CHAPTER 9

INSIGHTS: Exploring conceptual and pedagogical boundaries of information literacy : Cycle 6

Introduction

Having completed the four teacher action research cycles (5 A, B, C, D), and acknowledging the limitations of the analysis imposed by the decision to analyse the data within the parameters of the Framework itself, the researcher subsequently compared the evidence of these cycles with the evidence from Cycles 1 and 2 - the exploratory phase and literature review, with Cycle 3 - the development of the conceptual framework, and Cycle 4 - the development of the pedagogic framework, and derived insights grounded in the analysis of this data.

To confirm and strengthen the validity of these insights, a further detailed analysis of the coded NUD*IST data was undertaken using a framework of questions, along with thematic searches of the annotated Endnote bibliographic database compiled in Cycles 1 - 4 (indexed with the controlled vocabulary the researcher developed to reflect the CILL assumptions and propositions - Appendix 6). The same indexing in terms were used in constructing the NUD*IST coding framework. In combination they facilitated in-depth systematic 'criss-crossing the landscape' (Spiro et al., 1991b). This analysis of NUD*IST data and Endnote data (Cycle 1 - 4) covered questions related to :

- the assumptions: context, coaching and control;
- use of propositions;
- Framework use, and changes made to the Framework;
- differences between the researcher's and teachers' perceptions;
- constructivist learning design concerns and emphases.

A re-analysis of the theoretical, epistemological and pedagogical insights which evolved from Cycles 1 - 4 was informed by this deeper analysis of Cycle 1 - 5 data (presented in tabular form in Appendix 2) and led to the development of nine major insights.

Theoretical insights

The central concepts - context, control, coach - were more than alliterative conveniences. They were demonstrably effective in Cycles 5 C and D as a focal point for teachers' teaching and shared reflection. In Cycle 5A and B teachers struggled with the word 'control', confusing it, at times with the concept of teacher control in the classroom. However, as illustrated in Chapter 8, the *concept* of giving students control of their learning increasingly underpinned teachers' coaching efforts, and emerging ideas, like proactive coaching, recognised the efficacy of emphasising the complex network of factors which contributed to control. This included establishing a better sense of purpose for the learning, more background knowledge, ensuring that students found (or were encouraged to find) the topic and the purpose for learning compelling and interesting, and ensuring that students were self-efficacious - could describe the skills and evaluate their use of them. Turning the negatives from the Cycle 2 analysis (Appendix 1) into positive constructivist propositions proved an effective framework for promoting a positive pedagogy which allowed *teachers* as well as students more control of the teaching and learning (Appendix 3b), ie:

- 1. Helping learners to authenticate learning;
- 2. Helping learners to establish prior knowledge;
- 3. Helping learners to establish ownership of learning;
- 4. Helping learners to define knowledge needs;
- 5. Coaching selection of information;
- 6. Coaching working with information;
- 7. Coaching construction of knowledge from information;
- 8. Coaching communication of knowledge;
- 9. Coaching skills proactively throughout the process
- 10. Evaluating formatively throughout ; evaluating collaboratively with students.

Propositions 1 - 4, in particular provided evidence that the theoretical underpinnings established in Chapter 4 are sustainable in practice, particularly in relation to the constructivist concept of control. Recognition of the need for student control was mirrored in recognition of the need for coaching. Teachers' recognised that they had assumed a level of student skill and that modelling skills proactively paid dividends in terms of greater student confidence and competence.

Where *the need* for a supportive context for the learning became particularly evident by its absence was in the provision of sufficient time to achieve this type of learning. In Chapter 4 lack of time was identified as a constraint impeding constructivist learning. In this study time assumed even more significance as a barrier than the literature had indicated. It was seen as the biggest constraint at all levels, with 120 separate NUD*IST entries, a combination of factors including the burgeoning , interruptions and Education Review Office expectations at primary, conflicting curriculum and various examination and assessment requirements and timetabling at secondary, and, at tertiary, the shrinking amount of teaching time in relation to content to be covered and lack of time to teach requisite skills.

Other significant contextual constraints which coincided in these retrospective analyses (Appendix 1 and 2) included students' inadequate skill and literacy levels.

While Cycle 5 indicated that New Zealand teachers recognised that systemic constraints were the major impediment to information literacy learning, it was only in Cycle 5C that they felt sufficiently confident to see that, while some constraints were systemic and insuperable, others (like students' inadequate skill and literacy levels) were soluble, at least in part, through their efforts.

The benefit of this is the recognition that constructivist concepts can inform a robust pedagogic base but that, while these concepts can be sustained theoretically (as in Chapter 4), to be theory-in-practice requires a far more sustained and systematic analysis of constraints than has, to date, been undertaken.

Many of these constraints emerged as persistent explanatory themes early in the research, but the shift in teacher attitude from 'why we can't' to 'how we can' only emerged after six months of what, in retrospect' seemed like endlessly 'naming and blaming' - iterating through cycles of listing reasons why this type of learning did not, could not, might not 'work'. It appeared to the researcher that the 'naming of the devil' - the detailed description by each teacher at each level of how the constraints affected her/ him - was a *prerequisite* for the 'can do' change in Cycle 5 B and C. Given that we had met for an hour a week, and that teachers had put significant time, in addition, into shaping lessons, responding to transcripts and summaries, and recording students' reactions in more depth, this provides both an explanation for why (as in Appendix 1) so many teachers *and students* have had so much difficulty with 'enquiry'/RBL approaches to learning, and an indication of what might be needed to translate fundamentally sound theory into classroom practice.

In asking, in Cycle 6, whether the teachers' accounts mirrored concerns and issues in constructivist learning design (see Appendix 2 Table 11), the researcher concluded that concerns additional to time, for example, transfer, the entry level of students, over-full curricula, assessment requirements and teachers' own skill level were all reflected as issues, but, through the use of the Framework, were all discussed and resolved or seen, finally, as systemic and insoluble.

Epistemological insights

While the shared Cycle 5 analysis in Chapters 7 and 8 focused on positive benefits and uses of the study, in the Cycle 6 retrospective analysis, the same 'negative analysis' was applied that had been applied to the RBL literature (see Appendix 1), using questions like, 'So what does this say about what teachers/ students CAN'T do? What are the gaps? What is missing? What are the negative comments?' This proved interesting and fruitful (see Appendix 2, Table 3, 4, 5 trends/ emphases).

What emerged was a category called 'View of learning' which highlighted an epistemological dimension which the researcher suggests has been insufficiently explored in the literature as a factor influencing the transformation of theory into practice, and is particularly significant in transforming constructivism into pedagogy, given the significance of the concept of learner control. The analysis suggests that student attitudes/ expectations were the secondly most frequently mentioned factor determining information literacy learning at all levels, but for different reasons at various levels. However, by inference, teachers' own views of learning, shaped their attitude to teaching in a constructivist learning environment as much as that of students.

Primary teachers tended to have a broad an undifferentiated view of learning which saw learning in vague, general terms of personal/ social (rather than cognitive) development, and they were sympathetic to the notion of enquiry to construct. These primary teachers, initially, had a 'skills-focus' but, beyond the rhetoric, an insufficiently differentiated view of the learning skills required for effective constructivist learning. One of the positive achievements of Cycle 5 was the degree to which the specificity of the Framework provided these teachers with the conceptual and technical vocabulary to differentiate and deepen their view of learning. This was mirrored in the growing commitment to and excitement engendered as the project progressed, reflected in Chapter 8 comments.

Secondary teachers' view of learning tended to reflect the pervasive feeling that recurred frequently in the transcripts that the secondary system would never accommodate this type of learning, and the best they could do was to improve specific skills within the context of the current system. This was only level where systemic constraints shaped a view of learning and teaching which deepened during the research, but remained consistent with their initial views.

Both tertiary teachers embraced a view of learning which, like that of the primary teachers, coincided with constructivist principles, but was better differentiated than that of the primary teachers (although neither was a trained teacher). Possibly because of this, their frustration was greater at the contrast with their students' view of learning which tended to be more narrowly vocational and instrumental than their view.

Of significance was the recurrent phenomenon in discussions between secondary and tertiary teachers, and to a lesser extent primary, which does not appear to feature in the earlier accounts of practitioner research (RBL and TBL) and constructivist literature. This was the implicit conflict between their view of learning (and commitment to the consequent pedagogy) and that held by their managers and colleagues. There were frequent mentions of institutional 'lipservice' paid to 'self-directed learning' at the same time as driving down (expensive) teacher-student contact hours and increasing the quota of independent student work irrespective of whether students had the skills to use that independence productively. The feeling of being marginalised by more 'traditional' staff

was reinforced by the extent to which this disparate group coalesced through these meetings into a *learning* group who valued the weekly/ fortnightly companionship, and whose sense of developing into a learning community changed the focus of the research from foregrounding the use of the Framework it to backgrounding it in favour of teacherdirected, narrative-based lengthy discussions about classroom practice, conditions and constraints (as explained in Chapter 1) which often explored areas far wider than the parameters of the research.

