainees than others, or perhaps required at differing stages of
their development.

For example, in critical incident (5) (p 186), the young master is both a relatively
inexperienced practitioner and an inexperienced mediator, mindful of her own
developing talents and competences, and mindful too of her status in the workplace as
a young professional. In contrast, in critical incident (6), the second mediator described
is an experienced and knowledgeable master of his profession, so his mediation, offered
to apprentices so many times before, is clear and unambiguous. He is confident about
what he does in the workplace, and what his intentions for his assigned apprentice might
be. Each contrasting style of mediation is valuable, and therefore contributes to the rich
diversity of the trainees’ learning experience across the five micro-settings described
above in the data.

Critical incident (7) (p 190), describes an interaction between a trainee pastry chef
nearing her graduation working closely with the master pastry chef. This critical incident
would seem to exemplify a different quality of mediation again. Here, the data describes
a master and his apprentice working closely and comfortably together in the shared
activities of the workplace. Nevertheless, and despite the chef’s acknowledgement of
this novice chef’s growing expertise in the field of the expert, when she made a mistake,
the chef’s mediation was clear both in his regulation of her response, as well as the
deeper significance that such regulation implied.
These differences suggest that there needs to be a ‘match’ or a ‘fit’ between the demeanor of the mediator and the mediatee; and a cognisance of what an individual may need at a particular point in their development. There also needs to be a consideration regarding who may be most suitable participant to deliver a specific form of mediation for a particular individual; and a further consideration of how, where and when it should be offered. MLE is therefore never a one-size-fits-all-approach, but a skill honed through practice and experience, together with a consideration of the feelings, competence and aptitude of the mediator as well as the mediatee(s).

It would therefore be easy to say that the kitchen is the most significant learning environment of the trainees’ experience, but the data reveals something far more significant. For the training model of Fifteen Foundation is far more than the sum of its parts. Indeed, the data suggests that the relationships that develop between trainees and key participants across these five settings are to have a profound impact on how these young people develop and change over the course of their training.

9.9. Becoming a person

The micro-settings of the sourcing trips (8.4) (see and the Foundation office (8.5) would appear on face value to be peripheral to the main goal of the programme - teaching young people how to cook. On the contrary, the organisation has learnt through experience that these aspects of the programme are crucial to the young apprentices’ emotional and social development and their appreciation for the deeper meaning and significance of what the programme and the world of fine dining have to offer its young people.

According to the framework and philosophy of MLE, a number of considerations are essential for the structural cognitive modifiability of the human condition (Feuerstein and Rand, 1977; Kozulin, Gindis, Ageyev, Miller, 2003). Indeed, it is argued here that the data presented in the micro-settings of the sourcing trips and Foundation office indicate equally significant mediation to that offered in the other settings.

In particular these are: *mediation of intentionality and intentionality* described by the participants’ prime objective of helping trainees appreciate and respect the various aspects of the organisation and its programme of training; *mediation of meaning* concerning the integrity of traditions and practices of the culture of the profession in
which they have chosen to participate; and mediation of transcendence, encouraging trainees to look beyond the here and now, to understand how their education and experience at Fifteen can become a bridge towards building a more optimistic future.

It would seem from this analysis across the five micro-settings that the individualised nurturing levels of mediation offered to newcomers changes as the practices and culture of the community become transparent through shared meaning; and as proximal processes and individualised intervention becomes more distal and generalised over time. A tension between what is known, and what is yet to be known is therefore balanced between individualised learning through MLE and cultural transmission through participation. It would seem from this complex construction that the process of learning occurs in a Community of Practice and within the dynamic relationships of:

- Mediated Learning Experience - the quality of relationships between people (Freeman, 1994; Tzuriel, 2004; Hadji, 1998)
- The Zone of Proximal Development - the hierarchy of the apprenticeship model (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Rogoff, 1990); and
- Psychological Tools - the expertise of the master in the field of the expert (Kozulin, 1998).

The Community of Practice is represented in Figure (5) overleaf as a funnel, where these three elements work together within the modifying environment of the Community of Practice for the enhancement of the human condition.

9.10. Critical reflections on MLE

The main purpose for research which has guided this investigation was to illuminate in as much detail as possible the culture of Fifteen London and what is going on there in the process of apprentices learning to become chefs; and furthermore, whether, the two theoretical perspectives of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994), could provide useful frameworks for making sense of what was happening there which might add to our knowledge about their applicability in the real world.
Figure (5): Situated Learning in the Community of Practice of Fifteen London

The community of practice is represented by a funnel, where the process of learning occurs within the dynamic relationships between Mediated Learning Experience; the Zone of Proximal Development; and the development of Psychological Tools. These elements work together within the community of practice for the modifiability of the human condition.

Structural Cognitive Modifiability
social, intellectual and affective changes in the human condition
This section now takes a closer look at the framework of MLE and considers whether this proved to be an appropriate and fruitful framework for dealing with these specific questions.

An analysis of the data revealed that incidents of mediation were so bound up within the context for the learning experience and cultural transmission that an analysis of either perspective without consideration of the other became almost meaningless. That is, the context of learning and the nature of the activity triggers in the mediator a conscious, volitional and reflective, ‘in the moment’ tendency to act - to influence what might happen next; and therefore, critical to the learning process of its subject (Schon, 1991). This section explores these issues and considers whether an analysis of the data according to the MLE framework was helpful here to unravel the complexities of the human relationships between people as they went about their day-to-day activities in their community.

However, understanding the relationship between learning and human development has been described elsewhere as one of the grand ongoing debates in educational psychology (Hadji, 2000). Vygotsky distinguished the differences of three groups of theories of development and learning before developing his own model. Firstly, there are theories where development is thought to precede learning; secondly, there are those where learning is thought to coincide with development; and thirdly, those in which learning and development are perceived as independent but ‘nevertheless, mutually conditioning’ (Hadji, op-cit p 22). Vygotsky suggests a fourth path, that learning actually activates development. In this way, teaching can precede development: it activates or arouses it, and therefore there is a dynamic relationship of interdependence between learning and development. However, even Vygotsky did not elaborate on the mediational mechanisms that contribute to development.

Feuerstein subsequently developed the MLE framework for learning in which the modifiability of the human condition is not totally dependent on cognitive structures or the context of learning, but on affective responses to cognitive change, which in turn contribute to affective and social development. This holistic approach therefore considers instruction as the agency of learning; and acknowledges the central role played by mediation in this endeavour (Kozulin, 2002). Feuerstein has therefore gone further
than Vygotsky by developing a theory for mediating action for the modifiability of the human condition.

However, when we speak of ‘MLE’ or ‘an MLE approach’, it needs to be made clear in our description that this concept represents a huge gestalt, a complex and overarching theoretical framework far beyond its twelve parameters for mediated interactions (see chapter four). Therefore, when referring to MLE we cannot consider the twelve parameters of mediation separate from their ultimate goal of structural cognitive modifiability, or the conditions of the modifying environment in which they take place (Feuerstein and Rand, 1977). With this in mind, in using the MLE framework in this investigation I referred both to proximal factors identified in the data and the conditions of the modifying environment in which they take place. Both these perspectives were found to be helpful for exploring the complexities of the learning process as apprentices acquired the skills and knowledge of professional chefs.

The proximal factors of MLE interactions were conceived by Feuerstein as the main determinants of cognitive development. Tzuriel and others have conducted extensive research into the effects of distal factors on proximal factors and the combined effect of both on children’s modifiability (Tzuriel, 2000). Their findings suggest that the proximal factors are more predictive of potential modifiability than the distal factors. Tzuriel identifies however, a need for further research into specific mediational parameters, such as reciprocity, where the context of the interaction; the cognitive domains of the child; and specific MLE strategies are considered simultaneously (Tzuriel, 2000). This has been the approach taken here.

The three main advantages of MLE are therefore identified here as:

1). The MLE model is explicitly based on philosophical assumptions about the nature of cognitive modifiability, and the active role of the change agents in shaping up the development of the child.

2). Unlike other theoretical models which are based on some observed phenomena MLE provides us with general theoretical principles that can be applied across different domains, ages and groups.
3). MLE is a comprehensive model that allows practitioners to include, under the same theoretical umbrella, developmental aspects, diagnostic processes, educational intervention programmes, and socio-cultural aspects. Thus, MLE processes can be applied on a micro level (detailed study of specific behaviours) and on the macro level (ie, exploration of transmission of culture from one generation to another.)

(Taken from Tzuriel, 2000, p 238).

Thus, we need to consider all these perspectives in our analysis. In particular, the third advantage of MLE - the macro and micro aspects of the theory, were found to be particularly helpful for understanding how and where learning occurs in the culture of the modifying environment. For this reason, an equal emphasis here was placed on both the macro and the micro aspects of the culture of the community.

For example, data concerned with the inter-generational transmission of culture in the daily routines and practices of the community of Fifteen London became a key factor in understanding the learning process of its participants. In this manner, the macro conditions for the modifying environment are illuminated; and the framework for Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) was helpful to understanding this perspective. By combining these two perspectives in my analysis I illuminate social participation in the modifying environment as integral to the learning process.

Similarly, data concerned with the detailed study of specific behaviours within the cultural practices of the community were addressed on the micro level by means of an analysis of the informal dialogues and communications observed between participants according to the twelve parameters of MLE, and described within the practices of the community. Specifically, this analysis concerned the behaviours of the experts and old-timers towards the newcomers and novices, and the behaviours of these novices as a response to this intervention. In this manner, I illuminate the various qualities and intensities of mediational interactions between participants within the social practices of their community.
Rather than using a traditional scientific approach to conduct research concerned with
MLE of imposing a programme of intervention such as dynamic assessment and
Instrumental Enrichment or other cognitive educational programmes, to explore
changes in human development as a result of intentional intervention, I chose here to
use an interpretive methodology to illuminate naturally occurring mediation within the
cultural practices of a community of practice and explore what might be going on in
the learning processes of its participants as they acquired the skills and knowledge of
professional chefs. An analysis of the data revealed that specifically targeted
interpersonal mediation is offered spontaneously by the mediator ‘in the moment’ of
the activity, sometimes directly, sometimes vicariously, but always dependent on the
context of learning. The data also revealed that the twelve parameters of MLE were
helpful to this analysis and in my understanding of what was going on in the informal
dialogues witnessed between participants. This analysis gave further insights into how
culture and knowledge are transmitted within a community of practice.

I conclude from this that whilst recognising the partiality of all interpretive research,
it would seem that the methods employed here have been illuminative for exploring the
complex issues implied in the research questions which have guided this inquiry.
Moreover, my research would seem to demonstrate that MLE goes further than other
theories in the genre by offering a gestalt - an overarching framework in which to
explore the learning process within the social context of learning.

The three conditions for the modifiability of the human condition according to this
approach are identified here as:

1. *Understanding that Man is “modifiable”* (emphasis in the original)
‘and becoming familiar with each individual’s potential and abilities
through a process of dynamic assessment’.

2. *Causing subjects whose potential to develop is thus recognised, to
benefit from explicit mediating intervention*. In fact one can distinguish
explicit mediating intervention in which the mediator intentionally places
him/herself between the stimuli of the environment and the individual and
implicit mediating interaction which corresponds to the creation of an
environment which promotes mediation.
3. *Shaping the environment in such a way that it becomes modifying in a sense that it creates an awareness towards modifiability and conditions necessary for change* (taken from Feuerstein, 1990, p 144; also see Tzuriel, 2000).

A summary of how these three conditions for the modifiability of the human condition were met in my analysis of the data are discussed here below.

Firstly, data revealed that the community of Fifteen London passionately believe in the learning potential of each apprentice. Here, I departed from Feuerstein’s first condition for modifiability of applying dynamic assessment to identify learning potential, and chose instead to take a peripheral-participant’s positioning to observe the natural activities of the culture of the community rather than impose a formal method of assessment of the learning potential of its newcomers. However, data revealed that the careful selection process used by this community suggests that each successful candidate is selected for their potential abilities to become a successful chef and furthermore, their potential to make a valuable contribution to the enterprise of the community.

Secondly, the critical incidents cited in the data revealed that apprentices benefited on the micro level from both direct, targeted and *explicit* mediational intervention in their daily routines and activities, and also *implicit* mediating interaction by means of social participation in the culture of the modifying environment. Again, I departed from using a structured programme of intervention such as Instrumental Enrichment, but chose instead to observe what happens in the community as apprentices acquire the skills and knowledge of professional chefs.

Thirdly, an analysis of the data revealed on the macro level that the holistic bespoke model of apprenticeship used at Fifteen London was developed by old-timers out of a desire to activate the learning potential and modifiability of its newcomers; and shaped on the micro level by the intentional mediation of its more experienced participants towards these newcomers.
This analysis of the data seemed to suggest that once we depart from using a prescribed set of instruments (such as dynamic assessment and Instrumental Enrichment), or even the more structured approaches of Lidz (Lidz, 1987) or Kaufman (Kaufman, 2001) we can begin to see the true potential of considering all instruction as the agency of learning; and the central role played by mediation in that endeavour (Kozulin, 2002).

Drawing on the above, knowledge in a specific domain can be seen to be on two levels:

1. *What we do* - the area of expertise (For example, cooking; medicine; law; engineering; flying; sailing; soldiering; teaching. That is, developing the technical skills and ‘know-how’ which allow us to operate competently in the real world). And,

2. *Who we are* - a fully legitimate member of the community of practice (That is, developing an identity, and the human qualities and values which allow us to operate ethically in the real world).

Therefore, by placing an emphasis on instruction as the agency of learning, MLE becomes an essential component of learning as social participation.

However, although the twelve parameters of MLE identified in the informal dialogues of people within their environment were helpful to illuminate what might be going on in the learning experiences of the apprentices, I am mindful that an over-generalisation of the theory of MLE to explain complex phenomena in this situation may bring about a devaluation of the theory (Tzuriel, 2000). Therefore, it is not my intention here to suggest that the MLE framework fully explains what might be going on in the practices of the community; nor to claim that the mediational interactions described in the data were solely responsible for the significant changes in human development witnessed over the course of this investigation; or that the methods employed for data collection and analysis revealed conclusively which aspect of MLE was responsible for which observed outcome. Nevertheless, the MLE framework together with its underlying philosophy was helpful for conducting an in-depth ethnographic investigation to explore what might be going on in the culture of Fifteen London as a group of apprentices became fully legitimate members of their community of practice. Moreover, by placing an equal emphasis on the mediational and cultural aspects of the MLE framework it is hoped that this illuminative case study throws fresh light onto our
understanding of these important issues for education and their applicability for teaching and learning in the real world.

9.11. Summary

This chapter explored the data from a theoretical perspective to find out whether the framework of MLE could throw fresh light onto our understanding of learning as social participation in a community of practice. In doing so, it illuminates the key role that relationships between people play in how a community of practice may develop over time. Moreover, the data revealed that each individual newcomer arrives at the organisation with a different story, expectations and aspirations, and these distal factors affect the pace and quality of their learning in the community and how quickly these newcomers feel themselves to be fully accepted and legitimate participants. The specified conditions for a modifying environment were felt to be helpful to this framework, highlighting the need for participants to show each other individualised and personalised respect, consideration and empathy. Therefore, it would seem that any community of practice which has as its primary goal the modifiability of the human condition must pay adequate attention to all the human needs of the individual within that community.

