CHAPTER 1

Personal Roots

Introduction: Connecting Patterns

Patterns give life significance... our traditional patterns are eroding because they are no longer meaningful... we need to revise old patterns or create new ones.

Mandy Sayer

The aim of Chapter 1 is to demonstrate the inextricable link between this research inquiry and my life in general as it relates to learning and personal growth I begin to recognise the ‘patterns which connect’\(^1\). This will be conveyed through exploring the ever-connecting personal themes and directions as highlighted through relevant experiences, interests, challenges and initiatives. It is characterised by a description of the deeply personal, ‘spiritual’ motives, values and attitudes, that is the inner forces that drive my work, the assumptions underlying my approach.

These explorations involve a need to ‘dig deep’ in order to make relevant connections between my life’s learning patterns and emerging themes from this inquiry. Relating my own background is an attempt to invite the reader to connect with some of the meaning and significance I place on them. I have learnt that this digging is ultimately a search for my personal, spiritual roots, the essential inner self beyond the external, the immediate and the familiar.

I must also trace and discover the passion which drives this process. Remarkably, I see that the roots of this journey can be traced over a period of almost 40 years - a not inconsiderable period of time! I describe the gradual emergence of my changing world view, the seeds of which were sown back when I was a young teenager. Early experiences along with my questing and adventurous spirit, have undoubtedly been fundamental in the development of my altered perspective of life.

I began to be engaged in, albeit sometimes unconsciously, a powerful search for meaning and life purpose. This search has incorporated the discoveries from both my inner and outer journeying. It has involved choosing and ‘educating’ one’s own attitude, a phenomenon which lies at the very heart of my research and which will be constantly interwoven throughout my writings. Relevant spiritual learning experiences will be described as they connect with my thoughts and deep memory providing ‘fuel’ along the way.

My personal roots lay the foundation for understanding how I approach my learning, and my professional teaching and provide some direction for furthering my journey of personal growth toward an integrated sense of self. Whilst exploring the past, I discovered the major learning stages throughout my life fall roughly

\(^1\)Gregory Bateson’s term to express his concept of mind and matter in terms of relationships. See Mind and Nature (1979).
into seven-year cycles. These stages, which mark significant learning experiences from my childhood, travels, marriage, motherhood and my spiritual ‘awakening’, form the foundation roots for my life-long ‘learning tree’.

I will describe a fundamental shift in consciousness that led me to new beginnings and brought increased understanding of my desire for different perspectives. The following motivations have their basis in my ‘personal roots’ and tend to direct the flow of ‘connecting patterns’ throughout the whole inquiry:

* To find and sustain meaning and purpose in life

* To attain and maintain an empowering state of consciousness

In order to share some of my personal perspectives and motivations, emerging themes and connecting learning patterns, I relate my own story.

**The Essential Self: The Girl Within**

_The fullness of human development [for a woman], depends on circling back to the girl within and carrying her into womanhood._

Emily Hancock

In attempting to track the origins of some of my past passions about learning, I began to think of myself at around the age of eight. Whilst exploring this period, I found it to be quite significant in highlighting aspects of my essential spirit. A recent discovery of research carried out by Emily Hancock, a Berkeley (US) psychotherapist, provided me with further interest in recapturing early childhood memories as a key to understanding my own development. I was interested in Hancock’s research with women - of identifying with “the girl within” (1991:75), at the age of eight to ten years old. Her main proposition was that if a woman connects with her _natural or essential self_, then she can learn much about her fundamental (spiritual) nature before others’ projections and expectations take hold. Hancock found that a girl between eight and ten years old, although still innocent and playful, is fast becoming self-contained, independent and responsible.

At the age of eight, with natural tendencies to seek newness and change, I responded positively and eagerly to an opportunity to “help my bronchitis problem” by attending a girls’ boarding school in the country. Although no-one in our family had ever gone to a boarding school before, I was very enthusiastic about the idea of such an adventure. I was eager to experience the ‘unknown’, intuitively drawn towards learning through means other than my safe and familiar world. During my two-year stint at this school, I adored the feeling of _independence_, enjoyed the richness of other girls’ backgrounds and experiences, different to mine, and loved being close to nature and the open spaces of the country environment. I still hold many vivid and positive memories of this early learning adventure, despite a few short homesick periods. In general, I felt totally unhindered and
enjoyed a great sense of excitement, freedom and creativity around learning. I never thought school should be otherwise!

I recall being surprised that many friends and relatives thought it odd that at such a young age, not only was I happy so far from my loving and secure family home, but that in fact I had almost initiated the adventure. It was many years later that I realised how significant these two years at boarding school had been for my whole life. They had provided opportunities to see and experience things a little differently and to live closely with different ‘others’. It appeared that even at this early age, I was inclined to create opportunities for learning from alternate sources and in somewhat unfamiliar surroundings. At boarding school I had the chance to do something different, to perceive somewhat differently and to share a sense of self discovery with my peers. It was a true learning adventure where most of the time, I felt my very essence could be nurtured and expressed.

From then on, I intuitively wanted to pass on some of my newly discovered different perspectives and experiences to others. As a young girl, I used to set up puppet plays in our rumpus room, amateurishly attempting to teach other small children some new ways of viewing life through a variety of colourful puppet characters. In describing ‘the girl within’, Hancock says:

> When she has the good fortune to grow up in a family that encourages independence and celebrates achievements, a girl this age meets the world on their own terms. A soaring imagination combines with competence and adventurous longing to take her far from home, both in imagination and in reality. The rapid development of the girl’s mind, the acceleration of her know how, the shift in the way she thinks are acknowledged by cultures around the world. Nature and society conspire to allow a girl this age to flourish; harmony and integrity abound as she enjoys a wholeness of self, a unity with the cosmos, a natural radiance (1991:77).

This same phenomenon of “the way in which she thinks” was apparently also noted by Piaget and described as “the great cognitive shift” by Sheldon White (in Zweig, 1991:30). During this process of exploring my roots, Hancock’s proposition in particular has given me plenty of ‘food for thought’ about the way I have always liked to think and learn. Certainly, I view this early period as a potent seed for learning in a different, more ‘adventurous’ way, a tendency which grew to become an on-going motivating force in my life from then on. For as long as I can recall, I always wanted to travel, explore other ‘worlds’ and to pass on my learnings of different perspectives to others.

I also see how much of this drive has been and still operates as a powerful intuitive force which has its own way of seeking and enjoying satisfying and different learning adventures. At times, it’s almost as though I have no choice in the matter. I often unconsciously and intuitively find myself in very stimulating and challenging, learning situations. After discovering Hancock’s research, I
understand now why I have often reflected upon and wondered about this ‘girl within’. “At the centre of a universe in perfect harmony, she is master of her own destiny, captain of her own soul. She is subject of her own experience” (1991:79). I began to wonder how this young ‘girl within’ relates to where I am now with my present patterns of learning and spiritual growing. I realise that she has also been about “…the learner within, waiting to be free” (Ferguson 1982:306).

From an early age I have felt the need to share, to teach, (often before having integrated my own learnings) whilst attempting to nourish myself through a supportive, stimulating and loving environment. Today, perhaps I am not so different from this girl within. I still intuitively stray far and often from my usual nest of comforts and security to explore and experience a wonderful array of learning adventures. I love physical freedom, newness, challenges and the excitement of different perspectives and processes for learning and personal growth. These kinds of stimulations have always been essential elements for my own personal development. They are also inherent in the innovative learning/teaching methodologies to which I am drawn. They therefore become fundamental to the passion driving my inquiry.

**Imposed Transformation: Search for Understanding**

> The meaning of life is not waiting to be discovered by someone else and then relayed to the rest of us; we must put our own meanings into our own lives or they will remain meaningless

Hugh Mackay

On the morning of my fourteenth birthday my stable, secure family life was shattered. Just a few hours after he gave me birthday wishes and gifts, my father suffered a sudden fatal heart attack. My beloved, loving father, always present, a happy, constant and caring provider, was suddenly no more. How could this important human being be suddenly whisked away from so many people who would be deeply and tragically affected by his death? This only happened to other people, not us! Our lives had suddenly become unstuck and unhappily unpredictable. I desperately sought a way to understand how and why this had happened. As our family life began to change radically, I questioned whether life in general made any sense at all. In a way, I felt I had lost my innocence by being ‘forced’ to ask these kinds questions.