Students' views of learning, in retrospect, were no less significant a component in translating constructivist information literacy theory into practice.

Primary students' views of learning, not unexpectedly, were shaped by teacher expectations. What *was* unexpected was the evidence of the early age at which the 'project' model had consolidated as 'Teacher gives us a topic. We find a few facts and paste them up, manually or electronically.' This 'cognitive-bypass', 'collectomania', 'information pastiche' model of resource-based learning, explored at length in Chapter 2 and Appendix 1, was evident in the early phases of this study. What was evident from all four primary teachers was than, when they ceased to model, coach and insist on the use of analytical and metacognitive skills, students reverted to the 'project model' which had become and internalised view of learning. The extent of the need for this ongoing modelling, coaching, monitoring and reminding indicated that student models of learning are established early and are remarkably resistant to change even at primary. However, where teachers succeeded, students demonstrated a passion for learning and building knowledge (even when the topic appeared not immediately authentic in terms of students' interests) which was encouraging to all of us. This has been reflected in Chapter 7 and 8 transcripts.

Secondary students' views of learning, according to these teachers, were influenced by the secondary system and the pressures of content coverage determined by examination requirements. Even the toughest primary students (see Chapter 8) could be encouraged to commit to the learning, whereas at secondary the phenomenon of students, turned off learning and school, 'hardened' and resistant to *any* pedagogies emerged. Their view of learning stood in marked contrast to those students who wanted *knowledge* and liked to learn (even by taught) more than they enjoyed 'vague projects'. Teachers found it hard to accommodate these contrasting views of learning but noted that all students preferred spoonfeeding and structure, and responded well when they saw topics as relevant, and when they were given clear guidance.

The 'hardened' students could be assumed not to have continued on to tertiary education, and tertiary students were seen to have a far more instrumental and vocationally-shaped view of learning. Differences were seen between older and younger tertiary students. Younger students frequently imported secondary views of learning (teacher-driven, content-focused) and wanted the type of learning which allowed them to get the 'bit of paper' as quickly and easily as possible. This contrasted with the views older and more mature students who used life experience to contextualise a practical and committed approach to learning, seeing it as a privilege and a means to probable vocational and economic longterm gains. Both views have significant implications for translating constructivist principles into pedagogy.

While, in Chapter 2, a contrast in world views or ontologies was suggested as one of the reasons for the separate and parallel development of information literacy concepts in RBL (largely librarian-focused) and TBL (largely teacher-focused) literatures, and it was suggested that librarians were information focused while teachers were learner-focused, this retrospective Cycle 6 analysis reveals a more complex reality.

These teachers were *teaching*-focused, and, while this did not preclude being learnerfocused, their teaching was shaped more by systemic constraints and demands than it was either by their personal epistemologies or their appreciation of their students' learning views, learning needs and learning skills.

In fact, one of the most significant insights, from the researcher's perspective, to emerge from the study was the extent to which the Framework allowed teachers to explore and articulate and reflect on (often, it seemed, for the first time) their own theories of learning and teaching and the implicit convergences and conflicts between their views and what was officially (and implicitly) mandated and sanctioned. This, in turn, seemed to give them lenses and frames of reference for expanding and deepening their ability to discuss student learning. This was an unexpected discovery, recognised retrospectively, by using NUD*IST searching to reveal ongoing narratives - stories which started in Cycle 5A and continued through to Cycle 5D becoming more conceptually differentiated and offering far deeper and more probing explanations for student learning behaviours which revealed significant growth in their own ability to articulate views of learning and knowledge, and, in turn, their ability to offer students the ability to explore and articulate their own views of learning and knowledge.

In effect, the links between epistemological insights developed by teachers as the study progressed, and their ability to explore the pedagogical implications signalled one of the most exciting dimensions for future research.

Of interest, in relation to the dichotomy noted in RBL studies (see Chapter 2 and Appendix 1) between information retrieval and analysis of and reflection on that information - the suggested gap between 'information pastiche' and knowledge construction - it was interesting that teachers appeared to understand the difference, but lacked the knowledge of the skills needed to *teach* and encourage students to be critical and analytical users of the information they retrieved.

Likewise, knowledge of how information is organised and knowledge of information sources and resources and the tools and strategies needed to locate and extract information from an increasingly complex range of print and electronic sources, could be seen to be an increasingly important characteristic of the information literate teacher (and learner). These teachers did not see their view of knowledge and information retrieval as inadequate as usefully supplemented by the knowledge of the librarian. In contrast, while libraries and libraries were seen as an essential part of the 'mix' by tertiary teachers, primary and secondary were satisfied that the provision of information, and their knowledge of what was available, was more than adequate to guide students. There was more concern about the level of the available resources in relation to students' literacy levels than there was concern for the demands on learners posed by access to what Beswick characterised as the world of knowledge at their fingertips.

One of the researcher's expectations was that teachers' views of learning and knowledge would have reflected the impact of information technology. This seemed not to be so. In their discussions IT, like knowledge of how information sources are organised, seemed to be regarded as a 'non event'. There was, as with knowledge of organisation of information sources and resources, a 'just in time' approach where most teachers felt that they had the knowledge and skills to do what was currently required in the classroom, and there was no evidence of their own views of learning or epistemologies changing to accommodate the exponential increase of information and information technologies to be used (and guided) as *tools* for learning, but this view of learning seemed to have, by and large, remained uninfluenced by the 'information age'.

Pedagogical insights

Because the purpose of the research was to develop a theoretically grounded pedagogy for information literacy learning which would improve the quality of that learning in the New Zealand classroom, the pedagogical insights were a more explicit analytic focus throughout the study, evidenced in Cycle 5 C and D (Chapter 8) in particular. The pedagogic propositions had emerged from exhaustive distillation and synthesis of a formidable body of existing theory and practice (see Appendix 1) and, as Chapter 8 reveals, they proved useful signposts and guides for improving teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn. This progress has been examined under propositions in Chapter 8 and in Appendix 2 Table 2.

Cycle 6 provided the opportunity to probe further and distil some of these pedagogic insights further. The insights that follow represent pedagogic insights distilled from the re-analysis of RBL and TBL studies (summarised in Appendix 1) and the iteration back through Cycle 5 and preceding cycles (summarised in Appendix 2). It was suggested in Chapter 1 that a major contribution of the study was the analysis and synthesis of previously discrete bodies of research and theory. It is also suggested that this painstaking iteration between theory and practice produced some significant pedagogic insights which have advanced the development of a pedagogy of information literacy but also warrant further investigation.

Pedagogic insight 1: The CILL Framework establishes conditions for successful information literacy learning. It provides a way of predicting success and analysing reasons for the failure.

Studies carried out in resource-based learning (RBL) and related fields for several decades produced consistent evidence about how difficult students find these approaches to learning, and how difficult teachers find the teaching (Cycle 2). The three CILL assumptions and ten propositions were derived by analysing this body of studies (Cycle 3). Consistent and persistent negative characteristics were hypothesised as positive competencies. These hypothetical competencies were related to positive characteristics of 'technology-based learning' (TBL), to constructivist and related theories, and to constructivist learning design principles (Cycle 4). The resulting assumptions and propositions were trialled, as the CILL framework, in Cycle 5 of the action research.

To the extent that the teachers participating in the research demonstrated that they and their students could achieve some success in all of the elements related to the propositions, it is suggested that these propositions might constitute some of the *conditions* required for effective information literacy learning.

Applied retrospectively as conditions of learning, these propositions explain the largely negative findings about student learning in the significant body of British and American resource-based learning studies from the 70's, 80's (see Appendix 1) and New Zealand studies (1995a; Moore & St George, 1989). Many of these studies described problems honestly, but seldom analysed them in depth. The Thomson and Meek (1985) and Tabberer (1987) studies were exceptions. Here reasons suggested for the problems correspond to propositions/ conditions *not* met.

Applied retrospectively as conditions of learning these propositions also explain 'success' (Bruce, 1999; Curwood, 1995; Rankin, 1992a; Tallman, 1995; Todd, McNicholas, & Sivanesarajah, 1991; 1992). Here most of the CILL propositions/ conditions were met to a degree. In the two 'constructivist' studies outlined in Chapter 5, by Kuhlthau (1993a) and Moore (1998), the propositions/ conditions were not met, in the first instance because the process remained library-centred, and in the second because the related competencies were not coached effectively.