Four considerations within the data were highlighted in the discussion to emphasise the complex nature of human relationships between people, and illuminate the range and quality of mediation needed to elicit the required response from the learner, and so further their development. The framework of MLE was found to be useful to this analysis. These four main considerations included: (1), the effect of both interpersonal and intrapersonal mediation towards the learner; (2), the need to develop in the learner, by means of specifically targeted mediation, an internal locus of control; (3), the nature, quality, and intensity of the mediation in relation to the individual and the context of the learning experience; and (4), an awareness that the modifiability of the human condition depends on a number of elements of a social, intellectual and affective nature. Implicit in this analysis is an awareness by the mediator of the impact and his/her intervention.

In summary, the data suggests that the goals and objectives of the various parameters of MLE seem to work together over time by means of human relationships between
people in the daily routines and practices of the various micro-settings within the larger community of practice of the organisation.

However, the study further revealed that the twelve parameters of MLE without a consideration of the context of learning in which they take place cannot affect structural cognitive modifiability of the human condition. But together with the specific conditions for a Modifying Environment and the four essential questions for a community of practice, it can affect the pace and direction of its progress; and this would seem to be the unique contribution of Mediated Learning Experience.

It would therefore seem, from this construction, that both individualised learning by means of specifically targeted MLE, and situated learning through social participation, occur simultaneously in the day to day practices of the community, and each perspective would seem to rely on and support the other. A graphic of this synthesis of perspectives is presented in *Figure (6)* overleaf which shows how mediated learning experience *by means of* social participation *within* the activities of a community of practice come together to form a dynamic and symbiotic relationship that govern the process of learning itself, as the newcomer at the periphery of the community travels along their own trajectory towards full participation.

It might therefore be assumed in this symbiosis of MLE (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994) and Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991), that structural cognitive modifiability has occurred.

The next chapter reveals that I could have chosen to tell a very different story than the one described above. For in addition to the recorded success stories included here, and similar to any other community, this organisation has had its share of disappointments and frustrations. However, the optimistic perspective presented in the thesis was taken with a very practical purpose in mind, for it is my passionate belief as an educator and as a human being, that we learn best from witnessing the very best of practice. Moreover, it was also thought that by emphasizing the positive qualitative aspects of this setting and its learning environment in this manner, newcomers or novice participants of this community can refer to this document, in the hope that it may, in time, prove to be a useful resource for both historical context and reflective practice.
Figure 6: A graphic to illustrate the dynamic and symbiotic relationship of mediated learning experience and a community of practice. **Meaning; Practice; Community** and **Identity** provide the context for learning. The key for *Figure (6)* is overleaf.
Key to Figure (6): Brown represents strong, direct MLE; pink represents less strong, indirect MLE; green represents LPP; purple represents full participation; turquoise represents the ME; and yellow represents the culture of the community of practice. **The black arrow represents the individual trajectory of learning and developing psychological tools** in the field of the expert; and the chevrons represent the carefully balanced symbiosis between MLE from expert to novice in one direction, and the ZPD from LPP towards full participation in the other.
Therefore, Chapter Ten offers a critical narrative of the organisation’s historical development, and discusses some of the disappointments as well as successes witnessed in the practices of this community. Using the transcribed stories of six old-timers who have been at Fifteen since its beginning, the narrative describes how Fifteen Foundation has changed and grown over the course of this investigation; and illuminates the challenges and complexities of attempting to influence the course of human development through cultural intervention and social enterprise.
Chapter Ten - The Organisation: the distance travelled

10.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented an analysis of the data which suggests that the quality and intensity of the mediation between participants in the community of practice of Fifteen London varies widely across contexts in the five micro-settings described in the study. Central to my argument is a consideration of three key aspects across these settings: the quality and conditions of the modifying environment; the situated learning in each of the five micro-settings by means of legitimate peripheral participation; and the nature and intensity of the mediation between their participants. Using the framework of MLE, an analysis of the data suggests that it is the rich diversity of these learning experiences that contribute towards developing in the apprentices the adaptive qualities they need for structural cognitive modifiability to occur (Feuerstein and Rand, 1977; 1979; Tan and Seng, 2005; Tan, Seng and Pou, 2003; Pou, 2002). In presenting the thesis I deliberatively took a mainly positive perspective to describe the learning process of apprentices from selection for training through to graduation and employment in the industry. As stated above, this perspective was taken with a very practical purpose in mind, for it is my passionate belief that we learn best by observing the very best of practice.

However, not all apprentices on the training programme at Fifteen London reach graduation, or indeed stay in the industry. Some of the young people selected for this rigorous training programme decide they do not want to be chefs, and so quit the programme; others demonstrate that they do not have the self-discipline, motivation and dedication that the profession requires, and so are asked to leave. How the community respond to these disappointments is discussed in this chapter. The following narrative therefore reveals that in conducting this case-study, I could have chosen to tell a very different story to the one described above. For in addition to its many successes, and similar to any other community, this one has had its fair share of disappointments and frustrations. Some of these disappointments and frustrations were observed during the course of my investigations and recorded in my journal. This following narrative therefore offers a more critical perspective of the community to illuminate some of the challenges and complexities of attempting to influence the course of human development through cultural transmission and social enterprise.
I began research for the pilot study late in 2003, and continued to accumulate dense research data for the main study of the thesis over the next five years. In this closing chapter, written in 2009, I now stand back to take a wider and perhaps more critical perspective to consider what has been the ‘Distance Travelled’ by the community, and ask its participants what they feel has been learned in the process.

The ‘Distance Travelled’ is a simple conceptual tool which has been considered useful by successive members of the welfare team to stimulate dialogue with individual trainees in one-to-one progress meetings. In this manner, when each successive group of apprentices begin the programme, they are encouraged with the help of key participants in the welfare team, to identify and then pursue their various individual goals and targets. These personal goals may range, for example, from wanting to become a wonderful pasta chef to just getting through the programme and getting a trade. Other goals might include wanting to manage money better; make their loved ones proud; control their temper; get on better with people; recognise the consequences of their actions; control substance abuse; limit how much they drink at the weekend; stay focussed and optimistic and make a meaningful contribution to their community. Subsequent and regular meetings between trainees and members of the welfare staff throughout the programme revisit these goals and targets again and again to ascertain apprentices’ progress in each aspect of their learning experience at Fifteen London, and how well that individual may feel him/herself equipped or able to reach their set goals. Thus from the beginning, apprentices are encouraged to look beyond the here and now of the apprenticeship training, and so, with mediation, transcend to the higher purpose of the programme: autonomy, self-respect and independence.

In this penultimate chapter, I use the same phrase, ‘Distance Travelled’ to reflect on changes in the organisation observed over the years of my participation, with the help of some of the community’s key participants and old-timers. Their reflective accounts helped to clarify my own interpretations of what I had observed during the years of the study, from late 2003 when the second cohort of apprentices were in the kitchen, until Spring 2009 when this chapter was written. And because I had been a participant of the community for so long, I too was considered by them to be an old-timer myself. Therefore, speaking as one old-timer to another about the early days of the community provided an opportunity to share feelings about what were felt to be important milestones in the organisation’s history and development; and discuss why we thought certain new
practices had been adopted in favour of old ones; and what circumstances might have led to their success or failure. Each interviewee was initially asked whether, despite the huge changes observed over the years of the organisation’s rapid growth, they felt that the ethical principles on which the charity had been founded in 2002 are as strongly adhered to now, in 2009, as they had been in the past.

Moreover, in 2007, a social audit was commissioned to celebrate and reflect on the organisation’s first five years since its launch in 2002 (Fifteen Social Report: life in the present tense, 2007). This document reports on the social enterprise of Fifteen London and the culture of its community, and the effects of both on its apprentices. Its findings are also referred to throughout this chapter.

Therefore, rich data from my research journal is supported here by two further sources of information: recorded and transcribed interviews with key participants and old-timers in the Spring of 2009, and the Fifteen Social Report of 2007.

To introduce some of the themes of this chapter I begin by presenting the stories of two young apprentices who did not make it to graduation, to highlight some of the challenges for the organisation considered here below. These are in contrast to the many other stories of apprentices and past graduates presented earlier in the main study of the thesis (see Chapters Five and Eight).

10.2. Two stories

Vicky

I met Vicky when waiting outside college for her first interview for training with the Foundation (see 8.1), which was also my first day of collecting data about the selection process. My immediate impression was how young and small she looked standing next to some of the older and more mature candidates. She was sixteen at the time, and just out of school, so she was one of the youngest candidates that year. Since 2007 however, the minimum age for entry to the programme has been raised to eighteen years old. My journal records how I thought that since Vicky was not wearing a jacket, how cold she must have been on that bitterly cold February morning, as she constantly moved nervously from one foot to another in an attempt to get warm, heavily drawing on a...
cigarette. It then happened that I sat in on her interview. She told her two judges that she had no objection to my presence. She then told them that she had hated school which she had left immediately after her sixteenth birthday and that she now wanted passionately to become a chef. She also told them that she wanted her younger brother to apply to the Foundation for training the following year - she had it all worked out, she said. She spoke well for herself, describing how she needed to get away from what she had known in the past.

The judges listened carefully to a description of her experiences and decided:

'She’s a good kid...she deserves a break...'


As a consequence of that first interview, and the two that followed, Vicky was accepted to commence the programme with the other successful candidates. My journal next records seeing her in college a few weeks later. I was observing a practical session of her group of trainees working in the college kitchen. All the trainees were in chefs’ whites, and following a recipe in much the same manner as described in section 8.2 of the study above. For the duration of that session, my journal records how Vicky was the only apprentice drifting around the room, not paying attention to the task or the tutor-chef, and swearing at every opportunity. Later the same day, the apprentices were required to complete a worksheet in their folder relating to the practical task observed earlier which would contribute towards their qualification. Again, she was uncooperative, and my journal records how the tutor-chef tried very hard to regulate her behaviour in both sessions by trying to gain her confidence, and suggesting that they would complete the worksheet together. Vicky displayed resistance to this mediation, and it was shortly after my observation of these two sessions that I was asked to assess Vicky’s needs and give her some sessions to help her attitude towards learning. My notes on that intervention describe a girl of extremely low self-image but high intellectual potential. She responded extremely well to the mediation offered, and I was both impressed and encouraged by how quickly she was able to take on new concepts, strategies and rules to help her organisation and build self-belief. I was delighted a few months later when I learned that she had passed her NVQ 1 and was still on the programme.
One day shortly after my weekly intervention with Vicky had stopped, I went to the Foundation office to observe the training manager (Mark) conducting evaluation meetings with some of the apprentices, and one of those I observed was Vicky’s. In these one-to-one meetings the apprentice’s personal development was discussed by means of the distance travelled tool described above. My research journal records an extract of Vicky’s dialogue with Mark in that meeting.

‘...Mark:  *What about training...out of 10?  How is it?*

‘Vicky:  *9.... no, ... 8 ½.*

‘Mark:  *What would make it 10?*

‘Vicky:  *More money.*

‘Mark:  *We will talk about money in a minute.  Tell me about what you think of the training itself... how do you get on with the chefs, ...do you like the work...what’s it like in the kitchen?*

‘Vicky:  *Oh!  10!  I love it!*

‘Mark:  *Good.  Housing?*

‘Vicky:  *Crap.  Off the scale.  It’s horrible.  I can’t wait to get to the kitchen and away from home every day.  My older brother’s a crack-head.  My mother’s an “alci” and my father hates me ......’

(Research Journal, 18th August, 2004).

It should be made clear at this point that the Foundation well knew the circumstances of Vicky’s home life, as did I; and my journal records that I privately questioned whether she might be saying these things out of a deep-seated anger, or for effect to shock both Mark and myself. It should also be stated that similar to every other interviewee, Vicky was asked beforehand if she objected to my being present in her meeting. She did not;
but my journal records that I left the room for the duration of other interviews on that same day. My journal continues:

‘Vicky told Mark she wants to move out with her younger brother. Mark discussed the possibilities of alternative accommodation for her and asked her whether she had discussed her concerns recently with her social worker.’ ..... ‘Vicky is like a different girl to the little frozen waif waiting outside the door at college on the day of selection. She looks better - her skin and eyes are brighter, her skin is clear. ’ ‘...She seems less hyperactive, calmer, and willing to talk about her problems....’

(Research Journal, 18th August, 2004).

So far so good. Vicky appeared to be doing quite well, and the Foundation were reasonably pleased with her progress. Her attitude improved when she got into the kitchen. However, once or twice she missed a shift but was not given a disciplinary (see 8.3 and 8.5 for a description of the disciplinary procedures). I next met her when I was in the office one day to learn how the Foundation document the apprentices’ progress. My journal records:

‘When I was looking through the trainees’ files in the main office, Vicky came in. I had not seen her since we had finished our sessions together some weeks earlier. She looked very nervous and tense. She asked if she could talk to Mark. He said yes of course, and asked her to wait for him in the adjacent room. He then told me that she was having a really bad week, crying all the time, missing shifts, and for no apparent reason that they could discover, she would not go into the kitchen. After their discussion they came back into the office, and Mark called Al’... (Head Chef)... ‘ and asked him to come up’...(from the kitchen to the office)... ‘Together they arranged for Vicky to be on shift at the same time as one of the girls she was friends with from her group.’

‘Vicky: “Why do I feel like this? All my friends are here.”

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Mark: ‘I want you to come in every day, even if you are not on shift...it’s good to have a routine...come into the office and say hello and work on your folder or look up stuff on the computer....’.

‘...I left at this point so they could have some privacy’.


The next time I saw Vicky was on the Tuscany sourcing trip (see 8.4). She was socialising well with some of the others in the group, looked well, seemed calm, and appeared to be enjoying herself. I then saw her at recruitment time again (see 8.1 above). After that, I did not see her very much, but was told that she continued to do quite well.

A few months later was the apprentices’ Graduation. This is always a great event in the Foundation’s calendar. My journal records the excitement of the occasion. Proud families and friends come to support the graduates and see them receive their certificates and awards from Fifteen London. When I arrived for that year’s Graduation, I saw all the graduates from Vicky’s group standing outside in the courtyard looking very smart, and having their photograph taken with Jamie Oliver in the fading light. Vicky was not with them. I looked around and saw that she was standing a little apart from the group, watching. Thinking perhaps she did not like having her photograph taken, I asked her why she was not with the rest of her group. She told me that she did not finish the programme and so would not be graduating with her peers.

I could not believe it. I asked her what went wrong and she told me that she got ‘fed up’ with the training, had decided to go and stay with a friend, and ‘forgot’ to call the Foundation office. I was bitterly disappointed for her. Why had she dropped out at the last hurdle? I was later told that only three weeks before Graduation, she disappeared for two weeks without a word, and so had to forgo her place on the programme. What had made her quit? What could the Foundation team have done differently to help her overcome her problems? It would be speculation to discuss here what was thought by the welfare team to be the exact reasons for Vicky’s departure, but other incidents I was told suggest that Vicky’s story was only too familiar to the Foundation.
The Social Report of 2007 takes up this theme.