My father had taken care of everything and had provided the core of our emotional and financial security and I had always felt very ‘spiritually allied’ with him. Hancock explains this for me when she writes: “A tomboy at heart, this is the time in a female’s life when, paradoxically, she is most often allied with her father and yet least defined by patriarchy (in Zweig, 1990:97). How would we cope? What new ways would I learn to think and live? For some time I entertained the idea that perhaps my father had taken on another identity and for unknown reasons needed to be anonymous for a while. This thought greatly hurt me but I could not accept that this flame of life could be extinguished so rapidly. At the time it was my
way of dealing with mortality and my grief. Somehow I knew there must be some meaning, some answers even if I didn’t know then, perhaps they would be revealed later on.

Eventually I learned to accept my father’s death as an awful tragedy, but was left with serious questions and a deep desire to comprehend at least a little more of the meaning of life and death. Acceptance, if not comprehension of my father’s death and my eventual transformation from shock and despair, was essential to continue with my life. I felt I had no choice but to accept there was in fact a viable explanation and I evolved a somewhat metaphysical slant to my thinking. I am not talking here about a religious explanation. My acceptance felt much larger than the limitations of the church and in fact I could see no connection between the two. Although I had had a slight attraction to the church as a social institution, I was never consciously interested in matters of the spirit, or of metaphysics and nobody in my family and immediate social circles ever discussed deep philosophical matters.

As is often the case, during one’s teenage years, I spent much of them swinging wildly between extroverted socialising and a private inner world of unanswered questions, confusions and dilemmas about life in general. Four years after my father’s death, John F. Kennedy was assassinated. This event also provided an unexpected shock to my established way of thinking and perceiving. Now I knew there was definitely something going on in the world that I was surely not going to discover from the confines of my comfortable but culturally limited environment. I knew that I needed to explore much more of the world in one way or another.

From then on I developed a casual attitude regarding a future career. My school ‘Leaving Certificate’ pass wasn’t good enough for university entrance and in any case, after my father died, I could somehow never contemplate serious, academic studies. Would university provide answers about real life and death, and bring some kind of inner personal success? I thought not. I knew intuitively that academic study was not the learning experience I was seeking. I certainly knew that my father’s commercial success was not dependent upon formal education. However, his desire that I should succeed academically or at least in the world, was frequently at the back of my mind for many years after he died. I just chose to ignore it in favour of the more appealing, more immediate fulfilment of an education through ‘the university of life’, through overseas travel, newness and physical adventures.

My childhood and teenage experiences tended to stimulate a taste for life’s real meaning and I was ‘straining at the bit’ to get out there and discover all of it! In any case, since I was keen to widen my horizons, I was certainly determined to move out from the beach suburb adjacent to where I lived through my teens. This area was highlighted in the film “Puberty Blues” (1981), a depressingly real study of teenage life and the prevailing sexist, ‘surfy’ sub-culture. Since I was eager to
develop more global and intellectual influences, I naturally had to go farther afield from my home environment. I definitely felt a world apart from the ‘sun, surf and sex’ culture dominating the beach environment around us.

I very quickly made friends with people living in the cosmopolitan eastern suburbs of Sydney. I also became closely connected with travellers and immigrants visiting Sydney from Europe. I thrived on the differences between our backgrounds, such as their accents, tastes in food and music and their international life experiences. Undoubtedly sexism also existed in these circles, it was just more obscured. In any case, along with a wider choice of perspectives, choices and sub-cultures to taste, these attitudes seemed a lot easier and a more interesting way of dealing with it! I wanted to learn and discover life ‘out there’ and I was intuitively preparing myself for my worldly education yet to come.

These earlier life experiences added together provided enough nourishment for the seed for a deep change of attitude and outlook to develop later in my teens. I felt I was changing in different ways from many of my peers. Their interests were not mine and even though I wanted to connect with them, I couldn’t get excited about doing the same thing with the same people, the same outlook and the same attitudes. It now seems that doing what comes naturally for me has not always been what others do naturally. I very much relate to the twelve year old who says, “I would like to be able to fly if everyone else did, but otherwise it would be kind of conspicuous” (quoted in Ferguson, 1982:306).

I wanted my way of thinking and responding to change to be manifested in ‘normal’ external behaviour and development. I did not want to stand out from the crowd and be conspicuous - recognised, acknowledged and loved perhaps but not conspicuous. But I did want to ‘fly’ as well, and certainly wanted to break free from any restrictions or expectations which might ‘clip my wings’ and stunt my spirit. I realise in hindsight that this drive for a different perspective created a constant inner restlessness within me. This has taken many years to subside and when it emerges from time to time, I know it is time to seek new personal learning challenges and different adventures.

It was many years later that I realised the positive and lasting influence my father had had on my overall psychological and emotional development. Despite leaving school at twelve, he became a highly successful self-made business man, and had many creative interests and talents, ranging from photography and films to art and wood-work. Because he was born in England, I also felt he represented something of another perspective, from a part of the world that I wanted to know and connect with. I felt that he was a great example of embodying ‘life-enhancing’ values, in both his personal and professional lives and was a true philanthropist in both domains. In fact there never seemed to be a difference in attitude between these
two areas of “work and play”\textsuperscript{2}, a fact which obviously demonstrated a true sense of integration and a lasting influence upon my own attitudes to work, play and life in general.

During the process of this research, of digging deep, I have been reminded of some of the special qualities that seemed to characterise my father’s personal and professional relationships. In particular, these included a positive attitude, non-judgemental acceptance of others along with being very authentic. These personal qualities represent part of a strong pattern of themes which run throughout this inquiry. They are also paralleled and promoted within the experiential and accelerative learning domains which I am exploring. I remember that my father not only saw people’s inner worthiness but also encouraged their whole potential and creativity. He regularly provided opportunities for others to improve themselves. This tendency stimulated my later strong interest in social work activities as well as learning technologies which encourage expanded human potential. With my father’s death, I not only experienced the loss of a loving and loved parent but also a strong, educative influence upon my whole life’s direction.

I also realise that from then on I unconsciously sought mentors or teachers who would provide some of this same kind of positive encouragement and non-judgemental acceptance. My father’s cousin, a highly talented artist and art teacher was also one of these and stood out as an individual because of it. I remember him as always encouraging me to be creative, to follow my passions and my natural talents. Unfortunately it appears that these kinds of teachers, rather than representing the norm, have always been in the minority. This, I believe is a sad fate for education as a whole. Since I discovered A/L and the new paradigm for learning I have become even more aware of the power and influence of ‘positive suggestion’\textsuperscript{3}. I have come to understand the positive lasting impact of an encouraging influence upon our learning as well as on our own roles later as parents and educators.

\textbf{Oversea Adventures: What’s it all About?}

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\textit{Those who do not know the torment of the unknown cannot have the joy of discovery.}
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Claude Bernard
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It was the ‘swinging sixties’ and the Suez Canal was still open for passenger ships travelling across the world. Young Australians went off on the epic five week sea journey to Southampton and travelled around ‘the continent’ in Volkswagen Combie vans or London taxi cabs. My two year stint during this time included four months travelling in the latter with four other ‘Aussie’ girl friends. We had called our taxi “Alfie”, inspired by the name of a popular movie at the time starring Michael Caine. The song from the movie, “What’s it all About?”, seemed to encapsulate my consciousness at the time. I was totally naive about the wider

\textsuperscript{2} See Poem on \textit{Integration} in ‘Growing Up’, Chapter 3.
\textsuperscript{3}Identified by Dr Georgi Lozanov for use in learning process, See ‘Branching Out’, Chapter 3.
world and my place in it. I was very ‘green’, but very eager to learn all that life would teach me and to feel connected with ‘the whole picture’. I certainly wanted to know what it was all about.

During the end of 1967, I was in the north of Israel and it was the first time I had been alone without at least one of my Aussie companions. I was broke, lonely and quite sick. The army had imposed evening curfews and the mood was grim and depressing. What was I doing here in this state? This, I realised was the first time in my life I had become aware of the need to call on some deep inner reserves. In past times of difficulty, I had always had nearby a close friend, family member or some physical resources as external supports. I had none of these available to me at the time, so I was forced to grow up again. I began to realise how naive I was, despite my travelling and so-called ‘worldliness’. I could see that I needed to really open my (inner) eyes more and start learning something of significance from my life’s experiences. More accurately, I think I was wanting to know how to learn from my experiences.