Applied as conditions of learning to the technology-based learning studies outlined in Chapter 2, there is correspondence between the conditions provided for successful TBL and the propositions/ conditions. This is more predictable because these studies were designed using constructivist learning design principles. In particular, the constructivist features underpinning the FCL project were demonstrated as conditions of successfully

coached CILL learning (Lamon et al., 1995, p. 4). The design of the FCL project, where students developed questions, sorted them into categories and then applied four key literacy activities (summarising, clarifying, questioning and predicting), mirrored the success encountered by the primary CILL participants when their students iterated between knowledge map, questions, applying and making sense of the information.

Pedagogic insight 2: The three conceptual assumptions - context-coachcontrol - are sustained as pedagogical underpinnings of successful information literacy learning.

Cycle 5 demonstrated that these three conceptual assumptions provide a powerful pedagogic model which has explanatory, diagnostic and predictive power. Cycle 5 ratified the interdependence of the assumptions - if any of the three is severely compromised, what results will not be constructivist information literacy learning as defined in this study.

CONTEXT (especially factors such as time, timetabling, curriculum coverage, resources, class size, teachers' models of learning, student models of learning and expectations) demonstrably influenced teachers' opportunity to COACH skills needed by students to CONTROL their learning. Students' transmissive/ instrumental models of learning (revealed at all levels), their skill and literacy levels, as well as CONTEXT factors (economic and time pressures, how students expected teachers to teach), demonstrably compromised their CONTROL of learning - self-efficacy and self-regulation - and attempts made by teachers to COACH metacognitive and metalearning strategies.

While the importance of many of these factors has long been recognised, the simple recognition of the *interdependence and balance* between them refines our understanding of key elements of an information literacy pedagogy.

Contextual constraints emerging in this study are not new: **lack of time** (for example, Baird & Northfield, 1992; Berliner, 1992; Carter, 1987; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1993a; 1994a; 1994b; Gardner, 1993; Irving, 1985, pp. 36, 116; Juchau, 1984, p. ii; Laurillard, 1994; Mercer, 1992; Newsom, 1996; Perkins, 1992; Reusser, 1996; Rowbottom, 1983; Rudduck, 1991, p. 92), what Rudduck and Hopkins (1984, p. 114) called the **"tyranny of exams"** (see also, Ausubel, 1968; Biggs, 1993; Bjorner, 1991; Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1992; Norris & Sanger, 1984, p. 98), **transfer** (Hopkins, 1987; Irving, 1985; Lawson, 1991; Perkins, 1989; 1993; Winkworth, 1977; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1992), **curriculum overload** (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996). These contextual constraints, combined with coaching constraints, **teachers' inexperience in coaching cognitive skills** (for example, Brake, 1984; Brake, 1985; Hall, 1985; Hertfordshire Library Services, 1986; Hounsell & Martin, 1983; Irving & Snape, 1979; Rudduck & Hopkins, 1984; Sanger, 1989; Streatfield & Markless, 1994; Tabberer, 1987, p. 48; Thomson & Meek, 1985; UNESCO, 1981) were, initially, crippling.

The fact that the CILL teachers *did*, over time and to some extent, overcome the constraints helps to identify a more precise and contextualised pedagogy. It also invites us to look again at school-wide implementation of information literacy policies. Teachers have often expressed a need for a 'master plan' for teaching information skills across the curriculum (Hounsell & Martin, 1983, p. 65; Irving, 1985; Tabberer, 1987, p. 39). The CILL teachers were no exception. Stenhouse's (1975) process curriculum and Wellington's (1985) horizontal/vertical differentiation were considered in Chapter 1. For secondary teachers, in particular, the challenge of integrating process objectives into a horizontal skills-based strands approach alongside vertical subject differentiation (for examinations) was daunting. D'Hainaut (1981) suggests three approaches: intra-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary. These link to the notions of vertical, horizontal and transverse (or thematic) approaches to teaching and provide a visual menu which allow teachers to select an optimum teaching approach related to curriculum area,

curriculum objectives, and learning strategies. This might support the development of transparent school-wide planning for sequential information literacy strategy development - the 'master plan' that has so far proved elusive (Haycock, 1999).

It might also provide the 'missing link' between the coach-control dimensions by developing a strategy 'toolkit' which could be used for school-wide curriculum planning, and by teachers *and* students for co-directing the learning. As this study shows, where teachers co-directing learning, students *did* develop self-efficacy, enhanced motivation, skills for self-regulation, metalearning and metacognition.

The context-control-coach model is seen as providing a powerful conceptual underpinning for information literacy learning. It provides theoretically coherent links to constructivist (and related) approaches to learning (outlined in Chapter 4), and a powerful underpinning to information literacy pedagogy which has been demonstrated to 'work' for both teachers and students in the eyes of these teachers.

Pedagogic insight 3: Self-directed learning is an unachievable myth. Codirected learning better describes the interdependent relationship between 'coach' and 'control' assumptions in information literacy learning.

Candy (1993; 1994; 1991) examines the relationship between self-directed and resourcebased/information literacy learning. Underpinning much of literature and research is the assumption that resource-based learning will be self-directed by the student (the degree depending on age), and lead to 'lifelong learning' (Bruce, 1994; Cleaver, 1987; Todd, 1993). This study challenges this assumption, demonstrating that 'open-ended' projectequivalents, for inexperienced and unmotivated learners at *all* ages, need to be carefully structured and guided to achieve significant learning. Independent 'inquiry' learning was seen as a way for students to learn content knowledge in a more self-directed way than the traditional lecture-tutorial-essay-exam format (Irving, 1991, p.21; 1992, p. 43). In this study, even with exceptionally able and experienced teachers, at *all* levels there was recognition of the degree to which skills were *assumed* by teachers, and inadequately *taught*.

The extent to which the influence of context differed in primary, secondary and tertiary systems suggests that too little attention is paid to the contextual requirements needed to support this type of learning, particularly in secondary and tertiary systems. It also suggests that the rush to online 'self-directed' learning courses dictated, as the tertiary teachers suggest, as much by economics as educational ideology, might need close examination. Tertiary constraints such as timetabling, minimal 'contact' time and maximum 'independent' study, large class sizes and lecture-format classes all challenge institutional rhetoric about self-directed lifelong learning.

It also points to needs in teacher training and development which were beyond the scope of this study. Only the trained teacher-librarian (course graduate) had training in designing resource-based learning. Only the primary teachers (notably the trained teacher-librarian and the teacher concurrently doing the 12 week course) had had training in methods for teaching information or cognitive skills.

Teachers had difficulty distinguishing between planning teaching and designing learning. Planning focused on *what* would be taught to meet curriculum objectives. They had difficulty recognising that "(m)ental plans are richer and more complete" (Lovat & Smith, 1995, p. 149). The researcher's account of *designing learning* as visualising how *learners* could go about the learning was viewed initially as 'subversive'. Planning was synonymous with written lesson plans, based on selecting topics in relation to curricula. Students then developed questions which enabled them to self-direct their learning *and* achieve (the teacher's planned) *content* objectives even if students did not know what these were!

- 1. The idea of **co-directed learning** 'co' standing for coaching closely monitoring students, providing direct teaching, peer tutoring or other forms of 'support' when needed. It is also congruent with the constructivist notion of co-construction (McNaughton, 1996) and the role described by McNicholas (1994, p. 22).
- 2. The idea of **designing learning**, 'front end loading' in the head by analysing *in advance* the contextual factors curriculum, time, timetabling, resources, student skills.

The concept of co-direction was welcomed by the teachers as making students at all levels *more* self-directed and less teacher-dependent. They agreed that, even at tertiary level, co-direction was a more useful concept than self-direction. Co-direction was seen as a continuum. The coach co-directed continuously. Responses to student need ranged from direct teaching to indirect methods of mediation. These might include online/ printed study guides, software, or peer tutoring.