‘... (F)or a significant number of young people Fifteen did not work out for them. Some last a few weeks, good intentions crumbling in the face of the first challenge. For others full time study is too much and they bail before they even get to the experience working in the kitchen. And some make it almost to the end and then self-destruct. Cheap, plentiful alcohol is too often involved. One of the fifth intake - father of two, ex-offender and a handy little chef - lasted eighteen months only to get the boot one week before going to his work placement in one of London’s best restaurants having achieved a 72% score. We don’t understand yet what drives this kind of self destructive behaviour.’ (Fifteen Social Report, 2007, p 36).

The last time I heard of Vicky she was still working in the industry. I was pleased for her. It suggests that even though she did not graduate with her peers, she took something away from her experience at Fifteen London which hopefully will help her become independent and successful. I understand that she is still in touch with Maddie, one of her peers who graduated from the programme and is now a successful chef (see Chapters 5 and 8.5).

Vicky’s story highlights the notion that the rigorous and intensive training programme of Fifteen London is not for everyone. However, despite bailing out at the last hurdle, perhaps Fifteen London, for Vicky, had been a positive experience.

It would be fascinating to find out where Vicky is now, what she is doing, and whether she feels her experience of participating in the Fifteen London community has had a permanent effect on her development. Further research is therefore needed to explore what happens to those individuals who, like Vicky, and for a variety of reasons, do not make it as far as graduation. For despite their ‘failure’ to complete the programme, perhaps just the experience of participating in the culture of the community of Fifteen London for a few months affects their development in other ways. Indeed, the next unwritten chapter in Vicky’s story and the one that follows could provide valuable insights about whether the core qualitative elements of this community of practice
identified above, and considered here to be so crucial to the well-being and holistic
development of its young participants, have nevertheless affected their development.

David

David was in one of the later cohort of apprentices. He was referred to the Foundation
by Probation Services. At college he displayed some symptoms of dyslexia, and the
Foundation saw very quickly that the move into the kitchen was extremely challenging
for him.

To help him overcome his difficulties David and I worked together regularly for nearly
a year, initially, in a small group and then later individually. An extended dynamic
assessment revealed a boy of good average intelligence who was incredibly impulsive
and undisciplined but who expressed a willingness to learn how to overcome his
problems and make a better life for himself. We commenced a structured programme of
Feuerstein’s Instrumental Enrichment (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman and Miller, 1980),
bridging the strategies and principles learnt through the tasks into real-life situations.
Gradually, for example, he began to learn to believe in his good abilities; to reflect on the
consequences of his behaviour; and link cause to effect. He learnt that he needed to
develop strategies to support his memory skills. Initially we worked a great deal on
developing an internal locus of control by means of increasingly complex tasks, linking
this to cause - effect type relationships, to highlight the fact that if he drank the night
before we met for a session, or before a morning shift in the kitchen, his responses would
not be as good as when he planned his actions, had an early night the night before, and
therefore a clear head in the morning.

My session notes report how he learned to build on the small successes of these lessons
learnt, until his self-expectations improved dramatically and he developed a more
optimistic attitude to learning and his own potential abilities. Session notes record how
these positive changes were reflected in enhanced concentration and a new sense of
optimism. Glowing reports from chefs of very successful shifts in the kitchen led to an
improved self image and intrinsic motivation. As a consequence, I was asked to continue
to work with David over the coming months to consolidate these welcome changes in his
development.
At some point near the end of this intervention and close to graduation, my session notes record that David admitted to me that he was uneasy about leaving the protective and supportive environment of Fifteen London. The welfare team recognise this final hurdle for many of their young people and do their best to arrange suitable work placements for each individual graduate, ‘matching’ them to the right environment, and emphasising as they do so the organisation’s individualised care and attention to the needs of all its young people. Moreover, where possible, they arrange for past graduates to speak to the new cohort of graduates so that these fledgling professionals feel assured that they have sufficient mastery and expertise to cope in a new and sometimes perhaps tougher working environment out in the industry.

However, a few weeks after my conversation with David about leaving Fifteen London, and his subsequent conversations with members of the welfare team about his concerns, he was no longer on the programme. My journal describes how one day I went into the office to learn that David had been arrested and charged for a crime the night before whilst under the influence of alcohol.

‘I am devastated....we all are’...... ‘he was doing so well...’... ‘I really thought he would make it’... It goes on: ‘Carro’... (Youth Worker)... ‘is really upset about him but said in the end his reliance on alcohol and the influence of old friends must have been greater than his desire to complete the training ....I am not sure that’s true...

(Research Journal, 7th June, 2005).

The two stories of Vicky and David highlight the notion of distal and proximal factors that influence human development discussed earlier in the study (also see Feuerstein and Rand, 1979; Kozulin and Presseisen, 1995), and the different distance(s) travelled along their own personal trajectories by individual trainees or newcomers within the structured time-frame of the apprenticeship programme. The community recognise the challenge that the length of the programme poses for some of its young people, those who may have had far longer and more difficult journeys to negotiate than others, and perhaps therefore needed more time and support for newly acquired attitudes and allegiances to become internalised. Indeed, a wistful phrase I heard again and again in my informal discussions with members of the welfare team was: ‘another six months and s/he would
have made it’. The issue of the length and intensity of the training programme is discussed later in the chapter.

10.3. The Modifying Environment

One of the criteria for the traditional model for a modifying environment, according to the framework of Beker and Feuerstein, includes a need for group care to be residential (Beker and Feuerstein, 1990). Vicky and David’s stories would seem to highlight this important factor, since the modifying environment of the apprenticeship model of Fifteen London is not residential. The temptations of choice of identity and allegiance described in the two stories of Vicky and David are always there - when they go home late at night; on a free day; at the weekends; during Bank Holidays; always when there is no work or college and therefore nothing else to do. And these tensions need to be balanced between what a young apprentice might know through previous experience, and what s/he might be learning in new situations. As discussed earlier, community boundaries shift and change (Wenger, 1998; also see Chapter Nine above); and choices need to be made between an individual wanting to remain a legitimate old-timer in one community and, of his/her own volition, choosing intentionally to be a legitimate but peripheral newcomer in another (Wenger, op-cit). And the tensions these choices might bring can cause stress for some individuals that undermines their whole learning experience of Fifteen London.

The community are aware of this problematic issue, and strive to do their best to see that the positive demands, strict boundaries and stimulation of the community of practice of Fifteen London are of greater influence than the negative attractions of old allegiances; but even these highly motivational means are not always enough. In some cases, the temptations and ease of reverting to old ways are hard to resist, and perhaps far easier than negotiating the many unpredictable challenges of cognitive change. This key issue would seem to offer a clear example of the politics of negotiating boundaries discussed earlier in the thesis (Freire, 1973), and the risks involved in holding on to a number of allegiances to diverse communities (Wenger, 1998).

One reflective debate between myself and members of the welfare team recorded in my journal at the time would seem to illustrate this issue. Our discussion concerned how they might address the needs of those individuals who slip away just before graduation;
and the principles and practicalities of offering residential group care to apprentices. How would such a model be managed? And what would it look like? Would it eliminate the problems of choice and temptation or create a different set of challenges? Such questioning and searching was the common parlance (or shared moan) of the welfare team after a trainee quit or was fired from the programme. It made participants constantly vigilant of the need for specialist support for those more vulnerable young people in their care.

At the time of both Vicky and David’s participation in the community, the welfare team used the services of a local drop-in clinic where trainees could access regular psychotherapy and counselling. This was arranged on a case by case basis as the need arose, and in consultation with the welfare team and/or their assigned social worker. I have no record of who used these services or documented dialogue discussing cases where this may have applied, so cannot assume in any way how effective this may or may not have been. Certainly, my journal records individuals going out for sessions but how effective these were cannot be assumed. Nevertheless, offering a route to take advantage of these services would seem to be a step in the right direction.

However, one young person’s recollection of his experience in an early cohort of trainees was that,

‘ “The support and counselling they said we would get, when I needed it, they didn’t provide.” ’ (Fifteen Social Report 2007, p39).

I would suggest that this young person’s experience, early in the history of this community, whilst regrettable, suggests that any support of this nature would normally have been initiated by either a member of the welfare team or external social services responding to an expressed desire for help, as described above in 10.2. However, perhaps this young person did not make his/her needs clear, or felt him/herself able to demand what s/he instinctively felt s/he needed at the time. Moreover, the many issues, incidents and dialogues that I witnessed in the early days of the organisation would seem to point to the fact that the welfare team spent much of their time trying very hard to meet the complex and diverse needs of the young people in their care; even though they often seemed overstretched beyond their expertise and also by what was expected of them in

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the daily routines and practices of their activities. Indeed, my journal records one of the welfare team in those early days telling me:

‘I honestly don’t think they’…. (Management)… ‘have any idea what I do down here…’


Moreover, the following excerpt from the Social Report of 2007 would also seem to suggest that these welfare services, offered in an ad hoc manner as and when it was assumed to be necessary, were insufficient to the young peoples’ needs.

‘...(F)or the first three cohorts, the reality was that support was too often hit and miss ’…. (Fifteen Social Report, op-cit, p 39).

It would seem that one reason this might have been so was because the organisation was growing so fast that practices were often assumed to be fulfilling their purpose, and participants in different settings might not have always understood each other’s contributions to the general good of the community. Again, the Social Report would seem to support this view:

‘(At) the beginning, there were two competing cultures - fatal to the enduring success of any social enterprise - the restaurant and the charity


Indeed, my own investigation suggests that in the past, the tensions between these stakeholder groups may have unwittingly made each others’ roles far more challenging than they might have been otherwise.

Nevertheless, despite these observations, the main study of the thesis reveals that ultimately, the driving ethos of this community, and the quality of the relationships between participants in the various stakeholder groups, underpin its many successes. Moreover, over the years of this investigation, I have observed how this growing and changing community are learning to work better together to address the constantly shifting breadth and depth of its challenges, bringing their enthusiasm, diverse experience
and expertise into play; so that now there is now felt to be far more cohesion and shared meaning amongst its participants. The implication of this cultural shift in the organisation is the subject of the following section.

10.4. Organisational change

Michael Fullan describes organisational change as a highly complex and dynamic process by which an organisation learns to reconcile the forces of chaos and structure; and he presents a cohesive argument for suggesting that change is inevitable. In his trilogy of books on organisational change and educational reform, he tells us that what is important therefore, is how we learn to respond to these changes (Fullan, 1993; 1999; 2003).

‘Moral purpose without change agentry is so much wishful valuing; change agentry without moral purpose is change for the sake of change’ ...
‘continuity and change, personal mastery and collective action, vision and openness, failure and success, and pressure and support, not only can but also must go together in successful change processes.’ (Fullan, 1993, p6).

The organisation of Fifteen London began when its founder, Jamie Oliver, already a successful television chef, persuaded a group of like-minded and talented people in the fine dining industry to come together to establish an apprenticeship programme to offer a group of fifteen underprivileged young people the opportunity to learn how to become chefs in a dedicated restaurant.

As Jamie tells us: ‘

Having not been the brightest banana in the bunch myself, I realised that my biggest weapon in life was the determination, enthusiasm, hands-on and "actions speak louder than words" approach my father taught me, and I wanted to get this across to others, especially those interested in food’ (www.Fifteen.net, accessed on 20th May, 2009).

Participants tell me that this core principle still governs the ‘family of Fifteen London’ in 2009.
The founding participants of Fifteen London however, had little experience of the challenges they were to face but they shared Jamie’s passion in wanting to change the lives of some young people who had expressed a desire to become chefs, and so dedicated their energies to this endeavour. It was only after they began the project that they realised that in the fifteen young people of that original cohort of trainees, they also took on the responsibility of helping fifteen individuals with diverse needs, all of which had to be met if the fledgeling community of this original Fifteen, in London was to reach its goals. The welfare programme of the Fifteen London apprenticeship, described in the main study of the thesis (see chapter 8), therefore grew out of the community’s serious commitment to holistically address the needs for the well-being and development of its young people within a structured apprenticeship programme.

Research literature on organisational change tells us that unforeseen factors and shifting influences force changes to the system of any community (Fullan, op-cit; Senge, 1990). As described above, the community of Fifteen London developed an innovative apprenticeship model that includes a number of diverse components (see Chapter Eight). Placing these innovations and diversities at the heart of the programme meant that there was no blue-print or previous model to refer to; and although the community heavily drew upon the considerable human resources they had at their disposal, it was forced like any other to adapt to meet new challenges as and when they arose. Indeed, productive organisational change in a community is uncontrollably complex. Its solution lies not in holding onto outmoded practices, but rather in thinking about, and responding wisely to the many unpredictable issues that occur naturally in the day-to-day activities of its culture; and staying alert to the many global and internal forces, positive and negative, which may effect its progress (Wenger, 1998; Fullan, 1993).

Indeed, Senge reminds us,

‘No one could possibly come to figure out all these interactions’ (Senge, 1990, p281).

As a participant in one of Senge’s studies on the forces of change puts it:

‘“(A)ll my life, I assumed that somebody, somewhere knew the answer to the problem. I thought politicians knew what had to be done, but
refused to do it out of politics and greed. But now I realize that nobody knows the answer. Not us, not them, not anybody”. (Senge, op-cit, p282).

The reality is that,

‘...(E)very new variable that enters the equation - those unpredictable, but inevitable noise factors - produce ten other ramifications, which in turn produces tens of other reactions and on and on’ (Fullan, 1993, p19).

The community of practice of Fifteen London went through many changes and innovations over the five years of this study. To clarify my own interpretations of those changes, and put what I witnessed into some kind of cohesive narrative here, in 2009, and towards the end of this long investigation, I interviewed various key participants and old-timers from different stakeholder groups in the community to try and understand how they felt the organisation had grown and changed over the years of its development. These reflective and informal conversations proved to be as pleasurable and rewarding as they were insightful. I began each interview by asking whether they felt the ethos and essence of the guiding principles of the community have been lost or obscured in the changes I had observed over the years; and what specific changes they felt had been most effective in serving the apprentices’ development and well-being. The following section therefore reflects these participants’ reflections of where and how they feel these changes have affected the community and the well-being of its participants, and in particular, the learning experience of the apprentices themselves.

10.5. Entering the third phase

The restaurant of Fifteen London opened for business in November, 2002. Its initial struggles and challenges are well documented in both the television series, ‘Jamie’s Kitchen’ (Channel 4, 2002), and the Fifteen Social Report of 2007. Set up from the start as a social enterprise, Fifteen London in 2009 is now the flagship for an organisation which has grown to embrace three franchises in Amsterdam, Cornwall, and Melbourne. Indeed, in the past seven years, Fifteen has become an international community of communities. Speaking to one old-timer about the community’s history helped me think
of its development in three distinct phases, each with its own purpose and characteristics, and outlined here below.