Once I had dealt with my immediate problems and recovered physically, I began to learn to respond differently to new and challenging circumstances. Later, I realised I had been limiting myself and my growth, by sticking with known friends and ‘easy’ situations. Even whilst travelling, I had maintained a ‘comfort zone’ which I realised did not encourage opportunities for real introspection and self discovery. It also limited any significant or deep change from within and therefore any deep and lasting learning about the self. I soon began to realise I was after a greater personal shift than I had yet experienced.

Upon this realisation, I began naturally and unexpectedly to meet some new and different characters and face more stimulating situations which stretched me mentally and emotionally. Somehow, I had to face my fears, and knew I wanted to push past them and “do it anyway”⁴. I once again began to feel more alive and open to unfamiliar situations, accepting the lack of emotional and financial security I had been experiencing. Somehow, I knew I would learn faster under these tentative conditions, feeling I was on the threshold of some new discoveries about myself and my place in the world.

As fate would have it, this exciting period was ‘nipped in the bud’. “You have had enough holiday dear, it is time to come home get a job and settle down”, wrote my mother, concerned for my innate restlessness, I believe. To me this was not just a holiday, it was my whole life and I had yet so much to experience and understand. The very concept of settling down was abhorrent to me. I felt the world to be my home and the living was only really just beginning. Nonetheless, eventually the pressures worked; I was broke and was expected at my sister’s forthcoming wedding.

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in Australia. I knew I had to go back. But I vowed to return as soon as I could get
the money to do so.

For many years to come, I felt this overseas period was the most significant and
therefore, the happiest two years of my life. It was years before I understood that
this had much to do with being removed from traditional expectations of the sub-
culture in which I had lived as well as having absolute freedom to learn in any
way I chose. I also later realised, as Ludwig van Beethoven expressed in a personal
letter to friends, that “foreign countries will make you gentler, more human, more
reconciled to the world” (1980:16). Whilst travelling and living in different cultures
as a means to ‘reconcile’ myself to the rest of the world, I intuitively felt the need to
deal with my intensely-felt passions and concerns in a way which would also
connect with the wider world. More particularly I wanted to direct these energies
toward determining my own life’s direction. At the time however, I only vaguely
knew that the motivations and learning experiences that I was seeking had much
to do with developing the spiritual aspects of myself.

Nevertheless, despite earlier positive, parental influences and apparent lack of
restrictions to ‘be what I may’, there seemed to be an insidious sense of external
forces, expectations and restrictions that ‘hijacked’ the direction I was taking. As
well as these forces being too powerful for me, I was not even aware of what they
were. I have of course since realised that unless one is conscious and aware of the
direction in which one is heading, it will always be easy to get lost. I am reminded
of Lewis Carroll’s Cheshire Cat who tells Alice that unless she knows where she
wants to get to, it doesn’t matter which way she walks (1881:104). I may have had
an idea of where I didn’t want to go, but was certainly not at all sure about where I
was heading. Jean Baker-Miller has recently thrown more light on my experiences:

Women come from a position in which their own nature was defined
for them by others. Their selves were almost totally determined by what
the dominant culture believed it needed from women and therefore
induced women to try to be.... These definitions are then far-removed
from women’s ‘real nature’; certainly they do not reflect what women
seek to become as self-determining individuals (1986:118).

Although I was continually but unconsciously seeking ways to become more self-
determining, I was without the means (inner resources) to do so. I did not really
know during these travels, that what I was seeking was a true education about the
self. I did not know that I needed to develop my self-esteem, my mind and my very
spiritual essence. As is the case for most other ‘ordinary’ people, I did not know
this because such things were never taught us. I had not learnt how to be
introspective, to reflect and connect learned knowledge, facts and experiences with
inner development. This kind of introspection only tends to happen during or
after some kind of personal crisis. Baker-Miller also states:
It is true that the very ways we find to conceptualise experience are in large measure given to us by the culture in which we learn 'how to think and feel', or even learn what thinking and feeling are. But people are also continually straining against the boundaries of their culture - against the limiting categories given by that culture - and seeking the means to understand to express the many experiences for which it does not suffice (ibid p.112).

Baker-Miller goes on to say this is true of all people but for women it is a "pre-eminent factor", and that:

... their current endeavour can more clearly illuminate the hidden mental events that go on in all people. ... The closer the mind can connect with what one is actually experiencing the better its inherent creativity can flourish (ibid).

During this episode in my life, there was no doubt that I was in conflict between the "culture" in which I had learned "how to think and feel", and the world culture in which I felt I was beginning to expand my potential. I was already beginning to feel like a global citizen but I hadn't developed the strength of character to pursue the emotional and mental freedom that I was discovering. I knew this freedom was undeniably connected with the way in which I liked to learn. The problem was I didn't know how to find out what I wanted on my travels, nor did I really know what it was. I did not even know what questions to ask. All I knew was that my experiences were making a difference. I was hungry for more. My natural and innate learning curiosity had been stimulated. What I did know was that travelling the world provided a freedom to learn similar to the inclinations I had as an eight year old girl. I was unconsciously seeking something of lasting value which I now understand to be the very spiritual essence of myself.

My stay in Israel is memorable and significant in a few ways. For many years afterwards I felt it was the last time I had the opportunity for real, unadulterated and uninhibited learning and personal growth, free from family and society's traditional expectations. It was the first time I began to develop a strong fascination with what makes people 'tick' inside. Although I had already had a deep interest in children and their psychology, but had not before considered exploring the minds of adults. Whilst living on a kibbutz, I became interested in the question of the motivating force behind the work people do and the commonly shared values and ideals they hold.

This question would later prove to be an important one for this Spirit of Learning inquiry. At the time I believe I was also unconsciously aspiring to develop some strong traits of character and enough self esteem to resist traditional role expectations, like commitment to an ideal and a sense of global responsibility. Unfortunately, I would have to wait quite some time for this development! More than anything, I was seeking to access a different kind of awareness. At the time, I
did not see how I would ‘settle down’ and be able to attain this back home in my familiar comforts in Australia.

Struggle for Identity: Is that all there is?

Your only obligation in any lifetime is to be true to yourself

Richard Bach

It was with this consciousness that I returned to Australia after two years travelling and working overseas. I was alive and buzzing with energy of my experiences. I had no immediate interest in marriage and the traditional notion of settling down, either then or in the near future. I was in fact determined to return overseas as soon as I could manage. Despite these passionate intentions, nine months after returning to Australia, at the age of 23, I was married!

My husband-to-be was an advertising film director who had also spent considerable time travelling overseas for both work and leisure. I knew that there would be future opportunities to live outside Australia for different periods. I felt that this would be a wonderful opportunity for further learning of the kind I enjoyed and was looking forward to having a partner with whom to share the adventure of ‘life’s university’. However, being more conservative and cautious regarding life in general and despite several opportunities to work overseas, my husband decided against doing this, choosing to ‘play safe in familiar territory’.

I was totally unprepared for the traditional expectations that accompanied my new role of wife, especially without the bonus of living in a different culture or country for a time as I’d hoped and assumed. At the time I hadn’t associated my marriage with the notion of having to ‘settle down’, nor the internal traps (limitations) I set for myself. When I agreed to get married, I just thought I was being flexible about how I would learn and grow. I thought this partnership could complement and enhance my own view of the world and the direction in which I was drawn. I simply thought that I would have a companion with whom to share my learning journey along the way.

I also assumed my husband would naturally have the same outlook, motivations and ambitions as me. I was wrong! I was later to realise that he did not share the same ideals and deep interests that I held. For him, marriage implied a certain image which included “settling down, being responsible”, fulfilling particular roles and essentially conforming in the traditional sense. I was for him I am sure, a total ‘failure’. In this sense I was not prepared for the image, the role nor the expectations. In fact, after the novelty of being married wore off, I gradually began to feel that something was missing, that my own personal growth was being stunted. I felt that there had been an implied assumption that I should subjugate my own creative desires and ambitions for an assumed life direction and all that might have involved.
I wanted to create my own vision for life, although at the time did not know how
to express this need, nor indeed the concept itself. Unconsciously, I was yearning
for the kind of deep learning that would make a difference to me internally and
somehow change me. I was once again struggling to establish my real nature in the
midst of an 'imposed culture' I found myself in. My mother's influence as a role
model for what was expected in this new life-style never totally fitted the popular
'just a housewife' image either, although essentially that's how she may have
appeared. She was always a strong person, an efficient organiser and hostess at
many family and business events. Following my father's death when she was
obliged to enter the unfamiliar 'man's world' of business, she adapted relatively
easily to this new situation and soon became very independent. Despite the steep
learning curve involved and the inevitable hardships, it was clear that she
eventually enjoyed a sense of personal power and increased confidence about her
place in the world.