Proactive mediation

Indirect mediation

Co-direction of learning as an ongoing continuum

Fig. 5: Co-directing learning

One of the primary teachers illustrates the relationship between co-direction and student control of the learning:

T: It was more structured. And now the children are taking a bit more responsibility for their learning... It's less control for me... I think they feel more responsible 'cos they actually know what to do, and also, you know, there are skills that come up that have to be taught when they need to be taught, and they feel good about that... If I'm observing I'll note it in their book when I work with that group and I notice they can't do that then I consciously will work with that group, a couple of groups, on that skill... I think that makes them feel better because it's related to something they're wanting to know, cos it's something they cannot do, and also, having a small group, they don't feel like... especially some of my children, they're a bit reluctant to participate if there's a big group, but in a smaller group they feel safe - like I'm talking about groups of 4 or 5 - it's a bit safer and they will talk about it, and they will say, "yes, I'm having trouble here", so you can help them, but, whereas with the class, they sort of withdraw and sort of get hidden in the woodwork.

The rhetoric of learning is often not matched in reality. Beswick says, "teachers held what can best be described as uninformed notions of the use of text and the nature of reading" (1987, p.69). Lunzer and Gardner found little evidence of extended reading or reading for 'depth' (1979). The sacrifice of depth for breadth has been noted as a national trend in New Zealand (Crooks & Flockton, 1998). The expansion of the curriculum with new 'disciplines' like technology has led to what D'Hainaut describes as 'window dressing':

...we have only to think of the numerous statements of intent made by mathematics teachers to the effect that mathematical education is intended to teach the learner to solve problems, to use his critical faculties and his imagination, to abstract, to apply and invent models, etc. But beyond these common statements of intent, what actually happens in the classroom?" (1981, pp. 212 - 213).

He suggests that the consequence of the thematic approach is often "the distortion of the internal structures of subjects", with prerequisites not mastered (ibid., p. 208). Tabberer talks about teachers knowing about but not knowing how to do (1987, p. 48), while Rudduck and Hopkins talk about a "rhetoric of independence" (1984, p. 113).

Co-direction proved an easy concept to grasp. Co-direction became a frame of reference for teachers to 'walk the learning talk', to model, to become partners in learning, and for re-framing their role within this partnership. Meichenbaum and Biemiller discuss the value of students and teachers co-owning a self-directed learning model (1998, p. 75), while, for example Dudley-Marling discusses the dangers of confusing autonomy with ownership (1995). It was notable that, for the CILL teachers, the notion of co-direction provided a focus for a more overt focus on deeper learning. But this is not enough. 'Codirection' and 'coaching' were terms which resonated with teachers, but they relate to teaching. Terms which related to *learners and learning*, like self-efficacy, authentication, self-regulation, heuristics, metacognition and metalearning met more resistance. Teachers liked 'reflective conversations' but secondary and tertiary teachers were less likely than primary to achieve sufficient reflection to achieve critical literacy:

If literacy includes, as I believe it must, reflection on what is written to be read, then irrespective of changes in the technologies of the new literacies, the composers and receivers of communications and texts, of words and images, will have to be more critically literate, not least because of the amount of information that will circulate simply to justify the existence of the machines (Meek, 1991, p. 208).

The fact that teachers did not differentiate between Props 5-8, and resisted new strategies like the 'heuristic framework' even when they recognised that students had problems, signals a need to focus on coaching teachers how to coach *strategies*, rather than allowing them to think that *ideas* like keywords and questions, or skills like skimming and notemaking taught once or twice will, somehow, develop into critical literacy. The fact that progress *was* made, however, signals that the direction set by the CILL propositions was positive.

Pedagogic insight 4: Learning environments must be designed if information literacy learning is to be effective

Jonassen's (1994) idea of Knowledge Construction Environments (KCEs), developed in the context of technology-enhanced learning, provided a persuasive focus for encouraging teachers to regard planning the learning environment as something different from traditional curriculum planning. 'Knowledge construction' was easily transferred to information literacy learning whether or not information technology was used. In this study, where technology *was* used, it was used to extend and enhance the learning potential of the topic and of the students, not as an end in itself. There was support, in this study, for the researcher's suggestion that the design of the learning environment, not the technology, determines the quantity and quality of student learning. The term 'knowledge construction' helped to focus the key distinction between 'informationpastiche-collectomania', and constructing meaningful knowledge. What was *not* seen as realistic, at any level, was the design of specific KCE's like Jasper (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1991a). It was a more subtle shift for some teachers from the notion of teaching environments to *planning and rehearsing* how students would learn - learning environments. In designing learning environments the contextual constraints illustrated in the context map (Appendix 3) became potential problems for teachers to circumvent by thinking through constraints *in advance*. Teachers used the Framework overview, and this context map in particular, as a catalyst for this 'front end loaded' thinking.

Banathy (1991, p. 49) talks about 'designing within'. This aptly describes what successful CILL experiences demonstrated - that learning was a dynamic, reflexive process with teachers *and* students iterating around the props. Props became signposts and checkpoints in the 'knowledge construction environment'. It was significant that this did not happen at secondary and tertiary to the same degree. However, having embraced the concept of co-direction, tertiary teachers demonstrated that they *could* think of innovative ways of designing learning which provided for co-direction within tertiary constraints.

When teachers incorporated this notion planning a learning environment, they demonstrated ability to design, monitor and evaluate learning which embraced the characteristics of constructivist learning design outlined in Chapter 5 :

- complex, authentic environments;
- student-centred, learner-controlled, multiple perspectives, dialogue-rich;
- emphasis on metacognitive and metalearning strategies;
- emphasis on teacher mediation, coaching, guidance.

At the start of the project all liked the *idea* of self-directed information literacy learning, but most were not convinced that it was really viable, given the constraints and their prior attempts to implement it. They were eventually able, as their accounts demonstrate, to iterate flexibly round the props and assumptions, internalising them to the point where pedagogy reflected epistemology, or their 'espoused theory' became *more* congruent with 'theory in action' (Schon, 1983).

A key insight for the researcher was the extent to which the focus on contextual factors in the context 'narrative map' (Appendix 2) allowed teachers to 'name to devil' and, where possible, design the learning to bypass or overcome the constraint. The more specifically they could name, frame and discuss the constraints to this type of learning, the more effective they were in overcoming the constraints. This took time. It also took time for teachers to see the *learners* themselves as major players in the learning environments they were designing, and that factors like the student's self-efficacy, self-regulation, model of learning, prior knowledge of the topic were key to issues like motivation, ownership and confidence. Initially, these were seen as existing 'out there' - independent variables.

Pedagogic insight 5: 'Conferencing' emphasises reactive teaching and teacher dependency

The concept of **proactive coaching** is integral to emerging notions of constructivist learning design (see Chapter 5). It was emphasised in the revised framework, described as getting students to say what they are going to do, and how *before* they do it, coaching skills proactively if needed. It came into conflict with two practices cherished by primary teachers - 'conferencing' and 'support'. Both, in effect, were *reactive*. Teachers kept students on task by walking around, 'conferencing' with individuals and groups, 'supporting' as needed. This reflected the extent to which school-level teachers are not just teachers of learning, but teachers of *children*. Teaching is shaping behaviour, not just shaping thinking. Within 'conferencing' control of learning and diagnosis of learning needs remains the teacher's prerogative.

Gradually most teachers came to see that investing more effort in planning for *learner* control paid off. Checkpoints were a practical strategy. Tertiary teachers recognised that proactive coaching could be embedded as checkpoints in assignment guidelines or

software. Secondary teachers were slower to consider that moving from *reactive* marking and feedback to *proactive* coaching might help students' low level of skills.

It was three primary teachers who, towards the end, subsumed the proactive coaching concept into existing conferencing and support practices, bringing students together as a class or in small groups, getting feedback on what they had been doing (reactive) and asking them what they were going to do next, how they were going to do it, offering suggestions in the form of direct or indirect teaching (proactive). The term 'setting students up for success' meant more than 'proactive'. 'Cognitive coaching' supported the emerging recognition of the need to *teach* critical thinking. 'Modelling' was meaningful, but 'cognitive apprenticeship' was not, possibly because few teachers had previously attempted to model *their* thinking processes.

Authentication of learning should logically include getting learners to negotiate and articulate learning goals and criteria - what they think 'good' (notemaking, questioning, and the like) might *look* and *feel* like. Only the primary teachers embraced this to any degree. The breakthrough came in Cycle C discussions of how *exactly* the role of the coach should be interpreted, and what co-direction constituted. It was part of a move by all the teachers to being more comfortable with a far higher level of skills coaching. 'Support' was replaced with more confident discussion of coaching particular strategies. This, in turn, reflected teachers' growing comfort with a new vocabulary of skills teaching.

By the end of the year what had emerged in the group was a consensus recognition that they needed to give more time to planning the whole learning environment; that this planning needed to include far more precise thinking through of the learning process from the learners' perspective, far more rigorous checking of resources (like bookmarking Internet sites), and the designing of specific checkpoints for proactive coaching.