1. The first phase in the community’s history is a dramatic story of passion, energy and optimism that set the foundations in place for what followed.

It can easily be summarised in a few phrases that describe the contributing aspects of its culture: the driving force and inspiration of its founder, Jamie Oliver; a group of talented and like-minded people who shared Jamie’s philosophy of wanting to use their success and influence to give young people the chance to become professional chefs, and in so doing change the direction of their lives; the ever-present television cameras documenting the progress of the project’s development; the excitement and glamour of media interest in its progress; the passion of the individuals who were determined to make the project successful despite considerable advice to the contrary; the constant and very real risk of failure; and the huge popularity of the restaurant.

2. The second phase brought with it a desire to expand the Fifteen London model to other sites; and a new sense of commercial realism which was reflected in a number of key appointments.

Firstly, a director was appointed who brought with him a strong background in social enterprise. Secondly, a new head of operations was appointed to oversee the growing enterprise of the Fifteen brand; and thirdly, a new executive head chef was appointed to oversee the kitchen. Media interest and popularity remained high but television cameras were removed. Intense fund raising and new structures for accountability across stakeholder groups within the community brought with it further demands on the growing expertise of its workforce, creating tensions considered necessary to the learning process of any community of practice (Fullan, 1993; Lave and Wenger, 1991). The organisation has always prided itself on high standards of transparency and social responsibility. Consequently, the Social Report of 2007 was commissioned to both celebrate and investigate the first five years of the Foundation’s existence. In the foreword of this document, then director, Liam Black states,

‘This is not a typical annual report or PR document, it is a warts-and-all look into the guts of Fifteen, celebrating what’s great about this place but

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acknowledging too when and how we missed the mark’ (Fifteen Social Report, 2007, p 5).

The impact of this document was summed up best by Patrick Butler in the Guardian when he wrote:

‘...(P)erhaps the most remarkable thing about the report is that it was commissioned and published by Fifteen itself...There is, as the report makes clear, much to celebrate. But it is a rounded, self critical assessment, done with the aim of improving Fifteen’s performance. Consequently, Fifteen is in the process of radically changing its training and support programmes, and raising its target graduation rate to 70%. It’s hard to think of another organisation in the public, private or voluntary sector that has the balls, or the honesty to do this (The Guardian, February 20, 2008).

3. The third and present phase of the community in 2009 would therefore seem to suggest a robust response to some of the report’s challenges and recommendations, invigorated with a fresh direction and new sense of purpose; one which looks more critically at the methods and practices of its culture.

The community is also now developing a more global perspective, as it acknowledges its unique qualities, seeking ways to reach out towards other communities and explore its potential contribution beyond its own boundaries. In 2009, and in this third and current phase of the community’s development, a newly appointed director seeks to do the following: align the Fifteen brand across its growing international community of communities; build on its strengths; identify and reduce its weaknesses; and emphasise its core values of social enterprise.

To this end, further in-depth studies comparing the communities of all the Fifteen sites globally might usefully provide the organisation with valuable insights which could both align the common strengths of this community of communities, identify any weaknesses, and celebrate their diversity. However, this case-study has been concerned exclusively with the culture and community of Fifteen London.
It would seem therefore, that controlling and directing such an organisation is an extremely difficult operation. It demands from its director and board of trustees an increasingly diverse sets of skills: international entrepreneurship; restaurant management; social enterprise; fund raising; media and publicity management; all of which must be set against the community’s moral purpose, and the ethical responsibilities of its actions.

Moreover, this is not an organisation with a high profit margin, so any profit made is ploughed back into improving some aspect of the organisation and its services. And, because of its association with Jamie Oliver, the charity’s high costs and high profile means that there is a public perception that the Foundation of Fifteen London (Fifteen London Registered Charity number 1094536) does not need financial support; which, it would seem, is not the case. On the contrary, it relies very heavily on the goodwill and generosity of its benefactors. But as one participant put it,

‘People who pay top prices at Jamie Oliver’s restaurant don’t always come because they care if the young people who cook their dinner are trying to change their lives. They just want to know that they will get a fabulous meal’....and ... ‘Not everyone appreciates that changing the direction of a young person’s life is important, desirable or even possible. They would sooner give money to the local hospital than give money to some kid who last week might have pinched their car’.


Therefore even in this seemingly prosperous and successful project, the financial challenges of social enterprise are continually balanced between the public perception of the restaurant Fifteen London and the charitable goals of Fifteen Foundation.

10.6. Changes in the micro-settings

In 2008, a number of changes to the apprenticeship programme have been put into place in direct response to recommendations made in the 2007 social report. These changes include a revision of the selection process; a more structured welfare programme; a reduction of the length of the programme from eighteen months to twelve; and a major restructuring of the vocational curriculum. Most of the old-timers feel that these changes
have helped the community become far better at recruiting the right young people for the apprenticeship and at serving them better in preparation for a career in the fine food industry. However, there has been some opposition to these changes, and a feeling that they contribute to a dilution of the apprentices’ experience in the culture of the community. A description of these changes and their implications for the apprentices are discussed here below.

1. The Social Report of 2007 suggested that because the professional kitchen has a distinct culture, a successful chef requires certain personality traits, and these factors should be taken into account when recruiting suitable candidates for the programme (Fifteen Social Report, 2007). However, my own investigation suggests that although informal, the old model of recruitment was doing precisely this, since experienced judges knew exactly the qualities they were looking for in a candidate, and who they felt would make a good chef. However, in previous years, judges were representative of Fifteen London across the community, so that participants might have contributed at one level of the interview process and not the next, which was felt to be inconsistent. In 2008 therefore, the recruitment process has been refined, so that there is now a small team of judges who are involved with every level of the process. This judging team, throughout the selection process, is made up of the following: members of the welfare team; the training chef; training manager; executive chef; and head of human resources. The application form for training now asks for responses to questions and statements which test a candidate’s aptitude and attitude to cooking; and the first interview and tasting test are still intact. But the third interview, hitherto held at a challenge weekend in Wales (see 8.1 above) has been replaced by group challenges and assigned tasks conducted in the Foundation office, which is felt to be more efficient.

Two key factors underpin the seriousness with which the Foundation continues to approach recruitment: one aspect of this is moral, and the other is economic. The training manager is responsible for the whole apprenticeship programme, and therefore its methods of recruitment. In 2008, for example, eighteen candidates were selected from paper applications of more than five hundred, with a reserve of ten further candidates. Therefore, she is mindful of the very small number of applicants who can be offered a place on the programme; and cognisant of the huge responsibility of not wanting to set young people up to fail. So whilst she passionately believes in the learning potential of all individuals, she is aware that the organisation needs to be both practical and sensitive.
about who they think would benefit most from a place on this demanding and intensive programme.

In 2009, training each apprentice costs Fifteen London approximately £30,000. Moreover, in order to train apprentices in the workplace within the unique training model of apprenticeship at Fifteen London, much more is required of the professional chef in the workplace than would otherwise be the case in a conventional restaurant elsewhere. Moreover, although many professional chefs apply for work at Fifteen London because of its culinary reputation, only those chefs whom it is felt by the community will make an active contribution to the apprentices’ development are accepted into the workforce (See 8.3 describing the micro-setting of the working kitchen).

Each apprentice therefore represents a considerable investment by the community over and above the cost of housing benefits and vocational training that are paid for by Local Authorities. Moreover, the community is mindful that every candidate selected who does not make it to Graduation takes the place of someone else who might have succeeded; and therefore they are keen to get their choice of candidates right.

It seems to me that as the organisation grows in this third and current phase in its history, the recently appointed key participants, who have the responsibility of addressing some of the challenges posed by the Social Report of 2007, have brought with them a new professionalism and formality to many of the community’s cultural practices.

‘Systems do not change themselves, people change them’, (Fullan, 1993, p7), as they bring to the community the benefit of their previous experiences and expertise.

The selection process is a case in point, so that instead of relying on old-timers’ gut instinct about whom they instinctively feel would fit into what is still referred to as, the family of Fifteen London, the community now has a formal structure for addressing precisely these considerations. Nevertheless, I learnt that the gut instinct rule still seems to apply at some level, but the new and more formal process is considered helpful to the selection process. And old-timers who have witnessed the processing of candidates throughout the organisation’s history feel that they (the community) are getting much better at selecting the right candidates for the programme.
Nevertheless, it would seem that the course of human development is so complex, and the development of personality and attitude to learning dependant on so many diverse elements, that no system can accurately predict who will flourish in a particular community and who will not (Rotter and Heochreich, 1975).

Moreover, the thesis reveals that it is the community itself who welcomes the new participants through legitimate peripheral participation (Wenger, 1998; also see Chapter Nine above); engendering a feeling of belonging, of being valued; and demonstrating as they do so, a belief in the newcomers’ potential, and promoting a more optimistic approach to learning. Therefore, how easily, how quickly, or how enthusiastically newcomers might respond to the culture of the community depends upon their previous experiences, and the quality of mediation to which they are exposed in the cultural practices of that community.

Moreover, since the length of training has been reduced in 2008 from eighteen months to twelve, each successive group of apprentices does not overlap with the next, so there would now seem less opportunity for different generations to meet in the hierarchy of the community. This major change has also therefore reduced the opportunities in the recruitment process for collaboration and communication between the three groups of participants as described in the study (see chapter 8.1), namely: potential candidates; current apprentices; and old-timers. This would seem to be a significant loss for the incumbent apprentices who do not have the opportunity to compare their individual trajectory of learning with newcomers to this community of practice. There has been some additional opposition to this change from chefs who feel that a twelve month programme is too brief for some apprentices to become fully proficient in the professional skills expected of them at the point of graduation. Other participants agree that the twelve months programme is not long enough for new attributes and attitudes to become fully internalised. Nevertheless, I was told that an effort is made by the Foundation to expose apprentices to past graduates, and for incumbent apprentices the opportunity to meet new recruits. For example, this year, one recent graduate, working at Fifteen London whilst he was waiting to begin a work placement out in the industry, was purposely chosen to participate in the selection process for exactly this reason. Moreover, I learnt that in recognition of the value of this practice, the organisation are considering ways of making the interaction of different generations of apprentices and graduates part of the interview and recruitment process.
It will be interesting however, next year, to evaluate how successful the twelve month programme and the revised recruitment model have proved to be; and also perhaps to reconsider by what means success is measured by the organisation.

At present, success is measured by the number of trainees each year who reach graduation and stay in the industry. But the journey of human development towards autonomy and independence is unique to each one of us and dependent on so many factors both within the sphere of influence of the community and beyond it, that assessing what ‘success’ for one human being might be, and what ‘failure’ is for another is a subjective and sensitive issue.

Nevertheless, the bare statistics of graduates from each successive cohort of apprentices provide the community with a barometer to assess how well they might appear to be doing in the various aspects of the apprenticeship model, so that improving on these statistics year on year is a constant target. In 2009, the Foundation are now keeping more accurate records of past graduates’ employment and activities, but it appears that keeping track of this growing and mobile population, and updating and revising this data, is a time-consuming and challenging business. Some of these facts are presented here below.

Across all 6 cohorts from 2002 - 2008:

- Of the 122 young people recruited to the programme thus far, 67 have graduated from the Fifteen London Chef Apprenticeship Programme.

In 2008, 47 graduates work as chefs or in the food related industry

- 7 graduates have changed vocation
- 7 graduates are unemployed
- 2 graduates are training or studying
- 2 graduates could not be contacted
- 2 graduates are full-time mothers
The statistics break down year by year as follows:

In 2003, of the 16 apprentices in the programme, 8 graduated.
In 2004, of the 25 apprentices, 14 graduated.
In 2005, of the 22 apprentices, 15 graduated.
In 2006, of the 21 apprentices, 9 graduated.
In 2007, of the 20 apprentices, 8 graduated.
In 2008, of the 18 apprentices, 13 graduated.

(Sourced from the 2008 statistics from Fifteen London)

On the face of it, these statistics would seem to make discouraging reading, but they need to be understood in the context of the depth and purpose of the unique apprenticeship model of Fifteen London, and set against the organisation’s many success stories such as those described above in the main study of the thesis (see Chapter Eight). Moreover, Fifteen London has been criticised elsewhere for spending so much time, care and money on so few individuals. This opinion is shared by some within the organisation who agree that the community needs to reach out to many more young people. Whist agreeing with the sentiments of such ambitions, others might challenge such criticism by asking what price we should put on the life of one individual?

Therefore it needs to be emphasised here that the bare statistics of graduates each year do not reflect the humanity behind the stories of those young people who, despite the odds stacked against them, have managed to change the direction of their lives; nor do the statistics reflect the shared contribution of the many participants who helped them do so; nor the community’s passionate belief in the learning potential and value of each individual which underpins the enterprise of its actions. It is hoped therefore that this investigation and this chapter in particular illuminates the humanity behind these bare statistics, and provides an insight into the complexities of human development within the context of this particular community whose sole purpose is to help young people develop the skills to become competent, motivated and autonomous individuals.

2. The range and number of sourcing trips for the incumbent cohort of apprentices in 2009 has remained unchanged, and a recognition of the value of sourcing trips to the apprentices’ development remains intact. Key participants told me that trainees continue
to regularly benefit from a wide range of sourcing trips around the UK that include working visits to sheep, beef, poultry and pig farms; jam factories; bakeries; cheese makers; abattoirs; fish markets; and fruit growers (see 8.4 above). However, in September 2008, the length of the training programme changed for the first time from eighteen months to twelve and this meant that the trip to Tuscany, normally scheduled for November each year, was felt by the welfare team to be too early in the apprentices’ training, and the Foundation’s understanding of their individual needs. However, I learnt that the Tuscany sourcing trip for this current cohort of graduates will take place as usual but following graduation, emphasising the importance that the community continues to place on the cultural significance of this experience. Indeed, my own investigations revealed that the Tuscany trip was considered by many graduates over the years to be the turning point in their learning experience (see 8.4 above).

3. Another significant change to the programme has been the radical reform of the vocational training. Traditionally, this has always been provided by a vocational college in an accelerated programme leading to NVQ I and II (see 8.2 above), which is now considered by some chefs at Fifteen London to be outmoded and too far removed from the work practices of a professional kitchen in the fine dining industry. Moreover, there are now plans for Fifteen London to become a recognised training centre in its own right. In 2008, for the first time, formal training at college was provided by a fully trained tutor-chef from Fifteen London’s own workforce rather than a member of staff from the vocational college which provides its facilities. The plan is to eventually move the complete learning experience of formal training from the college site to the restaurant, which would allow Fifteen London to have complete responsibility for the apprentices’ learning experience in the workplace and eliminate wasteful travel time between the two sites. This will represent a huge shift of the learning culture of training, which is felt by the whole community to be a positive change in the apprentices’ experience.