Undoubtedly, these early factors would have some bearing on my subsequent
'struggle' for my own identity. Throughout much of my life and certainly within
my marriage, I felt rather ignorant of the notion of conforming to traditional
expectations as a wife and mother. However, rather than a feminist per se, I saw
myself more of an adventurer and certainly not as one fitting the traditional
female image. Until I was married, I had never really thought about limitations in
terms of my sex, since I was still more of the thinking of 'the girl within'. Although
the limitations I began to experience were not explicitly imposed, I experienced
them all the same. It was the late sixties, I was one of the first amongst my group
of friends to be married. I had no relevant sign posts along the way which would
guide me in playing my part in this 'unknown territory' of marriage whilst also
finding and developing myself.

Despite my intuitive attraction to the basic principles of feminism, my lack of
involvement in specific feminist actions, tended to highlight the view I had of
myself as a free spirit or a global citizen. This view has been accompanied by a
corresponding lack of particular emphasis on prejudices based on gender. Along
with developing my feminine self, I have also always enjoyed embracing the
'tomboy,' the masculine part of me. Hancock's explanation resonates with my
experiences here:

Excavated from the inner realm, the girl has much to teach the woman
about how to seize the subjective stance that lies at the heart of
generative power. She naturally synthesises the dualities of male and
female in her androgyny, fuses work and play in her purposeful activity
reconciles love and hate in her lack of contradiction (1990:84).

I also view my 'struggle for identity' as being significant in my subsequent relating
to others on a spiritual basis. Without always knowing it consciously, I feel I have
always wanted to relate to others and have them see me in terms of being a
member of the same universal, spiritual family. I have never been happy to be

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judged on the basis of my age, appearance, the work I do or my marital status. Being a married woman then for me, seemed to involve so many limitations, judgements and expectations.

However, I always knew I would and very much wanted to become a mother one day, although in the "distant future". As fate would have it, after only two years of marriage my son entered the world. I was happy and excited by the experience of finding myself in this position but also somewhat frightened of the inevitable responsibility. I also held an unconscious fear of my life changing so dramatically before I was ready and prepared for the change. Since I felt committed to doing the best job possible as a mother, I eventually gave up a rewarding job and new career direction to stay at home with my child for the first few years. I enjoyed a wonderful first year absorbed in motherhood and daily life adjustments and treasured every moment of the experience.

Nevertheless, after the first year had passed, I began to reflect more on my new circumstances. I started to feel somewhat psychologically and intellectually trapped and cut-off from important sectors of society, let alone the rest of the world. Despite the amazing learning experiences I was engaged in, I was also beginning to suspect there was a lot of untapped learning and creative potential within myself that I did not know how to access and develop. All my travels had still not taught me how to express much of my potential and to develop more of my inner capacities.

I had not yet established a career of my own, nor had I any qualifications or specialised skills and my relationship was gradually weakening. So, despite my contentment with being a mother, the inner, as well as the outer 'imposed' restrictions began to highlight my internal predicament. I began to hear a voice Is that all there is? stirring within me. These were the lyrics of a song made famous around the time by an older singer called Helen Hayes. Although the words related to the end of her life, the words and the sentiments seemed to encapsulate many of my own feelings during this period. I didn't know who I really was, nor where I was heading. The expected traditional role and direction did not seem to fit for me. This was such a terrifying and disappointing state at the time that I kept my feelings completely submerged. For quite some time I did not even admit them to myself, let alone anyone else.

As I unconsciously felt the marriage, or at least the initial romantic dream starting to falter, I eventually allowed myself to feel the psychological, emotional gap that had begun to form. I had always been so full of life and energy, so absorbed with my travels and life's experiences, the state I was now beginning to acknowledge felt very foreign to my being. I began to feel a failure in everything except being a mother. I felt guilt-ridden that I was not totally content and that my life was not turning out how it 'should'. I intuitively knew that if I wanted to continue to be an effective and 'good' mother then I needed to 'get my own act together'. Finally, when our marriage ended after just four years. I felt that I still had not grown up or
learned anything of lasting (internal) value. Whilst overseas previously, I had suspected that I was on the verge of more significant expansion of myself, I felt I was at the beginning of a self-discovery tour. Consequently, although unconsciously, I think that I began to view my marriage as a mistake, an interruption to my real learning about myself and the world.

On the other hand, I felt completely willing and able for the task of being a mother, even a ‘solo’ one. I felt I could understand and relate to children, although I didn’t understand adults, in particular my husband and least of all myself. I naturally no longer view my marriage as having been a mistake. I soon realised, as one of the accelerated learning adages goes, ‘there’s no such thing as a mistake, there’s only feedback’. I always felt that my marriage provided the gift of a child, and if for this reason alone, it could never be a mistake. Anything in terms of learning about responsible adult relationships was to take many more years and other relationships to follow.

During the years of separation and eventual divorce proceedings, I often wondered and worried about my lack of focus and commitment to what I really wanted to pursue in life. I wondered what it was that weakened my commitment to myself. Was it that I was too immature, and too lacking in self-understanding to identify the quality and nature of what was important in my life around this time? I also assumed others felt as I did and had similar views on life. It was always a shock for me to find out they didn’t. I certainly did not then, nor for many years, understand the significance of such concepts as ‘world view’ and how values affect everything we do. I did not know the force that values have in all aspects of our lives.

Years later I knew I agreed with Victor Frankl when he wrote:

Values do not drive a man, they do not push him but rather pull him... there is always freedom involved: the freedom of man to make his choice between accepting or rejecting an offer that is to fulfil a meaning potentiality or else to forfeit it (1959:158).

At the time, I felt I had forfeited a special kind of learning for another ‘lesser’ one. Deep down I wanted to fulfil “a meaning potentiality”, and to ‘find myself’, but did not know where or how to start. One lasting memory of this time is that the picture of life as I thought it would be, was shattered. On the other hand, ironically the breakdown of my marriage ultimately gave me the impetus, freedom and determination to start to discover myself and to pursue a direction toward my own inner fulfilment and spiritual growth.
Motherhood: A Sacred Duty

I know of no more sacred duty than to rear and educate a child
Ludwig van Beethoven

Prior to undertaking tertiary and further studies, I had worked as a social worker, kindergarten assistant, personnel assistant and part-time waitress. The image I had of myself which was to eventually include being a mother was definitely more of a traveller and an adventurer. Perhaps my adventurous approach to motherhood, along with my natural love for children, provided a key to my learning and fulfilment in this role. Since I felt completely natural in this role, unlike that of being a wife, I ended up being provided with constant and exciting opportunities for growth and self discovery.

Gaining learning experiences through being a mother was not what I originally had in mind to do so early in my life. My impulses were mainly toward travelling and exploring the world at large. However, it was becoming clear that this role provided many great opportunities for deep, precious and lasting growth through a variety of unexpected ways. There was much about being a mother that involved experiences of spontaneity and unpredictability that stimulated both my creativity and enthusiasm. I was gradually becoming as interested in my own psychological responses as I was fascinated with my child’s growth and development.

I was deeply grateful for the opportunity my son provided for close observation of his learning processes. I was able to study freely the development of human nature at a very intimate level. I felt quite privileged to be able to do this and over a period of many years I instinctively learned a lot about human psychology including my own. Needless to say, like many other women have found, being a homemaker and mother provided countless opportunities to quickly learn a large range of new skills and develop a variety of personal qualities. These included unlimited patience, great flexibility and an ever constant sense of humour!

What I did realise fairly early on, was that my desire and motivation to be a successful and good mother, provided me with a great determination to simultaneously develop myself in many different ways. Although I was well aware of how the role of a mother was completely devalued in terms of modern society as a whole, I somehow felt this factor to be of no real relevance to me at the time. I was not seeking acknowledgment or validation from society, these rewards in terms of acknowledgment held no meaning for me then. Rather, I was seeking internal gratification. As a sole parent, I felt this was where and how I was meant to be. I felt one of the great rewards for my situation and my task, was the freedom and autonomy to make important decisions which would affect my son’s whole life. I felt that this kind of opportunity was a true privilege. At the time I could not imagine that I would ever have this kind of autonomy and responsibility for making important decisions within a professional sense.
However, more than the development of any other skill or personal quality, the experience of unconditional love for my child, I believe helped me to grow up and transform much of myself. My desire and motivation to communicate with, care for and facilitate his learning and development became a strong basis for my subsequently doing the same with others. I also believe it laid a strong basis for my later attraction toward the development of a spiritual life. I intuitively knew that the sacred duty to one’s child also meant a sacred duty to the self, and not to one of martyrdom. As I was becoming more aware of the influence involved in the role as a sole parent, I began to feel more strongly about taking care of my own personal growth and fulfilment. This awareness included the need to ‘know more’, which in turn soon prompted me to pursue, with great zeal and enthusiasm, learning through further studies.