The challenge remains that what is considered *best* practice, responding to student needs as and where they arise by 'conferencing' and providing 'support' and 'feedback' is *reactive*. There was evidence that it encouraged teacher-dependency and militated against the development of self efficacy, self-regulation, metacognition and metalearning, feeding a teacher-centred model that teachers rejected in theory. This suggests that developing a precise constructivist information literacy learning pedagogy within the Vygotskian ZPD metaphor is possible, but involves supplementing existing teaching with an experienced vocabulary of *proactive* strategies.

Pedagogic insight 6: There is a paradigm conflict between information literacy learning and teachers' question-answer 'project' models.

A persistent thread emerging from all four teacher cycles was that, for all teachers at all levels, students' inability to ask and apply relevant questions remained a vexing issue, despite demonstrated improvement (noted in Chapter 7) when questions were focused by knowledge maps. There were 22 comments about students ignoring questions, losing focus and going off at a tangent. There was some evidence of what Sheingold observed - adding a question marks to statements: "The dog has four legs?" (1987). There is a substantial literature on questioning but the researcher has found nothing that suggests, as this study does, that a significant challenge to effective information literacy learning is *teachers*' confidence in a project-question-answer model as its fundamental underpinning.

The researcher's recognition of the limited value of the question-answer model underpinned her suggestion that students should develop questions from their map categories, categorise them into 'fact' and 'thinking' (inferential) questions, asking factual questions first to develop some knowledge from which inferences might later be made. She also suggested that question-asking became better focused if used within a 'detective' model, 'interviewing' information for 'clues'. The primary teacher who embraced this detective model achieved significantly better results. Using the metaphor of sailing down a river also helped another primary teacher (and his students) to contextualise the 'rapids' of the far more difficult stage of *understanding* the information retrieved:

T: It's at that stage I find things seem to come unstuck - when children find it quite difficult - trying to process that information into something that they can understand themselves... I guess like sailing down a river. You start off nice and placidly and then you come to this almighty series of rapids which they find quite difficult to negotiate, and once they come out through that, and they come out with a product which they're reasonably happy with, and which I'm happy with, then we can go back to the calm, simple process of publishing that, and turning it into a form that other people can relate to and understand.

'Reflective conversations' by implication would involve critical questioning (Brookfield, 1987, p. 93). Lipman uses the term 'deliberative dialogue' and the metaphor of a jury for weighing and assessing information (1985). What this study revealed was that deeper, more flexible questioning resulted in deeper thinking about the information retrieved, but that this happened to a greater extent within a context of a linking metaphor which had meaning for the students. Where it did not happen, the study yielded evidence that students were looking for finite *answers*, not 'deliberative dialogue' with ideas. This seemed to proceed from teachers' deeply held belief that students who generate (any) questions will be *motivated* to find answers; that questions prevent projects from becoming 'information pastiches'. Despite widespread recognition that it was important to help learners to frame better questions, the only strategy volunteered was the 'wh' prompt strategy. 'Good' questions were equated with 'open' questions was the ONLY strategy discussed by teachers for gaining information *despite* acknowledging that:

T 1: They haven't got enough knowledge to build up that big picture. They are very sketchy on background knowledge and world change and...

T 2: Yes, I think you're right, that we don't actually present a global perspective enough...

T 1: Or huge historical changes (T2: Yes) Yes, and where are continents, where are rivers, and those sorts of things. They are basic facts of knowledge that the kids need...

T 3: Which they don't know... (T. 2 No, they don't)...

T 1: They don't have the hooks (T2 and T3 agreeing). They don't pick up... They don't read as much and they don't watch the TV...

T 2: And because we teach them facts in isolation from each other too...

T1: But their general knowledge is not wonderful, is it? (Lots of agreement).

This is not a new problem. In 1987 Beswick talked about teachers who "encourage pupil autonomy, who nonetheless show insufficient personal understanding of the process to carry this properly through" and added:

All the enquiry, the seeking out of sources and the comparing of data amount to very little if there is not an incentive to 'reflect on what is being read', and to make from it not just a project report but also meaning (1987, p. 71).

The insight into how 'proactive' strategies infiltrated and enhanced primary teachers' reactive 'conferencing' model suggests that *experientially* evocative metaphors built into the process, like the rapids, the food blender or jury, may eventually supplant the question-answer-project' model, but that this takes sustained effort over time. The

primary teachers' successful 'projects' which ran as narrative links throughout the year illustrated this. Here the interdependence of authentic learning purpose, authentic learning topic and learning methods with *focused* questioning and analysis, underpinned with a driving metaphor, helped students to construct meaning and knowledge.

Secondary teachers indicated that many students were hungry for deeper knowledge than the superficial fare the crowded, fractured curriculum was capable of delivering. They did not necessarily want to find it out for themselves. They wanted to *know* 'things'. This might reflect their internalisation of the secondary model, their exposure to 'traditional' primary projects, or their expanding view of the world. In this regard the study yielded speculations, not explanations.

Pedagogic insight 7: While students' mental models of information literacy learning go unchallenged, paper-based and electronic 'information pastiches' will continue to substitute for knowledge construction.

Evidence that primary students were able to be more self-directed, more self efficacious and self-regulated when they used a metaphor-based model illustrates the need for similar models at secondary and tertiary levels. It also highlights the insight that students themselves need to be encouraged to *articulate* models of learning.

Rushkoff's (1996) provocative contention is that 'screenagers' have sophisticated visual literacy skills, demonstrated by their ability to 'surf' television channels and the Internet. Their "(f)acility with iconographic representations", portends new ways of thinking and understanding in an age of chaos:

Meanwhile, the ability to process visual information quickly will enable the worker of the future to cope with the "information overload" our data highway nay-sayers are busy warning us about. If we are about to enter an age of information glut, those who can wade through it will be people with the ability to inspect, evaluate, and discard a screen of data immediately. This information skimming will need to be practiced on many different levels, and sometimes simultaneously (ibid., p. 51).

Curriculum documents imply that visual literacy is something new to be taught to students who lack it. Teachers' slowness to embrace the concept of authenticating learning by discussing learning with students suggests unintentional support for this deficit model of student learning. Rushkoff claims that students are already more visually literate than adults, but that this is a superficial, 'surfing' literacy (ibid., p. 49). The challenge involves getting *students themselves* to make links between scanning television channels and websites, building coherent narrative from discontinuous flashes, and constructing knowledge from print and visual text using analytical and reflective skills (ibid., p. 213).

Farnham-Diggory says, "Children will learn spontaneously. What they need help in, from experts, is how to learn better..." (1990, p. 49). Meek talks about 'powerful literates' and says "(t)he significant shift in literacy... is that the confident literates know what they needn't read" (Meek, 1991, p.25). Learning behaviours reported on in this study indicated that students were not 'powerful literates'. Most failed to demonstrate selectivity, discrimination, flexibility or self-efficacy. Meek says elsewhere "The most important lesson children learn by becoming literate is that they can *learn*, in the way that the school endorses learning" (1983, p. 1).

There were frequent comments highlighting students' dependent, instrumental, unmotivated, 'empty-bucket' approaches to learning, poor skills and standards (reading, comprehension and spelling) and to students reverting to 'project mode'. One tertiary teacher mentioned that students' verbal skills had improved in recent years. Others agreed, but on the whole, negative attributions abounded, even in the face of evidence of significant progress when learning approaches were explained to students, modelled and guided. But there was little evidence of teachers *teaching* strategies of critical literacy or, beyond primary, *wanting* to take responsibility for students' critical literacy.

The researcher's conclusion was that many students, particularly primary, were willing to embrace new models of learning if they understood what was expected and why, but that some teachers found it hard to talk to their students about *learning* as opposed to assignment requirements. Insight 9 expands this speculation.

If teachers are to address the need highlighted by Beeby (cited in Beswick, 1977), that new ways of learning and teaching must be found, there is a need to scrutinise, not only teachers' own models of learning and the consequences of applying them to teaching, but the models of learning, and the competencies which *students* possess, and make links to what we would like them to possess, as Rushkoff (1996) suggests. This begs a reexamination of the Vygotskian concept of ZPD mediation. The use of metaphors and narratives in this study to bridge the realities of students' worlds and the world of classroom learning provides new insights into *simple* mediation strategies for articulating and expanding existing models.

Pedagogic insight 8: Teachers need to challenge their pedagogical beliefs. To do so they need a more sophisticated educational vocabulary.