4. The welfare programme has also radically changed in 2009. It is now both more inclusive and structured, so that all the apprentices can benefit from the various specialist speakers brought in to address topics considered helpful to the apprentices’ development and well-being. At the beginning of the programme, trainees are advised that although they might individually find some of these sessions more useful than others, their attendance is expected to all. This structure and routine is felt to be helpful in generating
in the apprentices a better understanding of each other’s needs and therefore a stronger peer group. It will be interesting to explore the effects of these changes.

Additionally, counselling and personal advice in 2009 is available from a trained ‘life coach’ who comes into Fifteen London regularly to offer confidential support on issues such as anger management; substance abuse; nutrition and exercise; personal relationships and emotional issues.

5. In conducting the interviews for the purposes of this chapter, it was interesting that a number of participants freely offered the information that a very positive improvement to the apprentices’ experience at Fifteen London in recent years has been the appointment of a particular Training Chef who, it is recognised, has not only developed special relationships with each of the apprentices, but also earned the respect of his peers - both in the kitchen brigade and the welfare team. The consistency across settings that this relationship has brought is felt to have had a considerable impact on the development of the apprentices. Indeed, most old-timers feel that the personal relationships that develop between people in the community is the singular and most important factor in the apprentices’ development. This would seem to correspond to my own findings that it is these qualitative factors that contribute to human development in the day-to-day practices of the culture of the community (see Chapter Nine).

Some of the participants interviewed however felt that there is still plenty of ‘wriggle-room’ in the opportunities this social enterprise community could offer its young people. As illustrated above, not everyone is suited to the harsh world of the professional chef, but there are many other roles in the industry of hospitality and catering for those individuals who are prepared to work hard and learn what is required. For example, one graduate at the time of writing this chapter was learning how to resource and purchase goods required for the Fifteen London restaurant. Another went to work for a wholesale fishmonger in the fish market. Ideas have been discussed by the community about how to broaden the programme so that some apprentices could either opt to become fully trained chefs; or choose to serve the industry in different ways: restaurant management; catering events; contract catering (for example - airlines, offices); or working in the beverages market; all skills which could, with sufficient planning, be developed within the organisation of the family of Fifteen in London.
10.7. Summary of chapter

Earlier in the thesis I stated that I deliberately chose to present the very best of what I witnessed in the community of Fifteen London over the years of this in-depth investigation, for it is my passionate belief both as an individual and an educator that we learn best by witnessing the very best of practice. To balance this positive perspective, this penultimate chapter has presented a more critical perspective of the organisation, to illustrate some of the many challenges faced by this dynamic and ever-changing community, and demonstrate how change forces inevitably effect the routines and practices of any organisation.

In summary, the recent changes in the apprenticeship model at Fifteen London seem to have been considerable and far-reaching. Nevertheless, it would seem however that perhaps what is even more significant, is that as the organisation has grown, and as changes have been made in response to internal and external forces, the impact of the relationships between people within the culture of the community of Fifteen London remain the singular and most significant influence on the young people’s development.

It would perhaps now be interesting, with the benefit of hindsight, to revisit the five micro-settings discussed in the main study of the thesis, in order to compare the impact of these changes on the young peoples’ development and the culture of the whole community. However, data for this chapter reveals that we do not always remember with certainty or clarity why certain decisions were taken at a particular moment in time; or indeed what specifically contributed to particular changes to practices over the years. Indeed, when asked whose decision it had been to alter certain practices and why, participants could not always remember. This would seem to illustrate that sometimes, changes occur in a community in direct or indirect response to internal and external forces, which in themselves may not always be remembered by those they effect the most (Fullan, 2003).

Nevertheless, in making significant changes to the apprenticeship, the Foundation of Fifteen London are aware that they need to reflect on the qualitative aspects of systems and practices they have always used in the past, as well as consider changes that need to be made for the continued prosperity of the enterprise and security for its future activities. Indeed, participants shared with me that they think it important that as a learning
organisation, they are vigilant about both continuously reviewing what went well, as well as learning from what did not, and regularly taking on board feedback from various stakeholder groups within the community as well as the apprentices themselves. It is therefore hoped that this study will help inform such reflection and evaluation.

My investigation also suggests that as participants come and go, they sometimes make huge and significant changes to the system, not always cognisant of the historical relevance and value of certain cultural practices or, not always staying in the community long enough to see the impact and consequence of their decisions, as other related practices get diluted or lost in the process (Fullan, op-cit).

Therefore, although most participants feel that they are getting better at what they do, all agree that the organisation could be doing far more to help both their own young people and the many others who apply for training that they have to turn away. This would seem to indicate the ethical obligations the community continue to feel towards the apprentices, and the value they place on each individual. Moreover, most participants interviewed for the purposes of this chapter feel they are getting better at choosing not only the right candidates for training within the revised apprenticeship model, but better too at finding the right person for a particular role within the growing community of communities of Fifteen.

In summary, this chapter began with the important statement that change is inevitable; and therefore, it is how we respond to change that is the important issue (Fullan, 1993). I presented the stories of two young people who did not make it to graduation to illustrate some of the challenges of attempting to alter the course of human development; and emphasise what one participant called, ‘the other side of the coin’ to the many success stories described above in the main study of the thesis (see Chapter Eight).

I suggest that systems, like those individuals who create them, come and go in any community of practice, and the repercussions of the changes they wrought sometimes unwittingly but significantly effect related systems and practices in the environment (Wenger, 1998; Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney, 1975). This has highlighted the need for further in-depth exploration into the cultures of the growing Fifteen brand across the four sites of London and Cornwall in the UK, Amsterdam in Holland, and Melbourne in Australia, which could provide valuable information for the organisation about the
quality of the apprentices’ experiences in each one of these diverse settings, and in the
day-to-day practices of its community.
Chapter Eleven - Summary of thesis

11.1. Summary of thesis

The thesis began with a discussion about the numbers of young people who leave full-time education after eleven years of compulsory education, ill-equipped for gainful employment in the twenty-first century, and slipping through the cracks of society towards dependency. This issue has raised the debate across the political, educational, social and economical sectors of our society about the kind of education children need in preparation for an increasingly complex society; and has led educators in the UK to consider new and innovative ways to make learning relevant and meaningful to all children, regardless of ability or experience. However, research suggests that success is measured by the society in which one has to operate, and therefore different cultures and contexts need to develop different skills and competences (Sternberg, 2004). There is a growing shift in both educational literature and pedagogy towards looking at how to develop personal skills beyond the traditional curricular subjects (Claxton, 2006); and the way forward now is a broader recognition of the central role that culture plays in human development (Kozulin, 2003). The thesis, mainly concerned with exploring the cultural practices of a community, and the learning processes of its participants, was set against a background of these issues.

This interpretive case-study illuminated the culture of the apprenticeship model at ‘Fifteen London’ to understand what actually took place there in the process of apprentices learning to become chefs. As a major part of this illumination process, a specific research question emerged, namely, whether the two theoretical perspectives of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991), and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein and Tannenbaum, 1994), could provide useful frameworks for making sense of what was happening there; and if so, what each had to offer in terms of furthering our understanding. Thus, the research had a twin focus, of examining what was taking place in the apprenticeship model of Fifteen London, and of exploring the practical utility of two well-known theoretical perspectives.

The study therefore used a socio-cultural perspective of both human development, and the theoretical framework of Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994), to illuminate that situated learning occurs both as a consequence of
the informal dialogues between people and, as participation in social practices. Given this starting point, the thesis is constructed in such a way as to reflect the complexities of the issues involved rather than provide a longitudinal analysis. It illuminated the dynamic complexities of learning as a natural phenomenon of social participation, and the important role that the quality of the relationships between people plays in human development. Whilst acknowledging that all interpretive research is partial, observations and participant-observations provided opportunities to enter the community, develop intimate relationships with its participants, and observe their natural activities as closely as possible. This ethnographic positioning gave valuable insights into the culture of the community of Fifteen London and the learning processes of its apprentices, and threw fresh light onto our understanding of these complex issues.

Three aspects of the setting were of interest here: firstly, the nature of the community; secondly, the various qualities of mediation observed between participants as they went about their day-to-day activities in the workplace; and thirdly, my ethnographic positioning as participant-observer. Drawing on dense research data accumulated in my observations of three successive cycles of training they combine to tell the story of the training process itself, from selection through to graduation. These observations were recorded as field notes, and a reflexive and detailed journal was kept throughout the investigation.

Three methodological points were kept in mind throughout the investigation. These were first, that it is impossible to understand a person separate from the world they live in; second, it is participation within that culture which allows meaning to be shared; and third, is the cultural or ‘folk psychology’ that describes the systems by which people organise their lives (Bruner, 2002, p35). Bruner was to become an inspiration throughout this investigation, as I returned to his writings again and again for guidance, encouragement and insightfulness (Bruner, 1977; 1983;1987; 1990). Therefore, from the beginning, the thesis developed within the constructionist tradition which considers the making of meaning as a major tenet of our understanding of human behaviour (Bruner, 2002; Crotty, 1998).

Following the experiences of three successive groups of apprentices, five diverse aspects of the community of Fifteen London were described in the study as ‘micro-settings’. These settings were: the selection process for the apprenticeship training; vocational
college where formal training was conducted; the professional kitchen of the Fifteen London Restaurant; sourcing trips where apprentices learnt the provenance of fine food; and Fifteen Foundation’s general office. Each micro-setting highlighted the nature of one key aspect of the apprentices’ learning experiences in the process of acquiring the skills and knowledge of a chef. Further to these descriptions, I used the term ‘critical incidents’ to present dialogues, communications or incidents witnessed in the specific behaviours of participants within these micro-settings to illustrate the rich and complex story I chose to tell.

In this manner, Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991) provided a cohesive framework in which to illuminate what was going on in the community of practice in the process of young people learning to become chefs; and Mediated Learning Experience (Feuerstein, Klein, and Tannenbaum, 1994) provided a similar framework in which to explore what was going on in the specific behaviours of old-timers towards their apprentices throughout their training, and in the specific behaviours of apprentices as a response to that mediation. My research revealed that the diversity of the micro-settings, and the diversity of the social interactions described in the critical incidents within each of these micro-settings seemed to have contributed to the social, emotional and intellectual development of the apprentices.

11.2. Research findings

An analysis of data according to the twelve parameters of MLE revealed that whilst the masters’ ultimate goal for their apprentices in the workplace was to impart the skills and technical expertise of a chef, there was something more significant being learned by the apprentices in the five micro-settings of the community of practice of Fifteen London. Moreover, some of the relationships which developed in the community over the course of training held far more significance than simple master/apprentice; and the observed changes in these young peoples’ development seemed to be far more profound than the traditional master/apprentice relationship implies. The framework for the Modifying Environment was helpful to my understanding of these findings, particularly, the notion of ‘proximal processes’ utilised in human relationships for the development of learning potential (Westling Allodi, 2007; also see chapter four); and that human development depends on ‘distal factors’ which may have affected cognitive development in the past.
Mediation witnessed in the various micro-settings of the community, and the specific behaviours of the old-timers and experts towards the novices, or apprentices, within the context for learning, appeared to have a powerful influence on human development. That is, apprentices arrived for training with different needs and different life experiences, and all these factors needed to be met by the mediation offered by old-timers towards the apprentices, and within the modifying conditions of the environment. This highlights that the mediator needs to stay vigilant and attentive to the notion that different individuals, and that even groups of individuals need different qualities and levels of intensity of MLE at various stages in their development (Rynders, Feuerstein and Rand, 1997).

The twelve parameters of MLE and their targeted outcomes provided a practical and reciprocal framework with which to explicitly illuminate what was going on in the learning processes of the apprentices in naturally occurring social interactions with their mediators, and in the context of the learning experience. Moreover, the specific goals of MLE were helpful identifying and analysing observed changes in the trainees’ intellectual, social and affective development; both in response to that mediation, and within the dynamic framework of the community of practice.

Within this complex analysis, a number of significant notions emerged in the data. There were:

- **Interpersonal** mediation was observed to occur naturally in the specific behaviours of old-timers within the context for learning. Similarly, reification of intrapersonal mediation was observed to occur naturally in the apprentices’ changed behaviours as a result of that mediation and by means of cultural transmission and increased social participation (Kozulin, 1998; 1999).

- Mediated interactions were therefore dependent upon three components of an interdependent nature: the context of the learning experience; the intentions of the mediator towards the apprentice(s); and the apprentice(s)’ response to that mediation towards them.

- As apprentices developed an internal locus of control, so their technical skills as chefs were enhanced; and as they developed the technical skills of the chef, so
their social and emotional skills were enhanced; and as their whole development was enhanced, so they developed an identity with the community; and as they developed an identity with the community, so they learned to support and regulate one another in the shared meanings of cultural practices.

- As the shared meaning of cultural practices became transparent to apprentices over time, so direct mediation was reduced.

That is, the research revealed that there is a tension between mediated interactions; learning; cultural transmission; and social participation. It seemed from this complex construction that the process of learning occurs in a community of practice and within the dynamic relationships of:

- *Mediated Learning Experience* - the quality of relationships between people (Freeman, 1994; Tzuriel, 2004; Hadji, 1998)

- The *Zone of Proximal Development* - the hierarchy of the apprenticeship model (Vygotsky, 1962; 1978; Rogoff, 1990); and

- *Psychological Tools* - the expertise of the master in the field of the expert (Kozulin, 1998).

These elements worked together within the modifying environment of the community of practice for the enhancement of the human condition.

Moreover, the findings suggested that the observed incidents of mediation described in the critical incidents were so bound up in the context of the learning experience, that an analysis of one perspective without a consideration of the other became almost meaningless. That is, the context of the learning experience effects and influences the specific behaviours of the mediator towards the mediatee, and again influences the subject’s response to that targeted mediation.

In summary, the proximal factors identified in the data and the specific conditions for a modifying environment were helpful in understanding what was going on in the social interactions of participants within the community of practice of Fifteen London, and in
the process of apprentices learning to become chefs. The twelve specific parameters of the MLE framework and their specific goals were helpful in an analysis of the complexities of the social interactions between participants within each of the five micro-settings and in the informal dialogues and communications between participants. Similarly, the notions of legitimate periphery participation and situated learning provided a cohesive framework for discourse in which to consider the impact of MLE as a key dynamic of participation in cultural practices. A symbiosis of both approaches allows us to take a fresh look at the macro and micro complexities of human development. Moreover, in providing a detailed analysis of the specific behaviours of participants within their community of practice, the study emphasised the socio-cultural strengths of the MLE framework.

Three main advantages of the MLE framework were found to be particularly helpful to this analysis. These were (1), a deeply held belief in the learning potential of each individual; (2), general theoretical principles which can be applied across domains, age groups and settings; and (3), socio-cultural processes which can be applied on both the macro-level of cultural transmission, and the micro-level of specific behaviours of individuals (see chapter nine). These particular advantages are itemised and discussed below here to demonstrate how the findings from this case-study might be made accessible for apprenticeship training elsewhere.

1. A model for learning is explicitly based on the assumption that the community has a deeply held belief in the learning potential of each individual.

Findings from this case study suggest that a strongly held belief in the modifiability of the human condition by the whole community was instrumental in allowing a newcomer in that community to reach their full learning potential. Data revealed that new members of the workforce were recruited to the community of Fifteen London on the strength that they understood the ethical positioning of the enterprise; and, appropriate training and support were offered to new employees towards this end.