In the meantime my urge to get back to my earlier overseas education had never left me. I was also very eager to spend some ‘unadulterated’, unencumbered time with my son, and to mark the end of an emotionally difficult period of three years. With my divorce finalised as well as with twelve months of university studies ‘under my belt’, I set off with Adam, then six years old, for a one year ‘learning sabbatical’ in Europe and the Middle East. By this time I knew I was taking charge of my own life and on the road toward an unadulterated period to learn from and to celebrate life with my son. I felt the education for us both would be worth all the efforts and expenses involved. I felt as Rabindranath Tagore expresses:

> Our childhood should be given its full measure of life’s draught, for which it has an endless thirst. The young mind should be saturated with the idea that it has been born in a human world which is in harmony with the world around it (1951:1).

More than anything, as an education, I wanted to expose my son to some more of this human world beyond the known, familiar one. To travel and learn with him overseas was the one ‘different thing’ within my power to do. Despite disapproval from my son’s father and other members of the family, the subsequent twelve months in Europe and the Middle East was a period rich with fabulous learning opportunities and adventures for us both. My son was exposed to the influence of people and places that no ordinary classroom could provide. I hoped that the experience would equip him with a foundation for a lifetime of meaningful learning.

I had no doubts that the experience would be the best education yet for Adam as well as satisfying much of the spirit for adventure within myself. I desperately wanted to show him another way to perceive life and to discover more of the world than that to which he had been exposed. This special period seemed to be blessed with a flow of the kind that frequently emerges throughout much of my own informal learning processes. This ‘flow state’\(^5\) has also become a significant

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\(^5\) Term used and described in detail by Csikszentmihalyi in *Optimal Experience*(1988).

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one as it emerges as a recurring theme throughout various learning processes, including those involved throughout this spirit of learning inquiry.

Upon our return to Australia, my previous ‘opponents’ complimented me on my efforts. They couldn’t help but see at least some of the immediate value of a direct experiential and global education. My son at seven years old had become self assured, responsible and had expanded his natural curiosity for learning in general. He also developed excellent interpersonal skills which are some of his most valuable attributes today. My new found confidence to follow my deepest instincts on this occasion provided me with, in terms of my own development, a sense of empowerment, assertiveness and self-determination.

**Schooling: A Dilemma**

*Education should enable a person to be herself, that is to become, therefore, education is the promotion of the person*  
Edgar Faure

My son’s school life from pre-school to early secondary was a very positive and fulfilling experience for him. At primary school, he loved learning, was always happy and his experiences were characterised by successful all- roundedness, high academic achievement and personal popularity, eventually leading to his position as school captain. However, when it came to choosing a secondary school which offered opportunities for similar ‘all-round’ education and which today I might describe as ‘holistic’ or ‘integrated learning,’ I found it a real dilemma.

I wanted him to continue with an education that would encourage the whole person. This would include providing stimulation and opportunities to fulfil his creative as well as his intellectual potential. These desires were based on my experience as a mother wanting the best for her child, rather than any progressive educational theories or brain research with which I was not yet familiar. Although I had become very aware of the responsibility for the influences and care that a parent should provide for a child, as a sole parent, I was also aware of the many potential gaps that I felt I was not able to personally provide for him. I felt that his primary schooling had done a lot to complement my own care and educative role.

However, the more I explored the subject with other parents and their children about an holistic, fulfilling secondary school education, the more my dilemma about choosing an appropriate school increased. I had flirted with the idea of alternate schools simply because I felt their approaches to teaching and curricula would be more holistic and integrated. Within my social circle and in particular with my husband, there seemed to be much ignorance and conservatism about these alternates. Without his father’s support, at least in principle, I felt I could not ‘push’ for this type of schooling for our son. In any case I had some reservations myself. I was interested in humanistic and integrative educational approaches and not specifically against conservatism just for the sake of it. I wanted my son to
learn to take responsibility for and to develop and maintain self discipline and motivation for his own learning. I was searching for some balanced attitudes and approaches regarding secondary education which were beginning to be hard to find.

Eventually, after discussing possible options, my son decided to accept the position he was offered to attend a boys' selective school. He wanted to follow in the tradition of his father and grandfather who both attended the same school, as well as being together with several of his known "good mates". I would have preferred that he attend the local co-educational school which I felt would be at least more balanced in terms of the sexes. However, I could not justify insisting or even strongly persuading him against his choice. This was partly due to my recalling my own rebellion and strong sentiments about schooling at the same age. I also finally accepted that there was no such thing as a perfect school, no matter how much I might have wanted it. In the end I counted on my son's easy nature, open personality and existing positive attitude to learning, to equip him for any particular school environment.

Adam was extremely enthusiastic and excited about attending high school. I intuitively had my doubts. His first year in high school passed with a continuation of the same enthusiasm as ever for his studies. However, from the second year on and throughout the rest of his schooling, slowly but surely his attitude changed from one of eagerness and natural curiosity to learn, to increasingly strong feelings that his studies were either boring, too hard, or irrelevant.

It was quite a depressing observation and realisation to watch a child with a natural curiosity and healthy attitude toward school fairly rapidly lose interest in most of his studies. This was of course just at the time in his life when the opposite was needed. This loss of interest was sometimes accompanied by a growing doubt in his own capacities in several subject areas, despite his strong interest and performance in these same ones during his primary years. This situation eventually resulted in him totally 'turning off' to subjects where he felt he was not achieving well which in turn affected his overall self esteem. His way of dealing with this, as is often the case, was to simply switch his attentions and interests elsewhere, in this case to sporting and social activities.

My son's and his friends' strongest complaints about school, especially as they became senior students were about the lack of respect given to them as individuals. They also complained of the irrelevance and lack of connection of much of their studies to themselves and to 'real life'. Undoubtedly these problems were intensified as the boys were in their mid to late teens, and maturing toward young adulthood. Unfortunately, it was one which I saw happening to many students over the course of their secondary schooling. There is naturally never one particular cause of this very common situation which affects many students from many different and varied schooling systems. It is also clear that this phenomenon
is not uncommon within our education system in general. Indeed, it can be argued
that it is a current, world-wide problem in modern society.

One might wonder why all the ‘fuss’ then if it happens all the time anyway? Perhaps this is the point. Should we not make a fuss or are we in danger of becoming numbed into accepting an alienating educational system which turns
thousands if not millions of kids off a natural and innate process? When I contemplated the potential power and influence of a teacher’s personality, and/or
school system to affect students’ psyches, I realised what I feared most was the
potential for a breaking of their spirit for learning. By this I mean an immobilising
of the innate curiosity and natural ‘lust’ for learning, believing an encouragement
of these to be the natural right of every student.

This spirit includes both the emulation and the encouragement of positive
attitudes, such as enthusiasm and motivation for learning. Its absence or loss is
usually accompanied by a lack of self esteem and confidence in one’s innate
capacities, and therefore within the students for themselves. As the effect of these
inner experiences can last a lifetime, I believe that the absence of spirit in learning
to be a potential problem of great significance, with probable far-reaching
implications.

**Good Teachers: Positive Qualities**

*Knowledge wielded by love is what the educator needs and what his/her pupils should acquire*  
Bertrand Russell

Throughout this period of my son’s changing attitudes about school learning, I
became convinced that despite the philosophy or tradition of any particular school,
each teacher would play a large part in making or breaking a student. I knew that a
good teacher would have a powerful and lasting effect on my son’s life, as well as
the converse. I instinctively felt that if even one teacher was able to impart her
own love for learning, demonstrate a respect and concern for each individual and
most importantly, believe in and encourage the inherent potential of each one,
then she would make a great impact on his sense of self and life-long learning
attitudes. Unknowingly, these strong sentiments represented the early stages of
identifying some of the passions and interests that have led to this exploration.

