

## **A Mediated Learning Approach - the rationale**

### **Introduction**

All training offered by Judy Silver is based on the theoretical and practical methods of mediated learning developed by Reuven Feuerstein who is internationally recognised as a leading voice in cognitive education.

This holistic approach suggests that thinking can be taught, and that we are all capable of growing and changing throughout our lifetime. There is no conflict between this approach and other thinking skills programmes, and some thinking schools may find that Mediated Learning Experience and/or Instrumental Enrichment offer a valuable dimension to their existing repertoire.

Feuerstein's ideas rely on a number of interrelated factors of an intellectual, social and emotional nature which can be applied in any context and learning situation. Therefore, any form of intervention we apply needs to take into account the following:

- < the feelings of the student
- < the conditions of the learning environment and
- < the quality of intervention to initiate cognitive change

### **Mediated Learning Experience**

Mediated Learning Experience is a practical yet powerful framework which allows the practitioner to analyse the quality and impact of their intervention to effect change in the learner, promoting reflective practice.

Training provides the practitioner with a strong and practical framework for teaching and learning in which to consider the following:

- < our belief in the learning potential of the student
- < a clear perception of our teaching objective
- < an understanding of the need for different qualities of intervention, and

< their consequent impact on the learner's development.

### **Instrumental Enrichment**

Instrumental Enrichment is a highly structured programme for intervention that teaches thinking skills. It is designed to enhance cognitive skills by means of verbal and non-verbal reasoning through collaboration and discussion - crucial skills for good citizenship and self image.

It consists of fourteen topics (Instruments) presented in paper and pencil exercises covering a wide range of topics such as spatial awareness; visual analysis and part/whole relationships; comparison and classification; inferential thinking; fantasy/reality; numerical progressions to name a few. The programme is both simply presented and cognitively challenging, and can be used with individuals or groups of students of all ages and abilities, usually above the age of eight or nine. Students of all ages enjoy the tasks because they are non-contextual, and so there is no experience of failure.

Initially, great emphasis is placed on careful and painstaking analysis of the problem presented, thus building up a rich and differentiated vocabulary in which to communicate ideas. Students learn how to identify relevant relationships, make valid judgements, solve problems logically and effectively, and understand that to solve a given problem they need to plan affective action. Principles are developed and 'bridging' is used extensively whereby the mediator/teacher actively helps the student apply a newly learnt principle into a relevant context such as schoolwork, personal relationships and so on. The more links that can be made within the life of the student, the more secure the principle becomes. As this bank of strategies and principles grows, so motivation and self esteem increases.

Extensive research has shown the programme to be effective with groups as diverse as Special Educational Needs, Gifted and Talented, Children at Risk, as well as providing a powerful tool for mainstream classroom intervention.

### **The Building Blocks of Learning**

The principles of Mediated Learning Experience and Instrumental Enrichment are equally

powerful when applied to very young children. The Building Blocks of Learning (Silver, 2002; Silver and Burden, 2005) addresses the underlying cognitive skills and concepts necessary for acquiring literacy skills through the careful application of attractive and colourful materials to enhance motivation and self- esteem. Training in Building Blocks demonstrates how this approach can also be applied as a powerful tool for diagnostic teaching.

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