Any learning community committed to helping realise the full learning potential of their apprentices needs to recognise the active role of agents, educators, and mediators, to shape the development of each one of the novices in their care. For example, in an industrial apprenticeship setting, such an active role would be taken on by old-timers, experts and masters in the community who are more familiar with how things are done.
This implies a consideration of the following three elements: (1), the ability of old-timers to understand the impact, quality and intensity of their targeted intervention to affect change in the development of their apprentices; (2), a recognition by those in power of their ethical responsibility in this endeavour by supporting the professional workforce to become good mentors/mediators; and for this reason (3), ensure that old-timers are equipped with the specific strategies and didactical skills they need to regulate, encourage, foster, and motivate meaningful learning in all their apprentices.

2. The macro aspects of the MLE framework are emphasised by means of inter-generational cultural transmission within the modifying environment of the community.

The study revealed that the hierarchy of the ‘brigade’ in the workplace had a significant affect on the professional and affective development of the apprentices. Similarly, the mediation offered in other aspects of the community was also found to have a significant impact on the apprentices’ professional and personal development.

Newcomers working alongside old-timers in a traditional apprenticeship model is a practical means of ensuring that old customs and technical ‘know-how’ are handed down from generation to generation. However, findings from this case-study revealed that learning here was found to be on two levels: what we do, and who we are. Moreover, the specific qualities of intervention offered to apprentices by other participants in the community affected the rate and direction of the apprentices’ development, and this important factor would need to be taken into account for practice elsewhere.

The study also revealed that although formal vocational training at college is important, there is no substitution for participating in the activity in the workplace within a team of colleagues, where the tensions of the enterprise of the community (in this case creating a beautiful meal for the paying customer) drives the motivation to complete a given task successfully. The workplace is therefore seen as the place where an apprentice feels most valued for making a contribution to the enterprise of the community. This supports the view taken by Fuller and Unwin whose research on contemporary apprenticeships in industrial settings concludes that the best opportunities for the personal development of apprentices requires a mixture of both formal and informal training (Fuller and Unwin, 2003; also see chapter six).
3. The micro aspects of the MLE framework are emphasised in the specific communications and behaviours of individuals towards one another in the daily routines and social interactions of the community of practice.

This anthropological study demonstrated that specific human behaviours of individuals can be analysed according to the twelve specific parameters of MLE and their targeted outcomes, both of which provided valuable and detailed information about how apprentices learnt in naturally occurring cultural practices. Moreover, the specifically targeted and intentional intervention by old-timers towards their apprentices would seem to demonstrate a deeply held belief in the learning potential of those apprentices.

To sum up this point, three considerations are emphasised here; firstly, an awareness by the old-timers/mediators of the specific needs of their apprentices; secondly, an awareness by the old-timers that the impact of their intervention affects the pace and direction of their apprentices’ learning progress; and thirdly, that a deeply held belief in the learning potential of each apprentice engenders the motivation and competence of the whole community towards this end.

It would therefore seem that the socio-cultural perspective of the MLE framework taken here helped to make sense of what was going on explicitly in the relationships between people in the community of Fifteen London, and in the process of apprentices learning to become chefs. In this manner, the frameworks for both MLE and Situated Learning threw fresh light onto our understanding of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice, and the dynamic process of becoming a fully legitimate participant in a community of practice. Moreover, a socio-cultural perspective of the MLE framework, together with a specific consideration of legitimate peripheral participation of the newcomer in the field of the expert, highlights the relevance and applicability of a fusion of both these perspectives for a deeper understanding of learning in the real world.

Drawing on these findings, knowledge in a specific domain can therefore be seen to be on two levels - what we do, in terms of our technical ‘know-how’; and who we are, in terms of our sense of identity and ethical values. As a consequence of this assumption, a community of practice could be shaped in such a way as to foster all aspects of human potential.
To place the findings from this research study into the context of utilising apprenticeship as a vehicle for meaningful learning, the following section describes the current provision and challenges of learning as apprenticeship in the UK. It compares the bespoke welfare model of apprenticeship described here, to other models of apprenticeship, and suggests ways in which the findings from this research study might be made relevant for practice elsewhere.

11.3. Apprenticeship as a vehicle for change

It has been argued throughout the thesis that apprenticeship offers a viable model for learning in the real world. Research elsewhere has shown that apprenticeship offers young people the opportunity to acquire a vocational qualification and make a fresh start after unsuccessful school experiences (Bathmaker, 2001; Postlethwaite and Maull, op-cit). Furthermore, the findings from this case study suggest that intellectual learning, such as learning the skills of a professional chef, has an impact on the social and affective development of the human condition.

This case study has described one organisation’s experience of using apprenticeship as a vehicle for change. However, it is not suggested that all aspects of the small bespoke model for learning described here would be relevant to all other apprenticeships, or indeed that this or indeed any other model of apprenticeship can be held up as a universal solution for all. Moreover, when we suggest using apprenticeship as a vehicle for change, it needs to be made clear what is meant by such a statement - do we mean cognitive change, organisational change, social change? The use of the phrase in this particular case study suggests a consideration of all three perspectives, but other organisations offering apprenticeship may see ‘change’ as a way of invigorating old practices, using innovative practice to gain funding from outside sources, or a means by which to help their apprentices lead more competent and fulfilling lives. However, extensive research on organisational change has shown that a change in one aspect of the community has a knock-on effect on another (Fullan, 1993; also see chapter ten). Indeed, it was pointed out earlier that:

‘Moral purpose without change agentry is so much wishful valuing; change agentry without moral purpose is change for the sake of change’ ... ‘continuity and change, personal mastery and collective action, vision and openness,'
Therefore, any organisation which seeks to change its practices, and the lives of its participants, should do so with a clear understanding of the purpose of such change, its agenda, and its targeted outcomes.

This section considers the notion that different learning communities will have different ways of interpreting the findings from this case study. Moreover, there are vast differences between most of the industrial settings for apprenticeship that the new Government initiative, the National Apprenticeship Service, (www.apprenticeship.org.uk/About-Us/National-Apprenticeship-Service.aspx, accessed on 2/06/09) is attempting to reach, and the small traditional apprenticeship programme described in this case-study. Nevertheless, research has shown that every apprenticeship and learning environment, small and large, could be considered a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). If this is the case, then every community could be broken down further into smaller micro-settings of practice. For example: workshop settings, vocational college settings, administrative settings.

Indeed, Lave and Wenger point out that although each community of practice (and therefore each apprenticeship) is unique, there are four essential questions common to all (Lave and Wenger, 1991; also see chapter six). However, when we consider the general apprentice population across the whole of the UK, we must acknowledge that each apprentice begins their training with their own unique set of needs, depending on their experience of the world, and this too must be taken into account. The findings from the apprenticeship described here suggest that the experience of participating in the cultural practices of the community had a significant affect on the learning process of a large proportion of its apprentices. It would therefore seem logical to assume that the specific cultural practices illuminated here could be usefully adapted for use in other situations.

Interestingly, despite the differences between the small bespoke model of apprenticeship described here and other organisations that the National Apprenticeship Scheme are attempting to reach, it is Fifteen London that is often held up by politicians and educators
as a model of good practice in apprenticeship for how celebrity, commercial innovation, higher education and social enterprise can work hand in hand to serve one another.

For example, in April 2009, Jamie Oliver and the chefs from Fifteen London were asked by the Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Gordon Brown, to prepare a banquet for some of the world’s top leaders and their spouses at the G20 summit hosted in London by the British Government. The team of experts that Jamie took with him to Ten Downing Street for this event was made up of a few senior chefs as well as a number of graduates from different years of the apprenticeship programme, including one of the current apprentices due to graduate in the summer of 2009. In a televised interview about the event and what it meant for the community of Fifteen London, Jamie describes how Ed Balls, MP, Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, had called him on the telephone and said that the British Government wanted to,

‘Show off good practice as far as apprenticeship is concerned’, (Oliver, 2009).

It would seem that encouraging learning communities like Fifteen London, whose purpose is to help young people who may have failed at school to become chefs, would be an important step in the right direction for a Government that professes to be committed to the resurgence of skilled labour, innovation and good practice in apprenticeship (Learning Skills Council, www.lsc.gov.uk/whatwedo/, accessed on 2/06/09). If this is the case, then one could question why more vocational projects of this nature are not in evidence as a result of Government initiatives.

One reason for this might be, if this study has demonstrated anything, that the success of such an enterprise is extremely difficult to achieve, and dependent on so many elements of an affective as well as a more practical nature. However, the findings from this case-study further illuminated the notion that all these elements seemed to rest on two key principles - a deeply held belief in human potential, and the contribution of the culture of the community towards this end. Indeed, Fifteen London, the original site of this growing community of Fifteen restaurants worldwide, was set up with the prime goal of helping young people who needed both the opportunity and the support to change the direction of their lives, by training them to become chefs serving the food and hospitality industry; but furthermore, supporting and developing apprentices’ personal attributes,
such as feelings of self-worth and identity, both found to be key elements in the process of human development.

However, although it has been argued throughout the thesis that the community of Fifteen London is a good example of what can be achieved within an apprenticeship model, it cannot be considered typical of all apprenticeships. So when we compare the Fifteen experience of apprenticeship to other small and medium-sized companies up and down the country, it should be remembered that not all organisations who take on an apprentice do so with a desire to serve society, but with a far more pragmatic and practical need to serve themselves. Similarly, it would be unrealistic to suggest that every apprenticeship in the small and medium-sized companies that the new National Apprenticeship Scheme is attempting to reach is governed by altruistic principles; or, that the needs of apprentices elsewhere are similar to those described here. Indeed, most small and medium sized organisations are primarily driven by the needs of meeting the commercial issues of the day, and having sufficient expertise to meet the demands of their future contractual commitments.

So although the welfare model of Fifteen London cannot be considered an apprenticeship in the conventional sense, it has been emphasised throughout this investigation that the young people it serves are given the opportunity to learn far more about life than gaining a trade. So, whilst the Government rightly highlights, and indeed celebrates, the success of the Fifteen London apprenticeship at the G20 summit, one could question their claim to do so. Indeed, the study reveals that Fifteen London’s success has been largely dependent on the strongly held principles of a small group of individuals with a common purpose rather than relying on any Government sponsored incentive to do so.

For example, the findings from this case-study suggest that the social interactions between people observed in the micro-setting of the general office, and described above in chapter eight, were to have a profound effect on these young people’s personal development. It would seem that such intentional intervention went far beyond the skills required for the professional tools of a chef met by their tutors at vocational college and in the activities of the professional kitchen. Moreover, the intimate personal relationships I observed that developed between masters and their apprentices, and between apprentice and apprentice, across the micro-settings, went far beyond our traditional understanding of such relationships. Similarly, the apprentices’ lived
experience of participating in sourcing trips to learn the provenance of food used in the restaurant, appeared to have a profound impact on the emotional and social development of these young novices, providing them with an opportunity to glimpse another world, and the possibility of living a different kind of life. Therefore, it is relevant in this closing chapter to suggest how the findings from this interpretive case-study might be made relevant and meaningful to apprenticeship programmes elsewhere, so that in their own unique community of practice they can foster meaningful learning in all their apprentices.

There were three particular advantages of the MLE framework that were particularly helpful for making sense of what I witnessed in the community of practice of Fifteen London. These findings are described here in six considerations for a modifying environment which were felt to be relevant to all learning communities. These are:

1. *the community's fundamental belief in each apprentice’s learning potential*

2. *the specific behaviours of masters towards apprentices in the hierarchy of the workplace*

3. *the specific behaviours of all other old-timers/participants towards apprentices across the various settings and stakeholder groups in the community*

4. *the organisation monitors the quality of the graduates' professional and personal development as reification of their learning experience*

5. *the organisation actively seeks opportunities and innovations to improve its own unique model of apprenticeship in collaboration with vocational institutions and in the light of current provision and service.*

6. *the organisation deliberately sets up the modifying conditions of the environment in such a way as to foster opportunities for mediated learning experiences in the apprentices.*

All these considerations imply that in the first instance, an organisation needs to make a clear commitment to creating a modifying environment, one that deliberately fosters
the modifying conditions necessary for all aspects of human development in its apprentices, and in the working practices of its community. After which, a small lead team from within the organisation’s own workforce could be trained in the didactical aspects of MLE, so that they might encourage, foster and supervise specific behaviours of old-timers towards their apprentices in the activities of the workplace; and similarly, monitor specific behaviours in the apprentices development as a response to that targeted mediation, and until such a time that positive mediating processes are embedded in the cultural practices of the community.

However, it should be pointed out here that organisational change is an inevitable dynamic of any community (Fullan, 1993), and, therefore, choosing to change established practices entails action, commitment, and a determination by the whole community to ensure such changes take place. Moreover, the study revealed that the delivery of a welfare model of apprenticeship such as the one described here is a complex and challenging enterprise, both at the macro level of the community of practice, and at the micro level of the social interactions of its participants. However, it has been shown that taking on the ‘active role of agent, mediator or educator’ to foster meaningful learning in a novice participant can be a rewarding but demanding and time-consuming process.

With these considerations in mind, the organisation should recognise this effort in members of their workforce, and award them accordingly.

It would therefore seem, in the light of all these considerations, and the Government’s recently renewed commitment to apprenticeship, that politicians should now be actively encouraging employers across industries to seek practical support and guidance as to how to go about creating thriving and diverse learning communities that address all aspects of human development, with the aim of building a stronger and more optimistic society.

11.4. Personal reflections

When thoughts for the thesis began, I had little understanding of the complex nature of the task I had set myself; nor could I envisage the fascinating journey on which my research would take me, and the things that I would learn along the way. When I look back now, with the benefit of hindsight, perhaps the biggest lesson of conducting an in-depth exploration such as the one described here, might be what one learns about oneself in the process. Recently, for the purpose of these closing comments, I revisited Schon’s
ideas about the reflective practitioner (Schon, 1991), which reminded me that we are all reflecting on our own professional conduct, all the time; as we constantly monitor, criticise, and defend our own positions in the various aspects of our professional lives, and in how we choose to present ourselves in the real world.

In educational research, we reflect on the assumptions we bring to our investigations, as themes emerge in the data in the fascinating process of social research (Richardson, 2003; Hunt, 2001; Geertz, 1973; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). It seemed to me in the light of this experience, that a community of practice has an organic ‘life’, as boundaries shift and change along with the participants within it (Wenger, 1998). As I learned about the shared meanings of other peoples’ lives (Bruner, 2002), and the many internal and external forces which influence the course of human nature (Fullan, 1993), the more I understood the impact we all have upon one another within the dynamics of our own environments, and in the light of our own experience (Bronfenbrenner and Mahoney, 1975). Indeed, social research is a multidimensional and unpredictable business, as we focus on different aspects of what we strive to understand.