At my son’s high school there were naturally many personable, caring and
effective teachers. However, the teachers who were able to engender in students a
lasting love for learning, stimulate natural curiosity and confidence in themselves
as well as for their studies, always seemed to be amongst a small minority. One of
these rare individuals unfortunately left Adam’s school early in his secondary
schooling. There was only one other teacher who seemed to be ‘classified’ by
students in terms of being a memorable and really good teacher.
This first teacher treated the boys with great respect, taking a personal interest in their individual characters, their out-of-hours activities and was ever-ready to communicate on any topic with them. Furthermore he seemed to be able to bring out the best in students by recognising their individuality. The boys all described him as fair, a good teacher, liked him a lot and were prepared to work hard in his subject. The second teacher had the knack of making each lesson highly relevant, experiential, interactive and good fun. My son really enjoyed her lessons and upon my questioning was able to clearly identify these reasons why he did. I wondered how the development and balancing of such personal qualities with effective teaching skills could be encouraged, and more widespread.

I recall that many of Adam’s friends were naturally talented, creative and lateral thinkers who in general did not become high academic achievers at this school. As I learned more and more about the learning process itself, I tended to understand better why this was. Throughout the latter part of secondary schooling, I spent a great deal of time talking to these boys about attitudes (theirs and their teachers’) to their studies and their perceptions of their own capacities. Eventually most of them would profess or demonstrate a lack of interest in and doubt about their capacity to learn in a general sense. I also found myself questioning them about their perceptions of the attitudes, personalities and qualities of their teachers. There seemed always to be a common agreement on who made the ‘best teachers’ and in this case it was the two teachers previously described.

By the end of their secondary schooling, many of the boys displayed an obvious lack of self esteem and confidence at least in some regard to their own learning capabilities. I am not suggesting that school and teachers were the only influences in this regard. However, my interest in the role of a teacher’s personality and way of being was growing as I perceived and believed that they have the potential for a life-long lasting effect upon their students. I knew that curricula could and would probably be made more relevant and that methodologies for teaching could also certainly be improved. Nevertheless, I was certain that in the end it was a good teacher who stood the test of time and finally made the big difference within their students’ lives.

Although I knew that Adam already had the makings of a survivor and was capable of and interested in learning in a general sense, despite the system, I became very interested in the power and influence of teachers to convey their own attitudes and values including their possible ‘hang-ups’. I had become aware of the potential that educators have to ‘make or break’ a student’s spirit and love for learning for the rest of their whole lives in general. At the time I knew nothing of the theoretical power of suggestion in the learning process as Dr. Lozanov\(^6\) identified it, but was nevertheless unconsciously drawn to many aspects of the

concept. My concern and interest in the ‘teacher influence’ factor remained never far from the back of my mind.

I became particularly aware of the strong connection between success in learning and self-esteem of the individual. I feel strongly that:

Self-esteem plays as much a part in the destiny of nations as it does in the lives of individuals; that self-hatred leads to the need either to dominate or to be dominated; that citizens who refuse to obey anything but their own conscience can transform their countries; in short, that self-esteem is the basis of any real democracy (Steinem 1992: 9-10).

Although at that time I had not made such a conscious connection between the individual’s level of self-esteem and much broader implications, I did intuitively feel a potential broader danger regarding self-esteem and motivation for learning for all students. I became more and more interested in what makes an effective and popular teacher. My son and his friends told me that the best teachers for him were quite firm, made the lesson interesting and relevant and encouraged, inspired and valued each student’s individual style of learning and contributions. Contrary attitudes from unpopular teachers was the same story - demeaning ‘put-downs’, total lack of encouragement and increasing disinterest in the student if he did not perform to an excepted standard. With so many factors contributing toward a less than ideal education system, I knew that the challenges for teachers, particularly at the secondary level, were enormous.

My absorption and fascination with my role as a mother and my natural interest in psychology led me to appraise other teachers’ personalities and attitudes. I was always more interested in these aspects and how the students related to them, than teachers’ particular academic knowledge or even the actual methodologies they used. These experiences eventually led to my asking a key question that is at the very heart of the inquiry: What are the unique personal qualities that enable teachers to stimulate real motivation and inspire a love for learning within students?

Since this time of my son’s school days, and particularly during the course of this inquiry, I have strengthened my interest in the subject of the special qualities that make a good educator, or indeed a leader of any kind. I recently discovered an article called “Good Teachers” by Dr Robert Muller, the then assistant Director General of the United Nations. Muller pays homage to the two special teachers who exercised a “profound and decisive influence” on him and his life (1984:20-22). I find that his experiences and convictions about teachers’ long-lasting influences connect strongly with my own observations, experiences and reflections on this subject. For these reasons, I am including much about what Muller wrote about his personal experiences with good teachers in this ‘personal roots’ chapter:
Muller's first 'special teacher' was an assistant professor of German in his mother's village of birth in France. He says the following of him: "From the first day he kept us spellbound, despite his strict discipline. Life soon entered our classroom. He put his finger on the heart of each student"(1984:20). Dr Muller goes on to say that this teacher was able to get to the essence behind the language he was teaching, that is "human life and aspiration". Through his manner of highlighting the heart and pulse of a subject, that is an essential humanness, this teacher was able to impart a life-long gift to at least one student, later to become a prominent and successful international figure. He adds:

From then on I knew the secret: education, sciences and humanities are only techniques. Behind them are the sky, life, the search and discovery of oneself, the forces that hold everything together in heaven and on earth. Passion, enthusiasm, deep belief in oneself and love of life are the great motors of learning and human happiness (ibid).

Of the other powerful influence, a professor of French Literature and Latin, with whom he experienced learning for only three short months, he says:

... Above all Professor Cumin was giving us the example of a great, happy, life-impassioned man who would not have traded his profession for that of president of France, as he once told us. He loved to be with us. He loved to live his life all over again for us. He loved to share everything he knew. He played for us the tragedies and comedies of life, sometimes to the point of exclaiming, 'Let's not have any recess', to which we agreed enthusiastically (ibid).

This teacher was a complete individual who invariably had his own original thoughts about everything and was totally unimpressed by the views of academic authorities. He abhorred students who just repeated the opinions of others and after Dr Muller once experienced this happening with himself in class, Professor Cumin admonished him with the following:

I want your opinion and not that of a textbook. Make it a sacred rule in your life always to be yourself, to know yourself and to rely upon only yourself. Be a man. Master your brain and heart and remain unimpressed by anyone else in this world. Accept an idea to be the truth only if you are convinced of it (ibid).

What powerful and relevant words I find these! In just three months learning with this professor, Muller felt that his life had changed forever and he says that he "never ceased to heed his admonitions"(ibid). Since then Muller has been led to add two more "personal rules" of his own. These words for me, particularly parallel my personal experiences and highlight the global 'patterns which connect'.

Always think in terms of the entire planet, for everything is interdependent in this world. Always think far into the future, for the seeds of tomorrow are being planted today (ibid).
I have rarely read such a powerful and explicit description of the influence of a teacher by a person of such international stature. Muller was so upset at having to leave this school and this teacher’s influence that he wrote to him, telling him how much he missed him. Professor Cumin wrote back and said “Oubliez-moi” (forget me) and “Gnothi seathan” (know yourself). To this day Dr Muller said that he wondered what his life had been if he had not gone to this school and had missed the opportunity to experience this professor’s teachings. He felt that what he had learned from this teacher, “strength, confidence and optimism”, has stood him well in both his personal life and his work at the United Nations. I include Muller’s school experiences here as a reminder of the “immense influence teachers can have on the lives of human beings” (ibid), and naturally because of the great relevance and significance to this inquiry.

I wonder then what is wrong with our education systems that places little if any emphasis on learning about being a human being and developing strength of character, self confidence and optimism, along with the learning of specific subjects. As Dr Muller realised, his two teachers were the only ones whose names he remembered throughout his whole schooling. He found them a ‘rare breed’, as is often the case for most of us during our school days. I wonder and worry about why this is. My passion is to inquire into the kinds of issues that surround this same phenomenon.