One of the phenomena highlighted by the study was teachers' reluctance to take on new concepts unless these concepts could be subsumed into their existing vocabulary. Teachers incorporated 'authentication' into their understanding by simplifying it to 'topic relevance'. However, "I think that 'reflective conversation is a really good term. It eases it, and makes it more... takes the formality away from it." No one used the terms self-efficacy or self-regulation although these were written into the model, defined, and used throughout the year by the researcher. One teacher suggested that they emphasised individuality and undermined inclusiveness. 'Confidence' and 'motivation' described both self efficacy and self-regulation.

Accommodating new concepts is fundamental to learning. There is a point where it becomes self defeating to ignore the fact that new terminology may describe *new* concepts. No one accepted 'heuristics' although (as evidenced above) teachers were aware of the need to improve student questioning skills. By not seeing key concepts, key search terms, and key questions as a heuristic framework ('the keys') some limited their learning. By collapsing Propositions 5 - 7 teachers limited their own schema for differentiating coaching strategies needed for different aspects of the learning.

At all levels general terms like 'support' substituted for a precise educational vocabulary. This would not have mattered in general conversation if there had been a shared specialist educational vocabulary for diagnosing and describing students' learning precisely when needed. The researcher noted in her journal, "It feels like hearing heart surgeons trying to describe a heart operation limited to the words 'patient, chest and heart'."

This raises the issue of the interdependence of semantic and conceptual vocabularies. These experienced teachers had a vast, effective, instinctive, internalised repertoire of *teaching* strategies, but they could name or describe few *learning* strategies with precision. The two tertiary teachers acknowledged this. All were hungry for learning but most appeared comfortable with their existing semantic and conceptual vocabularies. They absorbed most readily those ideas that could be accommodated immediately within their existing *teaching* schemata. The restrictions this placed on their learning. Tabberer (1987, p. 199), Stenhouse (1975, p. 157) and Norris and Sanger (1984) all comment on the extent to which teachers take learning for granted. Retrospective analysis of the tapes provided clear evidence, that, if there was one thing that changed for teachers during the year, it was how their enhanced vocabulary (conceptual and experiential) for describing *learning* skills and processes influenced their ability to teach these skills and processes.

Teachers must be taught how to coach metacognitive and metalearning skills if information literacy learning is to be successful.

In Chapter 2 several issues were identified as challenges in constructivist learning:

- the authenticity of learning environments;
- teaching and teaching skills;
- entry/ skill level of learners;
- transfer;
- assessment.

The evidence supported the insight that, while these issues tended to be interdependent in the sense that if one was the focus, there were flow-on benefits in the other areas. However, teachers' ability to coach learning skills emerged as the single most significant determinant of the success of the remaining three.

Initially these experienced teachers simply did not have the strategies needed for using a cognitive apprenticeship model (cognitive, metacognitive and metalearning). While the Framework was not seen as a teaching programme and the researcher studiously avoided teaching, the trained teacher-librarian and teacher currently doing the *Infolink* course talked 'skills'. Gradually other teachers identified and shared strategies, and discussion moved from *whether* to *HOW*.

As they developed and applied a repertoire of skills and strategies, particularly at the primary level, and particularly in Cycles 5, there was clear evidence of more:

- skills transfer by students;
- negotiated criteria being used to achieve in-depth formative and summative self-and co-assessment with 'official' requirements;
- transfer of skills being facilitated, for students, by participating in this ongoing evaluation of their learning; greater self efficacy;
- the entry level of students (particularly with regard to their reading skills) being seen as less of a barrier than it was initially (see, for example, the comments in Chapter 7 about the boy who knew he was not good at reading or writing, but delighted in his newfound questioning, analysis and synthesis skills).

This move from *whether* to *how* was one of the significant achievements of this study. It signals the need for a fundamental rethinking of preservice and inservice teacher education. Ten percent of New Zealand's teachers have completed the 175 hour *Infolink* information literacy paper (Gawith, 1998). This paper, as evidenced by the work of the teacher-librarian graduate, and the teacher who did the paper concurrently, provides a deeper understanding the information process and information skills. However, in the researcher's opinion, even this provides inadequate preparation for implementing constructivist information literacy learning.

The need for greater teacher knowledge of skills teaching has been extensively documented (see Insight 2, above, and Appendix 1). If this need has been demonstrated for 25 years, why has so little progress been made? Where efforts have been made to work on an ongoing basis *with* teachers in the context of their curricular teaching, using a process framework as scaffolding, and integrating as-needed coaching, for example, in this study, and in studies by Todd, McNicholas and Sivanesarajah (1992), Curwood (1995), Bruce (1999) and Gawith (1998), results have been significantly *better* than where information process frameworks have been used but not coached in context, for example, Kuhlthau (1993a) and Moore (1998) (Chapter 5). This signals clearly that progress lies in the constructivist notion of contextualised coaching within designed learning environments. Teachers need to be coached to coach. Standalone skills

programmes in the course of initial teacher training are unlikely to be applied (Squirrell, Gilroy, Jones, & Rudduck, 1990). The key lies in the notion of *cognitive* coaching rather than the traditional teacher-librarianship notion of collaborative planning (CPPT) although team planning within a school wide information literacy policy provides a necessary context (Bruce, 1999; Haycock, 1999).

Pedagogic insight 9: The 'information process' is a mixed blessing

Information process frameworks have been challenged by Thomson and Meek (1985) and Hopkins (1987) and, more recently by McKenzie (1998) and Hyerle (1998).

While the New Zealand information process model on which the *Infolink* course is based provides a useful scaffold in that each stage is modelled for teachers prior to their applying it with their students, it has all the disadvantages of linearity identified by critics of the framework approach. The ten years in which the researcher developed, coordinated and moderated the national programme yielded abundant evidence of this. At worst it produced better projects; 'knowledge construction' seldom evident; 'collectomania' frequently sanctioned; 'question-answer' the driving model.

This is *not* a new problem. Norris and Sanger suggest that "Project work places a premium on the teacher's diagnostic ability," but also confirm that lack of the sustained time needed to do justice to a complex process is not a new phenomenon, "The naturally inquiring mind does not display the same rhythm as the school timetable" (1984, p. 98).

The CILL Framework was a deliberate attempt to seek an alternative to linear interpretations of the researcher's information process framework; to provide structure and choice without prescription - a menu rather than a recipe. She underestimated teachers' need for systematic strategies. Where CILL teachers used the Framework selectively rather than in a linear fashion, they tended to avoided precisely those areas in Prop 5 - 8 that related to coaching for critical literacy and 'knowledge construction.'

Despite stated satisfaction with the revised Framework, teachers wanted more prompts and strategies - and prompts that students could use independently. There was tension between their request for more specificity, and their comments that other teachers would need something simpler and more 'user friendly'. This tension remained unresolved.

Although, as illustrated, over the year, teachers internalised the 'props' and iterated confidently around them, the researcher also recognised that, in all likelihood, the CILL 'props' would become de facto stages in the hands of less experienced teachers:

T: It's very important to be quite definite about the steps in the process. I've found the children really starting to take on board - and I'm quite unashamedly quite linear about this, at least in the initial stages - because I find that they need to work through the identification of the topic, and the key questions and key words and so on, but once we start getting into the actual research itself and the business of decoding fairly advanced language into a form which they can understand, that's ...where all of the linear steps go out of the window and we pull in lots of props from all sort of different places.

Cycles 5 A-D ended with the teachers expressing satisfaction with how the CILL framework had provided them with both structure and skills. The researcher rejoiced in their successes but remained unconvinced. It led her, in the course of the following year to return again and again to the recorded data to search for deeper insights, particularly where issues that had emerged related, negatively or positively, to RBL and TBL projects, to the CILL pedagogy, and to the emerging insights from the field of constructivist learning design. It ended in the re-design of the CILL Framework, acknowledging the feedback and insights generated by teachers in Cycles 5 A - D, but also the deeper analysis in Cycle 6.

CHAPTER 10

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS STUDY TO THE FIELD OF INFORMATION LITERACY LEARNING.

Developing the SILL Framework

The final insight, that a realistic pedagogy of constructivist information literacy learning is achievable, was accomplished through the rethinking and reformulating the CILL Framework.

Insight into how to resolve the tension between specificity and complexity, flexibility and linearity, simplicity and structure was arrived at in the course of the retrospective NUD*IST analysis and through informal discussions with David Hyerle. (1998). Hyerle's recognition that teachers need an experienced vocabulary of strategies, 'Thinking Maps', to teach students resonated with the researcher's growing recognition (see insight no. 8 above) that teachers needed to be taught to use specific strategies so that they could teach students to manage learning, construct knowledge and communicate it. Understanding *about* these things often did not translate into pedagogy.