The personal experience we bring to our research dictates the kind of inquiry we want to conduct (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; 2003b; 2003c); and the kind of questions we ask in qualitative research, and the methods we use, define the nature of its findings (Wellington, 2000). From the beginning of this long investigation, this case-study has had a twin focus; firstly, on learning in as much detail as possible, what was going on in the learning processes of a group of young people learning to become chefs, and the culture of the community which provided their apprenticeship. The second focus for research was to understand the various qualities of social interactions of participants within their cultural practices, and their impact on human development. I used the theoretical frameworks of Legitimate Peripheral Participation and MLE to explore these questions, and explore whether these two perspectives might throw fresh light onto our understanding of learning in the real world.

The original focus for research was to find an existing model for learning in which to explore the complex issues implied in these lines of questioning, but it was never intended that I should make a study of apprenticeship in itself. Nevertheless, the holistic approach to learning used by Fifteen Foundation in the bespoke welfare model of apprenticeship described here seemed to resonate with certain aspects of my own world-
view of education. Consequently, it was thought that an interpretive, naturalistic investigation of its apprenticeship might throw fresh light on to our understanding of the process of learning, in just the same manner that Lave and Wenger used five diverse apprenticeships in which to explore situated learning as legitimate peripheral participation in the field of the expert (Lave and Wenger, 1992). Therefore, from the very beginning, the thesis has attempted to demonstrate that the findings from this study, and the lessons learned through this experience, might be made accessible for practice elsewhere.

This anthropological case-study described one organisation’s commitment to changing the lives of its apprentices. I passionately believe that we learn best by witnessing the very best of practice, and so the main body of the thesis described the very best of what I witnessed to serve as a vivid example of what can be achieved when social enterprise and moral purpose work hand in hand. Whilst deliberatively focussing on the many positive aspects of what I learnt about the community’s culture throughout the main study of the thesis, I tempered this perspective with a more reflective and critical look at the culture of Fifteen London in chapter ten, to illustrate and punctuate the complexities and ethical responsibilities involved when attempting to change the directions of other peoples’ lives. Moreover, I had brought to this investigation a passionate belief in the modifiability of the human condition, and the impact of interpersonal mediation between people towards this end. This belief has not wavered nor altered as a result of the study. On the contrary, my faith in the goodness of people in their endeavours to affect the lives of others has been confirmed through this experience.

A naturalistic interpretive approach in educational research such as that used here suggests that we can only really understand the rich texture of other peoples’ lives by listening to their stories, and sharing in some accessible part of their lives (Bruner, 2002; McAdams, Josselson and Lieblich, 2001). The purpose of this anthropological case-study was to learn in as much detail as possible, what was going on between people in their cultural practices in the process of young people learning to become chefs, and throw fresh light onto our understanding of the dynamic relationships between the mediator - the learner - and the task, and its impact on human development. The researcher is always the instrument of the inquiry, as s/he chooses how best to represent the story s/he wants to tell (Ellis and Bochner, 2003; Richardson, 2003); and it has been suggested that we need more stories about learning in the real world (Berteaux, 1981;
Indeed, it has been pointed out elsewhere that we need to learn what it is that children learn, when they are not learning what we expect them to learn (Bannister, 1981).

My ethnographic positioning allowed me to witness many intimate social interactions between people with minimal disruption to the natural conditions of the learning environment. Participants’ interpretation and reinterpretation of my initial findings provided valuable insights into their world. However, despite the advantages of using a naturalistic methodology such as this to explore learning in the real world, I learnt that there are limitations in using only one methodology; and although I would still argue that an ethnographic approach is the most effective way to explore the natural interactions of people in the daily activities of their culture, with as little disruption as possible, further research might benefit from employing additional methods to support and illustrate an understanding of various phenomena.

For example, semi-structured interviews of apprentices as newcomers at the beginning of their training, and again as old-timers as graduates at the end of their training would have provided further insights about their changed attitudes, and how they felt about their participation in the culture of the community. Attitudinal surveys, based on the Individual Classroom Environment Questionnaire (Fraser, 1990) for example, or Myself as a Learner (Burden, 2000a), could have been devised to offer other perspectives concerned with what both newcomers and old-timers felt about one other, their community and its cultural practices. However, these tools could provide a valuable source of data for exploring these issues in vocational environments elsewhere.

Another unforeseen difficulty experienced here was that the logistics of trying to keep in touch with participants to get their immediate feedback about what I witnessed was sometimes a frustrating and time-consuming business. People were always willing and generous with their time, but when I needed clarification of certain points they were not always available. Looking back now, perhaps it would have been helpful if I had scheduled feedback meetings immediately following my observations of particular incidents within a particular micro-setting, but this was not always possible or feasible in the many demands of a busy organisation. Consequently, the longer I had to wait to get participants’ feedback of what I observed, the harder it became for them to remember what they might have meant in specific social interactions. As a result of this delay, and the more retrospective participants’ interpretation became over time, the less impact it
made both on the quality of the data, or my own interpretation of what I thought I saw. Further data collection of this nature would benefit from adopting a more structured audit trail of participant observations such as that described by Lincoln and Guba, for example, which would have provided a more immediate and comprehensive record of who or what I had observed, my initial findings, and what I had yet to observe (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

This experience suggests that further investigations would benefit from having more than one researcher: for example, one making anthropological observations in the field, and perhaps another conducting interviews and attitudinal surveys. Such collaboration would provide more than one interpretation, and consequently a greater understanding of what was witnessed by means of simple participant-observations. Although this anthropological case-study used participant feedback to ascertain participants’ feelings, attitudes and self-perceptions of their culture and their own development, surveys and semi-structured interviews might have provided a more efficient and less time-consuming means by which to gain such insights. Similarly, utilising a structured discourse analysis of informal dialogues observed in the critical incidents, in conjunction with an analysis according to the framework of MLE, might have further illuminated our understanding of the significance of social interactions to the learning process.

Nevertheless, a natural anthropological methodology allowed me to engage intimately with people in their cultural practices, observe their informal communications with one another in their daily routines and cultural practices, and moreover, gain valuable insights into the purpose of their conduct, their intentions towards one another, and the shared meanings of their lives. Micro-settings and critical incidents described diverse learning experiences of apprentices in the cultural practices of the community, and provided a cohesive framework in which to present the informal dialogues and social interactions of people within these experiences. Further research might now explore whether the application of this framework could further our understanding of human development in cultural practices. For example, in a school setting, further research is needed to explore how children learn in the various micro-settings of a school community, and the careful balance between formal learning, learning as social participation, and the social interactions of children and teachers.
However, as I look back on the long investigation described here, I know that I could have chosen to construct a number of different stories about the community of Fifteen London. For example, an in-depth exploration of the celebrity status of Jamie Oliver and its effect on the community’s culture would in itself make a fascinating study about our generation’s obsession with celebrity and fame. The study revealed that Jamie’s personal involvement and commitment to Fifteen continues to inspire the community in their cause, but how much this is due to Jamie’s personal relationships with other participants and how much this is due to his celebrity status, is yet to be explored.

Similarly, research listening to the individual stories of those young people who did not reach graduation would provide the organisation with valuable information about the affective aspects of the ‘folk culture’ of their community (Bruner, 2002). Therefore, it is relevant in these closing comments to reconsider by what means the community continues to measure the success of both the apprenticeship programme and the individual young people it serves. The study revealed that each individual arrives in the apprenticeship programme at Fifteen London with different experiences and expectations of both themselves and the programme. For example, some may have ambitions to become the best pasta chef in the world, others may just want something to do and in the process of finding out what that might be, realise that they are participating in a community that gives them a sense of belonging, an identity, and feeling valued for their contribution to the community. Moreover, the statistics presented above in chapter ten show how many young people graduate each year from the programme, and by omission, reveal how many fail. But these bare statistics could not tell the stories of the individual struggles behind these numbers. Nor, what it was specifically in the modifying environment which might have influenced how they chose to conduct their lives since leaving Fifteen. Further research in this regard would illuminate the impact of the culture of the community of Fifteen London on all its apprentices, past and present, and regardless of whether they graduated or not, providing the community with valuable and constructive feedback for this holistic model of learning as apprenticeship.

One of the most interesting aspects of this investigation was that by taking a sociocultural and naturalistic perspective of the framework of MLE, the study revealed that the various qualities and intensity of mediation offered by the old-timers towards the apprentices were governed by the individual needs of the learner, and the nature of the task. Moreover, by using an ethnographic approach to observe social interactions of people in
their cultural practices, I was able to analyse the specific behaviours of the mediators, and understand what was going on as they mediated towards the mediatees, ‘in the moment’ of performing a given task, and contributing to the enterprise of the community. Thus, the focus for research here was on the specific behaviours of the mediator, the conditions of the modifying environment, and the specific behaviours of the learner in response to that mediation. Further research might now explore the theoretical implications of these findings in practice elsewhere, and how these might impact onto our understanding of complex issues related to mediated learning as social participation in a community of practice.

Moreover, a review of relevant educational literature revealed that different educational philosophies have more in common than I had previously understood. Indeed, my investigations suggested that the great educational philosophers, such as Vygotsky and Dewey are often saying similar things about complex issues relating to the learning process, but they each uses a different set of terms and concepts in which to frame their ideas. There is now a growing interest in exploring some of these similarities (Prawat, 2000). Indeed, recent discussants of both these approaches demonstrate how these two philosophies are still dominating our world-views of education generations later (see Kozulin, 1999; Edwards, 2005; Daniels, 2001; Biesta and Burbules, 2003, for example). However, it has been highlighted elsewhere that in our post-modernist generation we need to adopt a more open mind to what different perspectives in educational research might have to say about what we strive to understand in our own methodology (Bruner, 2002; Saljo, 2007). Certainly, this was my experience when exploring the many concepts and notions inherent within Feuerstein’s overarching gestalt of theories, as I learned that others had explored such notions as motivation (see Ames and Ames, 1989, for example); optimism (Seligman, 1991; Dweck, 1999); reflective practice (Schon, 1991); and autonomy and self-determination (Deci and Ryan, 2002) to name just a few. Perhaps, the socio-cultural aspects of Feuerstein’s work emphasised here need to be reviewed by educational research with a fresh eye, and a mind towards building a more optimistic society.
11.5. Conclusions

It has been argued here that we need to find new and innovative ways to make education relevant and meaningful to all young people, regardless of ability and experience. However, despite political and social concerns about the number of young people who continue to slip through the cracks of society towards dependancy, there is still an urgent and ongoing need to create learning environments for our young people where they can acquire the competence and wisdom they need to lead productive and fulfilling lives in the twenty-first century. Research elsewhere has shown that apprenticeship offers young people a second chance for success after negative experience of school, and so it has been argued throughout the thesis that apprenticeship could be used as a powerful vehicle for social change. Moreover, we know from extensive research elsewhere that when we take social and affective aspects of the human condition into account within the learning environment, children learn better and develop a better attitude to learning than in a purely intellectual and instructional environment (Slavin, 2008; 2006; Fraser and Walberg, 1991; Johnson and Johnson, 1975; Burden, 1991; Harris and Rosenthal, 1990). Nevertheless, despite recent welcome changes to apprenticeship training in the UK, there is still an urgent need to explore ways in which the apprenticeship model of learning could be used to embrace all aspects of human development.

The community of practice described here provided a setting in which to explore what happened as young people learn how to become chefs after negative experiences of school. I used the frameworks of Legitimate Periphery Participation and Mediated Learning Experience to illuminate complex issues about learning as social participation. I concluded that a consideration of both perspectives throws fresh light onto our understanding of the complexities of learning in the real world, and suggested ways in which the findings from this case study might be interpreted for practice elsewhere. Moreover, the conditions of the modifying environment described here, based on strong principles of community and moral purpose, would seem to offer a good example for others to follow.
Appendix (1): Certificate of ethical research approval from the School of Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Exeter

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS
You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php and view the School’s statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter).
DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Judy Silver
Degree/Programme of Study: PhD
Project Supervisor(s): Prof. R L Burden
Your email address: J.Silver@ex.ac.uk
Tel: 077 12 18 3000
Title of your project: Mediated Learning in the Socio-Cultural Model: a case study

Brief description of your research project:
I am following a group of young people through their vocational training to become qualified chefs in a professional setting. The research focuses on the quality of the interactions within the culture of the organisation. Data will be collected from observations and interviews.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): Trainees are aged between 16 and 24. Other participants within the organisation will also be observed and interviewed.
Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) a blank consent form can be downloaded from the SELL student access on-line documents:

A binding agreement has been drawn up and duly signed by myself and the Director of the organisation, outlining my ethical obligations to both the participants within the study and Exeter University, as laid down in the ethical policy of SELL.

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Methods of data collection will comprise of audio-taped interviews/narratives of participants, observations and videoed interactions. These last are the property of the organisation used for training purposes and loaned to me for the duration of the study with the full knowledge of the participants. Names are withheld to maintain confidentiality and privacy. All interviews will be conducted in confidence according to the SELL guidelines. Individual consent forms co-signed by myself and the interviewee emphasises my respect of privacy and confidentiality. Each interviewee will receive a copy of their taped interview and be consulted before any information is added to the body of data in accordance with my formal agreement with the organisation.

Narratives will be analysed to identify incidents of mediated learning experience.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.):

All videos, taped interviews and relevant writings are kept in my private office in my home.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School’s Research Support Office for the Chair of the School’s Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation/thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:..........................................................date:........................................

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor.

This project has been approved for the period: until:
By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ..............................................date: 30/6/06

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference: 21/05/01/127

Signed: .................................................................date: 28.7.06
Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from
http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php
then click on On-line documents.
Confidentiality Agreement

This Confidentiality Agreement is between Judy Silver ("You") and Fifteen Foundation ("FF"), each a "Party" and collectively "The Parties" and takes effect from 1 June 2006 (the "Effective Date"). FF acknowledges Your ethical and professional obligation to the Ethical Policy the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Exeter University.

1. In consideration of FF allowing You to (i) study FF’s documentation of the trainees progress throughout the training programme (ii) study trainees’ files and (iii) interview and observe participants and stakeholders in FF for the duration of your research on 'Situated Learning in a Vocational Environment', focussing on FF, Fifteen Restaurant Limited and Jamie Oliver as the case study (the "Project"), You hereby undertake to keep private and confidential and not to disclose to any third party, whether for economic gain or not, any and all "Confidential Information" that You may obtain in connection with and/or as a result of the Project, from FF and/or third parties in connection with Fifteen Restaurant Limited, FF and/or Jamie Oliver during the period starting on the Effective Date and ending on the date of publication of your PhD. You further agree to provide FF with copies of your published academic study in Educational Research and PhD thesis based on the Project (the "Published Papers") and to allow FF to use all material contained therein and/or extracts or parts thereof and any other data derived from the Project PROVIDED that such use cites and acknowledges the Author as You.

Confidential Information means all information tangible and intangible, including material (including without limitation written, photographic audio or audio visual material, materials, strategies, know-how, business plans), insight and/or knowledge that You may obtain in connection with and/or as a result of the Project including but not limited to any information gained from any of Jamie Oliver, Jamie Oliver’s associates or representatives and/or Jamie Oliver’s family, friends or colleagues, Fifteen Restaurant Limited, The Fifteen Foundation, Sweet As Candy Limited and/or any of their respective employees and/or contractors (collectively the "Associates").

2. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing:

2.1 You agree not to publish or otherwise disclose to any third party any Confidential Information concerning the personal lives and/or business, legal or financial affairs of Jamie Oliver or the Associates.

2.2 You will provide copies of any photographs or other recordings (whether written, audio or audio visual) of Jamie Oliver and/or the trainees and/or the Associates to FF and this Agreement shall take effect as a present assignment of all copyright (for the avoidance of doubt including but not limited to future copyright) to FF in respect of the entire copyright and all other intellectual property rights as may exist in such photographs and/or recordings throughout the world for the full period of copyright and thereafter in perpetuity. FF hereby grants You a non-exclusive and non-revocable licence to use all such photographs or recordings in academic meetings and presentations.

2.3 Subject to Clause 7, You will not give an interview or make any comment, write or contribute to any article or book or appear in any radio or television programme, film or broadcast, or digital transmission of any kind concerning Jamie Oliver and/or the Associates and/or the Project.
2.4 You will refer all enquiries from the press or media to Liam Black (contact: liam.black@fifteenfoundation.org.uk) (or such other person as Sweet As Candy Limited may nominate) and not attempt to instigate or deal with any requests for interviews Yourself.

2.5 You will abstain from duplicating or distributing any of the Confidential Information to any third party without the prior written consent of FF.

3. You agree to indemnify FF and/or the Associates against any and all actions, claims, costs, charges, losses, judgments, suits, liabilities, expenses or damages that FF and/or the Associates may suffer or incur as a direct or indirect result of a breach or threatened breach of this Agreement by You.

4. You acknowledge that FF and/or the Associates would be irreparably injured by a breach of this Agreement and that each shall be entitled, in addition to any other remedies available at law or in equity that they may have, to seek equitable relief, including injunctive relief or specific performance or both in the event of any breach or threatened breach of the provisions of this Agreement.

5. You shall upon receipt pay FF and/or the Associates any fee or consideration whatsoever that you receive as a result of your breach of this Agreement and this is in addition to any other remedies available to FF, and/or the Associates in law and/or under this Agreement.

6. You permit FF and/or the Associates to institute legal proceeding in your name to restrain any third party from any act which would or may conflict with the intention of this Agreement or your agreements, undertakings or obligations under this Agreement.

7. The obligations on you and agreements by you contained in this Agreement shall not apply to any information:

   (i) which is in the public domain other than as a result of an unauthorised disclosure by You or any other party;

   (ii) which You are required to disclose by specific order of a court of competent jurisdiction provided that you notify FF of such an order as soon as is reasonably practicable and You only furnish that portion of the Confidential Information that is required;

   (iii) which You had in Your possession prior to the Effective Date;

   (iv) which is independently developed or created by You;

   (v) which You are expressly authorised to disclose by FF and only to the extent that such disclosure is expressly permitted. FF hereby authorises You to publish Your study in Educational Research and PhD thesis in 2009 and Your PhD thesis within six years of the Effective Date PROVIDED THAT it adheres to the ethical guidelines set out by the Ethical Policy the School of Education and Lifelong Learning, Exeter University. FF further acknowledges that You may make reference to the material contained in the Published Papers with colleagues, in academic journals, academic books, educational meetings and educational lectures.

8. All Confidential Information will remain the property of FF and nothing in this Agreement will be construed as a grant, whether express or implied, by FF to You of any rights in any Confidential Information. FF acknowledges that You retain full authorship rights in the Published Papers.
9. FF does not give any warranties in respect of the Confidential Information nor does it accept responsibility for any expenses, losses or actions incurred or undertaken by You as a result of Your use of the Confidential Information.

10. The laws of England shall govern the construction, the validity and the performance of this agreement and any disputes that may arise in relation to the interpretation and performance of this agreement and you submit to the non-exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

SIGNED

DATE 13/6/0

SIGNED FOR AND ON BEHALF OF FIFTEEN FOUNDATION

DATE 20/6/0
Appendix (III): Individual Ethical Agreement

Individual Ethical Agreement - Fifteen London

Date(s) of interview/observation: 3/11/06

Name of subject: [Redacted]

Position: Trainee Chef

Agreement

This research is being conducted within the strict ethical framework laid down by The School of Education and Lifelong Learning (SELL) at Exeter University. As a researcher I am obliged to tell you that how I conduct these observations and interviews carries an ethical responsibility.

Please read the conditions below carefully before you co-sign this letter which gives me your permission to include your dialogues and comments in these investigations.

I understand that this interview and/or observation of practice is being conducted as part of a research project about the apprenticeship training at Fifteen Foundation London, and that it will contribute to part of a published paper for research on practices in education.

I understand that my own identity will not be published unless I give my express permission to do so. Following this interview/observation, feedback will provide me with the opportunity to correct anything which is not a complete and true record of what occurred.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw or refuse to participate in these activities and can stop at any time.

Co-signed by:

Interviewee: [Redacted]

Researcher: Judy Silver

Judy Silver, Exeter University
Appendix (IV): Field Notes: Excerpt 1, in the restaurant

* From where I was sitting, I could see [redacted] working behind the bar kitchen (upstairs). They are 2 of the 6 graduates from last year (Group B) who now are employed at '15'.

I first saw these 2 at the selection of my kids. I can't remember. I except that he seemed a good kid. But that's Jamie's son, right? So he told me a few months ago that he had not been a full day at school since Year 5. Menthol/ko was 'monthly', [redacted] kitchen staff reminding him to tone down his language. At that time he was still testing the boundaries. I remember being surprised when chefs would sharply see, 'as if they were used to speaking to him, keeping him in line.'

Last night, watching him, he was as focused and involved when we came in at 7.30 as when we left 3 hours later. It was impressive. No chatter to the others, no edgy movements, but total absorption in the task. Slow, controlled or constant, busily going about the business of food preparation, in full view of the whole restaurant.

I felt very proud for him.
3 days: 29, 30 Nov and 1 Dec 2006

Day 1: flight + coach to Capezzano for wine lunch.

I remember how beautiful Tuscany is in the winter (find quote from a place in the sun. You can see the bones of the place. The red soil, fading to orange back through brown, clean and empty after the summer green had died away been tilted away. Trees, golden or empty, bare branches or yellow gold against the grey-blue of the olive groves. Soft misty colors, familiar and unfamiliar to English eyes used to the vivid color palate of the English countryside. Vines bare and stubbly, waiting for a final pruning before the new growth of the spring.

The soft undulating curve of the land up shone into the Val d’Elsa valleys, fields like toy town yellow gold v pink tiled houses pecked at the top of hills, overlooking the rich and fertile soul of the Tuscan heritage hoary smoke, and clouds of mist fill the dips in the land. Too gentle to be called valleys, too. I fell in love with Italy all over again.

Capezzano was a wonderful start.
Five courses of heavy winter fare. 1: Crostata
2: Bean soup (divine), Mushroom risotto. 3: Roast
meat (Lamb?), a perfect almond plum. Different
wine before the meat course, a richer cahste
with the meat, perfect dessert wine. The trick is
Appendix (IV): Field Notes: Excerpt 3, the sourcing trip, Tuscany

Jamie should stay with the Tenutes when they were taken down into the cellar to see the wines. He said I should go too. Jamie looked very tired but made a big show of staying close to the Tenutes.

M.E. (the wine-maker at Castello) told them about pruning. The idea is that instead of having many vines or not pruning them much, the current practice is now to prune hard to produce more grapes, needing less vines.

Jamie asked the Tenutes if they understood the significance of this; he asked Alfredo if he could explain this practice again, in his words. When Jamie finished explaining, he said, "so its quality rather than quantity...?"

J: "Yes! It's like life - you want something to be the very best it can be.

He asked about using the moon and the gravity. This is called "eco-biology."

He made light of it, referring to hippies etc., but also acknowledging that it had been effective since the Roman times.

There has been a lot of reference to history, to ancient & traditional practices.

- Agritourism 600 years old,
- area "only" 600 years old,
- Practices unchanged since the Romans 3000 years ago,
- Vineyards, olive groves in the same family for hundreds of years.
Appendix (IV): Field Notes: Excerpt 3, the sourcing trip, Tuscany (cont.)

a few bottles of
laying down wines. Non children, grandchildren each year.

* demonstrated continuity, stability, and respect for a quality of life, an unchanging chain. Responsibility for the land & future generations

All these factors were present, not only at

* but everywhere we stopped. From the
first wine-tasting, olive oil tasting, shared meals, the warmth, the respect shown to Jamie, us as his colleagues, the trainees. Jamie told them that their hosts had been impressed by the questions they had asked & by their interest in the most famous butcher in the whole of Italy who ran us for lunch. Jamie warned us he had a handshake like a vice. He did!

* vice - it was like a large ham / felt my knuckles crush in his grip. But the warmth & affection he showed Jamie demonstrated his respect for both Jamie & the Fifteen Foundation. He said Jamie had a "big heart."

See over for sequence of events.
With groups B & C

The kitchen is basically along in shape, different stations or sections, it is open along one side, into the restaurant, so customers can see staff working. When I arrive at 11:00, they are "prepping" up. There is nowhere to sit, so I prop myself against a pillar out the way. No one seems to mind. I eavesdrop to hear the instructions/ conversations...
The new trainees remembered me when they general gave me disbelief that they were already in the kitchen.

No one expected much from them before. Peeling, fetching, washing, all the head of the cooking shift (3:00) should have had a go at plating up or preparing dishes to serve. They looked very overwhelmed. But all staff make them feel part of the team. Group B, students, (last year's) gave plenty of (AW to the new recruits)

Everyone looked totally dedicated, focused on the task in hand.
Appendix (V): Data: Excerpt 1: recruitment, the tasting test.

Think of all the different flavours, "and don't tell them they can spit out until they show they are not going to swallow it, but don't let them choose."

Chef to trainees: Guys - try to keep your machining consistent. Compare these marks to the ones you did first thing this morning. I think you need to modify them - you were a bit too generous.

Chef to trainees - that was good, get them to say what they think they can taste.

Chef: "Com'n guys! These new guys need you! Take up the challenge! Meet the challenge. Sieze the day! Sieze the moment!"

Wonderful! Much better! Do you see what I mean? That was great!"

to chefs ... "Wasn't that great?"

Chef: "That was wonderful - you are really getting into this now."

Started getting restless mid morning - walking away from his station (behind tasting table) sitting down, not contributing to discussion.
Whilst all this dialogue is going on, I am sitting on a seat in the training theatre of the kitchen, wearing the air filming equipment and individual monitors in front of each seat. The maximum observation is set up, and a young black tutor chefenchant. The process is also overseen by a Head of Hospitality, and two FF people who watch in. I only have a little while, so I want to stay. But I have to slip out, go to outside the training kitchen, and with the interviewees. There is an overwhelming sense of purpose, and excitement amongst the FF participants, which can only be described as optimistic. The FF's are confident and purposeful, demonstrating an empathy with the interviewees.
Appendix (V): Data: Excerpt 2, in the working kitchen

Dialogue: (Dusty Chef) and (T)

E: "Get some mint to put on there..."

T opens 'cold' cupboard, takes some mint, breaks falls on the floor. She puts it back in the cupboard next day.

E: "Now throw the whole lot away..."

T: "Why?

E: "You put it back from the floor..."

T: "I hesitated. She looked at him.

E: "That's the way it goes, mate."

T: "Throw it all away - get another lot out.

Comment: This shows a strong R/ and B, i.e., what's what we have to do because it's hygienic. She asked what I did when putting it back was instinct. The habit is now to resist putting it back.

By using R/C in such a controlled manner, how modulating (T) so that she would remember why she should not do this another time, so she knew that. No reprimand or comment was made by either.

The kitchen is very crowded, surprisingly small. 15 people instead of 10, plus me.

Each station is handled by at least 2.

As very hot in the hot station which is in the middle. It was quieter then 1 expected, I stand up all day so time passes quickly. I don't like to take rests in front of people. Groups (I look very tired by the end of the shift. The chefs all look..."


*Chef (chef) to [Group B]*

"That was good, [Group B]. You've worked hard here. Shu mackerel didn't get to the top without hard work... it's like tennis, cooking... whatever... you succeed in something when you work hard, not sitting on your butt watching videos. The more you cut mint... the faster it becomes... that's the game..."
Training? 9 (8½) "What would make her change it to 10 when she realised the reservation was money (lack of it),

Housing? "Crap, off the scale. It's hot. I can't wait to get to the kitchen and wash home everyday. My brother's a crack.

Money - ask [ ]. Trainee added emphasis to the she must tell the she has any gripe in the kitchen she she tell him immediately.

in like a different child to the the frozen wait waiting outside the door at Hammersmith College. the day of sale. She looks better. her skin, her eyes are. She is less hyperactive. Calmer. It seems again its the motivation which seems to

The motivation Getting thro' college at into '15 has made her feel she is on. She is aware of what is happening & she feel herself changing - she is aware

process.
Appendix (V): Data: Excerpt 4, bread-making demonstration to candidates in recruitment

"Tuesday -

30. Jamie - Bread making demo: "When yeast has a dump" it gives CO2 etc..."

Jamie’s communication is direct, clear, precise... not using any - 100% of my hearing his explanation was practical. McIntosh is powerful. My encouraging. He does lots of eye contact, open ended questions, asking for justification, verbal reasoning, imaginative, very inclusive (has also members of team at different trainees, team members as well, everyone...

"Feel it, smell it, touch it."

Reiteration of what was said in quantity food and bread in particular - The staff (by nothing was measured, everything is proportional. Very touchy, feel.

Kids organized themselves into pairs to make dough. They worked really hard, aware of Jamie being around. 2 groups made bread. 1 group prepared veg for a stew for lunch (to serve with bread). Group = 10. (in 3 rooms).

Each doughball was coated in flour, etc. One kid wouldn’t cover his until Jamie had seen it.

One didn’t want to: “Put his dough with the guy’s shit!”

Jamie: Hung is all together - it’s better & done it all with pride while we go out - they after he heard the comment said: We’re..."
Appendix (V): Data: Excerpt 4: Bread-making demonstration to candidates in recruitment (cont.)

Team Building Tasks
3 groups of 10

Tasks
- Long bamboo stick - 2 freshly cut
- Building a construction with 3 x (3 x 3 x 3)
- 3 short logs - 6 ft. & 7 ft. ropes, stones, & airlift weight of 6 people on
- Net on the ground
- The shepherd game (2 x 5) + blind
- Radiolactive circle of rope, lift a bottle with a rope
- Ropes twisted (group x 2) over
- The pairs have to work out how to separate
- 2 long i short logs, 10 ropes. Make knot over diagnose + set 10 over
- Get everyone into a spiders web

Judges - average 3 per group, moved around

Description:
It was obvious after task 0 who were dominant personalities in the group. Some shouted good ideas but no one listed. Some waited and organised others as a
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