**The Power Within: An Inner Journey**

_The search for life in the universe has led us to ourselves_  

Pamela Peck

As a mother, I learned to balance many delicate roles at the same time. On the rare occasions when I could detach from my own behaviour and activities I was fascinated by the number of roles I was playing during the course of one day. I realised I was perhaps in one day, a student, a mother, a lover, an adviser, a teacher, a child, a driver, a sports coach, a psychologist, a counsellor and an employee and so on. I loved the newness, variety and theatrical nature associated with this role-playing and I still do. The world really had become a stage and I had always enjoyed being an actor. However, I felt the real me was often getting lost in the ‘dramatic’ process. I began to increasingly ask questions about _who am I really_, beneath these roles, beneath these costumes? Eventually, the fascination with these kinds of questions has contributed toward my on-going interest in the practice of meditation and spiritual study. This study has focused on ways to develop and sustain positive and creative thoughts, habits and virtues. The emphasis is on the practice of being in the consciousness of the _essential spiritual self_.

During my first year of this course of study, whilst browsing absent-mindedly among the university library shelves, my attention was caught by the title of a book by the respected Victor Frankl. My arm stretched out to take down ‘Man’s Search
For Meaning (1959) off the shelf. At the time I had never heard of Frankl, nor had I seen the book on any recommended list. I considered it a valuable, timely and ‘accurate’ find. Since then I have discovered that Frankl’s experiences, in a Nazi concentration camp, and his subsequent development of his theory of Logotherapy, appear to be more widely known and acknowledged than I was then aware.

Whilst reading this book, I recalled how fascinated I had always been with the extraordinary experiences and fate that many Jews had to face during World War Two. More accurately, I was fascinated with the stories of their survival. I am mainly referring here to the psychological survival which Frankl emphasises. He provided me with deep insights, additions to and ‘confirmations’ about aspects of my spiritual studies. He also stimulated my interest to know how people, deprived of their physical freedom could develop inner powers to cope with their abnormal external situations. I was spellbound and deeply moved by Frankl’s account of his experiences and observations. It confirmed in a very fundamental way how much we human beings have in common as well as highlighting the unique and non-duplicative, non-determining aspects of human nature and psyche.

Frankl’s important and often quoted message from his experiences and observations as a prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, has had much impact on reflections on my own personal, spiritual learning story.

Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one’s attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one’s own way (1959:104).

This message threw immediate attention on our inner capacities and powers to create our own ‘destiny’ or life direction. I reflect on even a seemingly inconsequential situation where I may be feeling psychologically trapped or lost. Remembering the constant choice that we humans always have, provides me with support and encouragement and a renewed sense of spiritual self power. I was overcome with respect and awe of Frankl’s clarity of intellect for observations and recording under such horrific human conditions. I also experienced a sense of his humility and genuine love for humanity that he conveyed so meaningfully.

Since ‘devouring’ this book some five years ago, I have seen or heard an enormous array of people refer to his work. This interest and acknowledgment has confirmed my belief that there is an inherent and on-going interest in the development of spiritual growth amongst a great variety of people. Certainly reading his book at the time helped me re-focus on my research topic, confirming my passion in matters of the mind, the development of the self, our attitudes, values and the spiritual aspects of ourselves. To me, there seems to be no place or argument for separation of matters of the self and spirit from any aspects of our lives, from those of our professional arenas and certainly not from the learning domains.
The situation in which Frankl was placed and out of which he developed his school of Logotherapy, a meaning-centred therapy, was extreme compared with anything we may be facing in our society today. However, I contend that the message is as important and as relevant for matters of personal/spiritual growth no matter what the external set of circumstances may be. Frankl was concerned with the usefulness of the life of a human being, the “specifically human dimension” (1959:63). I am presently, and now realise that I have been most of my life, very much fascinated with this ‘spiritual freedom’ which cannot be taken away. Logotherapy, a spiritually based psychotherapy, involves a search for meaning and directly confronting the source of fear or negativity in order to move beyond it. “Inner freedom, independence of mind and potential meaning is what in fact make life meaningful and purposeful” (1959:105).

I am constantly fascinated by the innate capacity that human beings have, to frequently overcome terrible external life circumstances. Inevitably this appears to be based on a certain state of consciousness involving specific life-enhancing attitudes and a positive and creative way of perceiving the world. I am saddened that in general we do not believe that we have these kinds of inner capacities. We tend to think that it is only for extraordinary people who have had fortunate backgrounds. I observe myself as I face these on-going life challenges. I continue to explore philosophies and theories of the new scientists, innovative educators, psychologists and spiritual philosophers. I feel connected to the emerging patterns of changing and enlightened thinking and a growing recognition of human’s inherent spiritual freedom and ability to transcend traditional limitations of mind and being.

One could also argue that because we do not utilise anything like the same time and energy as we could to develop our inner selves then we often have no idea of ‘what we may be’ 7. It is this concept of human potential that I have found to emerge and re-emerge as a constant pattern throughout my personal and professional roots and directions. It underpins the philosophy behind integrated, accelerative learning methodologies and is behind the force which inspires me to move forward as well as attempting to facilitate others toward developing their own full potential.

**New Awareness: Awakening Spiritual Consciousness**

All beginnings are invisible, an inward movement, a revolution in consciousness

Marilyn Ferguson

What is the main message from my connecting patterns? What does digging deep and exploring my personal roots tell me about my own search for meaning? Certainly it is clear that I can not divorce learning from meaning and have adopted the term ‘Realearning’ for my consultancy as well as to help emphasise the link between the two.

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7 Term taken from title of book by Piero Ferrucci (1982).
As a global thinker, I am constantly attempting to make connections, internal and external. I love order, logic, wholeness and perfection. I go for the big picture first - to see where I’m at and how I fit in to the whole scheme of things. I naturally want to know something of my ‘brothers and sisters’ around the planet. I want to know more about the commonalities rather than the obvious differences. I have delighted in discovering many relevant and apt quotes by respected scientists and thinkers of all ages. I experience the connecting patterns and some of the uniting forces when I contemplate Einstein’s reminder:

> Concern for man himself and his fate must always form the chief interest of all technical endeavours. Never forget this in the midst of your diagrams and equations (quoted in Edberg, 1974: 99)

For myself, there is no danger of losing myself in traditional, scientific obsessions! I delight in the discovery of the ‘born-again-paradigm’. I say born-again because I see this new vision of reality was in fact an original vision - one of perfection, harmony and love. The ‘new paradigm’, or new vision of reality which involves “a fundamental change in our thoughts, perceptions and values” (Capra 1983: xviii), which I contend is essentially spiritual in nature, is our original paradigm. Marilyn Ferguson refers to the yearning for this original state or way of being as a “cosmic homesickness” (1982:83). It is as a deep sense of something missing and we are in wanting of something we feel we have lost.

My explorations have very much been about accessing this ‘new awareness’ and awakening to my own essence as well as to the world as a whole. At a three-day residential retreat in Australia in 1990, Jean Houston expressed her passions about waking, about “awakening the senses in order to reweave the sensory system, and opening the new relation of oneness to nature and to the earth”. She moved participants with a pot-pourri of stimulations and stirrings which would serve to awaken our consciousness and motivate our whole beings, to experience the “total connectedness of everything, reweave the sensory system, realise and remember who you really are”.

Houston often tells the story of the Zen master and his student who came to him and asked him if he was the Buddha, or was he God, or a prophet and so on. Each time the master says “no I am not God, I am not a prophet...”. Finally the student asks “What are you then? “The master replies simply “I am awake”. This story is certainly relevant for me and the development of a new awareness. I would also elaborate upon being ‘awake’ to increasing my awareness of myself as a spiritual being whilst also seeing others in the same light. It is about being conscious of our ‘other than conscious’ parts of ourselves, our inner motivations, our values and our innate learning and spiritual potential.

Up until ten years ago or so, my exploration of other ‘worlds’ was focused on the external, much of it through my travelling, the new, external and the physical. Today, I have learned that real learning has to include and often emphasise the
inner world of thoughts, attitudes and personal values. It is very much about 'learning (and playing) from the inside out'. Richard Bach's words capture much of my experience throughout my 'personal roots': "You are led through your lifetime by the inner learning creature, the playful spiritual being that is your real self" and "Your only obligation in any lifetime is to be true to yourself"(1978:47-51)

The following themes summarise the basis of the connecting patterns throughout my personal life, that is my 'personal roots'. I view these themes to be essentially universal in their nature and directly connect to my professional life, my present passions and research.

* Freedom of choice and alternative perspectives  
* Search for meaning and real learning  
* Developing 'life-enhancing' attitudes and values  
* Self-determination and confidence  
* Learning and influencing as a mother  
* Awakening to other dimensions and one's own powers
CHAPTER 2
Educational and Professional Roots

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the connection between my learning and teaching experiences and the elements of my personal development, which are as relevant to this inquiry. Essentially it will trace the recurring educational motivations and significant influences through both formal and informal learning experiences as well as through literature.