Teachers all liked the CILL Framework, but suggested that something simpler was needed as an introduction. They liked the idea of stages for students, and, undaunted by the researcher's hesitation, developed their own.

It became obvious that *students* at all levels did need an overview of the information literacy process and that stages represented a simple narrative logic: "I work out what I need to know and do, and where I could go; I select the best information; I wrestle with ideas and build my knowledge; then I usually have to communicate this knowledge in some way."

It became clear that the **stages** could be reduced to three:

1.	Designing learning	(incorporating Props	1234)
2.	Understanding information	(incorporating Props	56)
3.	Performing knowledge	(incorporating Props	78)

It was also clear that this would tap back into the 'project' model unless there was significant change involving:

- empowering learners by training them in the use of a strategy toolkit supplanting teachers' covertly (primary) or overtly (secondary) disempowering pedagogies, as described above, by providing *students* with a conceptual and experienced *learning* strategy vocabulary to increase self-efficacy and self-regulation.
- *re*-empowering teachers by *coaching* them to coach these strategies in an ageappropriate manner.
- *re*-empowering teachers by *teaching* them to design 'knowledge construction environments' (Jonassen, 1994), beginning with a systematic analysis of systemic and climatic contextual constraints (This analysis could use diagnostic software based on an expansion of the CILL context map).
- *re*-empowering teachers by translating Vygotsky's ZPD into methods of co-directed mediation which may well be electronic, in the form of interactive computer based 'mindtools' (Hyerle, 1996; Jonassen, 1996; Novak, 1998) and emphasise the teacher's 'co' role as coach in:

- ensuring that students are set up with the skills to be successful;

- working alongside students articulating the learning, coaching as needed;
- co-evaluating the process and product of their learning formatively and summatively.

It became obvious that an approach developed by David Hyerle based on teaching students *and* teachers a core vocabulary of 'mindtools' could be adapted (1996). Hyerle groups his tools into three categories: 'brainstorming webs', 'task specific organizers' and 'thinking process maps'. This study suggested that, irrespective of level, in the area of information literacy learning students only needed three types of tools:

- tools for recognising learning needs (skills, topic scope, purpose, planning);
- tools for summarising ideas from information (analysis, organisation, synthesis);
- tools for explaining knowledge (reflecting, constructing, communicating meaning).

Such tools already exist (Gawith, 1996). Hyerle's 'thinking tools' (1996) and Jonassen's 'mindtools' (1996) are particularly valuable, but earlier tools, like Buzan's mindmaps (1993) Novak and Gowin's Vee diagram (1984) also contribute to a powerful cognitive toolkit for students. Teachers often know *about* them but fail to integrate them into processes, as the study demonstrated.

What the data from the study suggests is the need for a **co-directed** model of **strategic learning.** The teacher's coaching role would involve modelling and coaching the use of appropriate grapho-cognitive tools, and 'talking the walk' by verbalising the thinking processes used in applying these tools strategically within any or all of the three information stages. Age is no barrier. This study demonstrated that younger, less able students used grapho-cognitive devices (brainstorming, knowledge mapping) flexibly and enthusiastically *when* these were modelled by the teacher. Hyerle's software, and other programs like *Inspirations* (see also Jonassen, 1996), STELLA, or even Powerpoint, make it possible for students to submit work (at face-to-face or online checkpoints) providing evidence of using these structuring, explaining and linking processes. Process sheets could be assessed against explicit criteria as part of portfolio assessment requirements. In other words, thinking, keeping a record of one's thinking, and knowledge-building, is designed into the learning environment.

Recognising, summarising and **explaining** are tools for implementing a simplified information process which has three focus points:

- 1. **Designing** (teacher coaching the learner to use tools to design and plan)
- 2. Analysing (teacher coaching the learner to use finding and analysing tools)
- 3. **Constructing** (teacher coaching the learner to use knowledge building tools)

In the new Strategic Information Literacy Learning Framework (SILL) the learning model is integrated with the teaching model, exemplifying the notion of codirection. Props 9 and 10 (proactive coaching and formative co-evaluation) are built in as before and after components at each of the three focus points. Props 1 - 4 support the **designing** focus; props 5 - 6 support the **analysing** focus, and props 7 - 8 support the **constructing or performing** focus. (The term 'performing' as it is being used by David Perkins (1997) to describe performing knowledge will be trialled with teachers as an alternative to constructing). The framework provides nine cells which represent areas where learners need to use skills strategically. Together they represent a logical sequence for 'doing' a project or inquiry, but each column represents distinct self-regulation/ metalearning, metacognitive or communication strategies and each strategic step could be done independently of the others. For example, students could construct or perform knowledge from information provided through lecture mode by teachers.

The essentials of earlier CILL Framework are retained and the revised SILL Framework is seen as a simpler introduction to the full Framework:

- The props become conditions for successful information literacy learning.
- The **teacher prompts** are linked to items in the Strategy Toolkit.
- The strategies are easy to find because they relate to one of the nine cells.

The simplified framework and Strategy Toolkit could be used by all teachers without training, but the fuller framework would need to be embedded in a course which had some of the features of the current action research process, notably providing teachers with a 'safe' environment and enough time to relate the terminology and concepts to their own philosophies and practices, and to develop their understanding through 'reflective conversations'. It is anticipated that the shorter framework will provide a bridge into the fuller framework, and that exploring the fuller framework will still be necessary to develop deep and enduring information literacy learning. In retrospect, the researcher feels that this simpler framework would have made the teachers' learning during Cycle 5 A and B less protracted and painful.



Fig. 6: Strategic Information Literacy Learning model.

Implications

Gagne talks about "strategic learning" (1993, p. 196). Nisbet and Shucksmith define strategies as "the executive processes which choose, co-ordinate and apply skills" (1986, p. vii). Rohwer and Thomas summarise the areas of 'strategic learning' where the CILL teachers needed to grow in terms of helping students (Props 5 - 8), and where the Framework needed to serve them better:

... providing students with systematic assistance in acquiring (a) prior knowledge of specific relevance to the information presented in text form; (b) rhetorical knowledge structures, including embedded procedures for detecting and representing the structures of texts, for discriminating more and less important information, and for integrating or building internal connections among text information; (c) deliberate strategies of summarizing and questioning; and (d) strategies that build external connections between text information and prior knowledge (Rohwer & Thomas, 1989, p. 109).

Candy suggests that approaches that aim to increase the depth of learning or move learners toward meaningful learning usually take one of two forms, "those that try to increase the learner's understanding of what it means to learn, and those that strengthen an understanding of what knowledge is and how it is created" (1990a, p. 32).

The CILL experience suggests that both are needed, and that information literacy learning requires both teachers and students to understand how the world of information is structured (for example Tuman, 1992, p. p. 18), how knowledge is structured (for example Alexander et al., 1994, p. 223), and how the processes of problem solving, analysis, critical evaluation, hypothesis making, invention, investigation and experiment (Beyer, 1987, p. 55) are applied strategically to construct knowledge.

Repeated iteration through the five action research cycles seeking theoretically coherent explanations for decades of unsuccessful information literacy learning yielded insights which undergird the development of a radically different model which has the potential to overcome the limitations of the 6-stage information process models which have become a global norm.

The purpose of this study was to address Beeby's (cited in Beswick, 1977) comment about new ways of learning and teaching needed in an age of information. Three decades of studies revealed how challenging students and teachers find resource-based learning. More recent studies of technology-based learning suggest that adopting a constructivist approach might support the development of more coherent, theoretically-grounded conceptual and pedagogic frameworks for information literacy learning in New Zealand education.

The study demonstrated that the CILL assumptions and propositions are sustainable as pedagogic tools but that sustained teacher development is necessary to exploit the full potential of the original and revised frameworks.

It is suggested that, by developing and evaluating such a framework, this study advances scholarship in the field of information literacy in three directions, theoretical, epistemological and pedagogical.

While the evaluation of the framework (Cycle 5) was small scale (eight teachers), and, while action research precludes generalisations, the study yielded deeper information than most earlier studies. These data, related (Cycle 6) to the findings of the earlier resource-based and technology-based learning studies, supported the pedagogy derived from the new study, but also offered new insight into teachers' and students' difficulties with this kind of learning over a century.

Within the teacher evaluation action research cycle, feeding back, not just transcripts of weekly (Cycle 5 A and B) or fortnightly (Cycle C) and individual (Cycle D) audioconference meetings, but the researcher's weekly explanation of aspects of the original and revised framework, along with summaries of the threads arising, and issues fed in by individuals (email, phone calls, letters), ensured that data were verified and validated from a number of perspectives. Comparing the emerging threads against findings of the earlier studies provided a further point of validation.

In the sense that the 'threads' from Cycle 5 were consistent with the earlier findings, the study yielded few surprises. However, the iteration between Cycles 1 and 2 (contextual), Cycle 3 (conceptual/ theoretical) and Cycle 4 (pedagogical) and Cycle 5 (field data) yielded a depth of insight into and understanding of the pedagogy of information literacy which would not have been possible had the study not achieved the integrative focus which was one of its purposes. This attempt to identify and examine key and related characteristics and principles in four fields which are discrete in terms of their literature, research and professional bases - curriculum, information literacy, constructivism and learning design, provided yet another frame of reference for testing and analysing emerging insights.

Iterating through the action research cycles, constantly checking understandings against teachers' understandings, against previous findings and the evolving multidisciplinary synthesis; attempting to retain the transparency, integrity and rigour of the process; trying to 'capture' the threads as they emerged but to stop them from solidifying into self-fulfilling 'givens'; keeping the process moving forward for the teachers while wanting them to reach deeper levels of understanding all proved dynamic, exciting, time-consuming and challenging. It became, in effect, information literacy learning within a study of information literacy learning – cycles of information selection and synthesis followed by cycles of knowledge construction in a 'knowledge construction environment' populated with past experiences and writings, present teachers, and emerging insights from conceptual and theoretical syntheses.

Action research is, by definition, subjective, not replicable and, therefore, original. Many of the insights in Chapter 9 are both speculative and subjective - the purpose of the study was exploratory - but they confirm the value of exploration grounded in the integration of theory and practice, past and present.

Theoretical contribution

The study has progressed the circular and static debate about what information literacy is by taking a situative/ constructive perspective which contextualises it in learning. While library/ information-centred or technology-centred perspectives are valid and valuable in their own right, how it is situated determines the definition of information literacy. This perspective makes it both inevitable and desirable that the boundaries between using information and learning become inseparable. In fact, the whole information process is not discrete but embedded firmly in the climate and culture and 'mucky flux' of classroom life and learning.

From a theoretical perspective this shift to an embedded, situated learning-focus has significant implications. Most first generation studies were firmly library/ information-centred. Shifting to a focus on situated information literacy *learning* implies a shift to a *learner-centred* conception of information literacy. This in turn shifts the whole ontological and epistemological focus and sets it in the humanist/ constructivist, rather than the behaviourist or cognitivist paradigms that have characterised previous library-centred work.

This shift of paradigm in turn has significant implications in terms of setting information literacy as a pedagogy, into a theoretically coherent conceptual framework. It provides a

context for examining factors characterising successful/unsuccessful resource-based and technology-based learning; for deriving assumptions and propositions which can be related to a variety of constructivist-related theories and theorists, notably Vygotsky.

While there have been several summaries of the existing research, none proceeded from a learner-centred constructive/ situative perspective. This attempt enabled design parameters for successful information literacy learning to be extrapolated as assumptions and propositions. The assumptions and propositions also yield a powerful, conceptually coherent device for predicting, explaining and diagnosing constructivist information literacy learning.

This, in turn, provides a coherent framework for harnessing key pedagogical insights emerging from the field of technology-based learning (knowledge construction environments) and the emerging field of constructivist learning design.

Epistemological contribution

No other study has reflected so consistently and in such depth the existence of fundamental tensions between the epistemological underpinnings of constructivist information literacy learning, and the models of learning that teachers and students hold in their heads - their epistemologies. Given teachers' reasons for joining the study - an interest in information literacy and commitment to self-directed and resource-based learning - it was an unsought and unwelcome recognition. In retrospect, it is valuable. Seeing teachers' year-long struggle in the web of the question-answer model that reinforce the 'project habit', and seeing students using the question-answer model to reinforce their comfort within this internalised project model, highlighted the need for different mental models for both teachers and students.

Pedagogical contribution

The study provides evidence that these different mental models are not likely to emerge top (theory) down for teachers *or* students, but can, and *do*, evolve from bottom up, from being helped to *implement* new ways of teaching and learning, new pedagogies, in the classroom, and from being helped to talk about learning - teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-student, student-to-student - using semi-structured protocols, like the 'reflective conversations' of this study. The evolution was painfully slow, but, for all of the teachers, it *was* happening.

As a pedagogical tool the CILL framework breaks new ground.

It achieved Greeno's 'educational utility criterion' (Donmoyer, 1997, p. 34). It 'works' for teachers, and, significantly, teachers can make it work for and with their students. Every teacher succeeded to some extent in:

- identifying constraints to this type of learning and identifying at least partial solutions;
- identifying characteristics of successful information literacy learning;
- identifying areas where students attitudes or skill levels would be barriers;
- beginning to identify precisely what skills were needed for success;
- beginning to identify methods by which they could be coached and evaluated;
- beginning to involve students in co-directing this learning.

'Utilitarian criteria like adoption or improvement of practice' which seemed unrealistic in teachers' first cycles, 5 A and B, were met to an extent unexpected by the researcher, as reflected in Cycle 5 C and D responses.

The researcher is not aware of any published studies that have recorded the same level of success. In fact, the two explicitly constructivist information literacy studies discussed in Chapter 5 recorded failure, not success. Teachers, over the year, demonstrably used the framework with increasing confidence to:

- identify contextual and climatic constraints which compromised this type of learning;
- expand their concept of planning from written lesson plans to mentally rehearsed 'front end loaded' design of complex, authentic 'knowledge construction environments';
- develop and trial a repertoire of strategies for coaching cognitive strategies;
- develop a greatly enhanced technical and conceptual vocabulary for discussing *learning;*
- expand teaching practices to include new approaches, like 'proactive' coaching;
- demonstrate that constructivist learning challenges, like entry/ skill level of students, transfer of skills and assessment were problems of little significance when teachers coached continuously, consciously using the notion of 'co-direction' to help students to a greater level of 'control' self efficacy and self-regulation of learning.

To the extent that the iteration, in Cycle 6, from these Cycle 5 findings back to Cycles 1 - 4, confirmed that the CILL assumptions and propositions could be used for explanatory, diagnostic and predictive purposes, it is suggested that these assumptions and propositions could, with confidence, be hypothesised as **conditions** for effective constructivist information literacy learning.

Clearly there could be more conditions - the list is not exhaustive - and clearly these conditions need to be thoroughly tested, but it may, nevertheless, signal a significant advance in our ability to develop theoretically coherent pedagogical approaches.

In summary, the development an evaluation of conceptual and pedagogic frameworks for constructivist information literacy learning has demonstrably:

- provided a viable alternative to the 6-stage information process models that have become a de facto world standard;
- suggested further developments for enhanced constructivist information literacy pedagogies which have the potential to resolve some of the unresolved tensions recognised by the researcher;
- provided the beginnings of a pragmatic diagnostic, explanatory and predictive tool to analyse factors determining effective/ ineffective constructivist information literacy learning;
- established tentative and contestable conditions for successful information literacy learning which, in turn,
- provided a menu of prompts for teachers to use to:
 - co-design
 - co-monitor, and
 - co-evaluate

constructivist information literacy learning *with* students, which students demonstrated that they had begun to understand and practice with increased self efficacy and self regulation, and, not least, enjoyment;

• provided, by their accounts, the richest and most interesting professional development some of these teachers had undertaken;

• provided, for the researcher, the richest and most interesting experience in 25 years of learning and teaching in the field of information literacy.

Hoggart comments:

The literacy given to most people is insufficient for the needs of increasingly complex societies and, more important, inadequate in ways essential to a democracy. Most leave school critically, culturally and imaginatively sub-literate (1991, p. 1700).

This study has demonstrated that this need not be so, but that it is likely to be so unless we address systemic constraints, and encourage teachers and students alike to explore views of learning and pedagogies substantially different from those currently in operation in every sector of New Zealand education:

Discovery learning, project-based learning, independent learning, situated learning, experiential learning, problem-based learning - all these are innovative ideas designed to undermine the traditional teacher role of 'telling', to replace it by 'facilitating learning'. Advances have been made over the decades, but slowly because these methods are much more difficult to train, and require more pedagogical understanding of the professional teacher (Laurillard, 1994, p. 21).

One of the CILL teachers sums up the project:

You've got excitement in the subject, plus confidence in themselves and their skills, plus structure or learning framework, then you've got ownership ... and they feel they can go on on their own. But they've really got to have that excitement or motivation. You've got to give them those skills and the confidence they can do it.

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