It will describe the emergence of various themes which continue to re-emerge throughout the inquiry, some eventually playing a major role in the personal/spiritual development of the A/L practitioner. The highlighted themes connect with each other as well as providing the link between my formal and informal learning, my early professional teaching and my subsequent involvement with integrated accelerative learning approaches.

This chapter emphasises the importance of the learning/teaching experiences and influences that have continued to motivate me to facilitate the transformative process for others. The following points represent some of these relevant experiences, influences and interests that are included in this chapter:

* Discovering the importance of belief in my own capacities through ‘mentor’ encouragement
* Interest in the psychology and processes of learning
* Experiential learning and discovering the process and theories afterwards
* Impact of teacher’s personal qualities upon students
* Developing intuitive and facilitative approaches to teaching
* Personal development as a key to learning - for both teachers and students
* Emphasis on the subtle non-verbal elements in learning - related to early language teaching and later discovery of theories behind this concept

Toward Self-Determination: Positive Encouragement

It’s not that self-esteem is everything, it’s just that we are nothing without it
Gloria Steinem

Early in my marriage, prior to my becoming a mother, I found a rewarding position as an (unqualified) social worker at a children’s holiday health home which also incorporated a school. Despite the value I had placed on my personal and non-professional experiences to date, this position greatly influenced my
future decision to pursue tertiary studies and eventually obtain professional teaching qualifications. Some of my experiences involved in this position contributed much in the planting of the seed for this inquiry.

The first factor was the on-going encouragement and support that I personally received from the principal of this children’s institution. He continually encouraged my “natural way with children” assuring me that I had been employed because of my obvious love and deep interest in their psychological development. This explanation was significant for me because it assured me of the value of love, care and affection in the workplace (or at least in this place). Secondly, I found the principal to be an example of an educator who balanced professional effectiveness with unconditional love toward the children in his care. He represented a model to which I was drawn, perhaps partly as a father figure, as well as providing an important ‘personal link’ within a professional educational context. One of his gifts was that of being able to encourage the full potential of everyone around him. For me his influence inspired me to think more about my own potential and enabled me to imagine alternative employment possibilities for myself in the future.

The home was a unique institution made up predominantly of children from both physically and emotionally deprived backgrounds, many of whom were aboriginals. The institution stressed the importance of emotional and psychological care and education above academic schooling. This philosophy fitted accurately with my own intuitive and ‘uneducated’ philosophy which definitely emphasised the affective factors of education over the intellectual and formal curriculum. I felt comfortable and at ease with my views and my place in this institution.

Despite this emphasis and philosophy, the discovery that there were one or two teachers and carers who did not portray automatic love for and acceptance of these children, came as a great shock to me. A clear example of this was demonstrated by their not infrequent denigrating and demoralising attitude toward particular children on different occasions. The children staying in this institution were there because they were emotionally and/or psychologically deprived and in particular need of a break from difficult home circumstances. In other words they especially needed unconditional love and acceptance. With one teacher in particular, they received exactly the opposite. I immediately started thinking about the motivation behind teachers’ decisions to educate, wondering why and how a teacher could have such antagonistic feelings toward those in his care.

Why was he teaching if he felt this way? More significantly what is wrong with a system that does not check for a teacher’s competence in the psychological sense? The children’s emotional and psychological deprivations, I felt, were more than likely a direct consequence of the negative influence of emotionally deprived adults, whether they be parents or teachers. I began to wonder about the discord and incongruence between generally accepted values and attitudes for teaching and actual practice. Within this one institution, it was clear there was an enormous
range of personal approaches and values related to teaching and communicating. It was also clear that the principal could not control or dictate how staff must be as people. As long as they did their job at a physical level, it seemed there was not a great deal he could do about their actual personalities and attitudes. I wondered why they had entered the profession. A deep interest in the personality of the teacher was stirred for the first time and I somehow knew the issue of ‘emotional competence’ \(^8\), was one to which I would return.

The positive encouragement that I received from the principal was not only valuable in regards to the development of my intellectual capabilities, but also as an assurance that it was never too late to learn. His attitude and beliefs no doubt challenged some of my unconsciously held assumptions. Particularly once I had married, the idea of undertaking further formal studies was far from my mind, especially university studies. Before this period, although there had been no specific discouragement from external influences, neither had there been any particular, positive encouragement or inspiration for me to obtain professional qualifications. It was generally accepted that my employment would take second place to my husband’s which, as a film director, had society’s accepted success status. It was assumed that work for me would essentially be for the purpose of making money, or supplementing his income. I had, however, come to know that satisfaction on a daily level and some kind of integration of the personal and professional was essential for my ‘sanity’. I knew I would never be able to tolerate a job without meaning or stimulation.

I eventually decided to undertake formal studies and to qualify either as a teacher or social worker, leaving no doubt that I was to be involved in the ‘caring and sharing’ professions. I felt comfortable that this was an inevitable and natural direction for me with an approach that tended to be more idealistic than security-conscious. I tended to agree with the comment I once heard that “idealism doesn’t understand economics”, but I had already learned from my earliest employment, that I could not work without heart or a sense of purpose. Later during my university studies, upon discovering Marx, I realised I had concerns about the potential alienation and separation from a sense of meaning and purpose not only in the workplace, but in my life in general. Such were some of the yet not emerged and articulated motivations behind my decision to break from other’s expectations, return to studies and obtain professional teaching qualifications.

I chose this direction, not so much as a career in itself, but as a natural way to make sense of my experience and involve the integrating factor in my life. I now realise this way is essentially spiritually-based. I wanted to be involved in the personal, spiritual growth of others, although at the time I was not consciously aware of this. Many years later I realised I held an unconscious belief that “the highest education

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\(^8\)Term first introduced by John Heron and developed by Denis Postle. See ‘Integrating Subtle Skills’ in Chapter 6.
is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony
with all existence” (Tagore 1951:2).

There is no doubt that positive self-esteem became a key factor in my own learning
and personal development as I now believe it is within every individual’s. It has
become a key theme throughout this inquiry as well as being one of the basic
foundations for effective and enjoyable learning within the ‘new paradigm
learning’ domain which I later embraced.

Further Studies: A Natural Direction

A person learns significantly only those things which he perceives as being involved in the maintenance of,
or enhancement of, the structure of the self

Carl Rogers

Further studies opened up a new world of intellectual thought, stimulation and
confidence, which provided distraction from those circumstances I could not
control. They also gave me a new life direction, focus and motivation to succeed in
some way in the wider world. Most importantly, I experienced a sense of
empowerment as I learned I could control at least some of the events in my life.
Despite external circumstances, I knew I was going to learn, grow and change in
any case. I was moving toward self-determination and I liked the direction in
which I was heading. I felt I was beginning to recapture much of the sense of
discovery and excitement around learning that I experienced when I was overseas
in the sixties. I had not been to school for twelve years and not having been a
particularly high achiever, did not know how to even begin writing an academic
essay. There was no doubt that the support and faith in my abilities, by two
specially inspiring TAFE 9 college teachers, along with my new-found motivation,
helped me attain high passes in university entrance exams. It was clear already the
value I began to place on encouraging and supportive teachers and mentors.

At university, I chose my subjects for their intrinsic interest and immediate value,
appropriateness for my timetable as a mother and for my life in general. I was
interested in language, creativity and the world! I chose to study French, Drama
and Sociology and enjoyed the variety and somewhat experiential nature of these
subjects. Nevertheless, after the completion of my first degree, I felt so what?’ Both
my undergraduate BA degree and post-graduate Dip-Ed felt like an anti-climax.
Despite the largely positive experiences and sense of accomplishment I finally felt,
I was still left with a sense of not knowing what ‘it’ was all about. Academic
learning really wasn’t the kingdom of knowledge I probably thought it would or
should be, as I eventually realised that academics do not have the answers to those
important ‘meaning of life’ questions. For the first time the question of academic
knowledge versus ‘real knowledge’ and meaning was planted and of course has
taken many different kinds of growth since this period. I also eventually realised

9 TAFE (Technical and Further Education).
that any lasting benefit derived from my university courses usually happened as a result of applied learning outside the classroom.

Not all my lecturers at university were uninspiring. During my studies I had become friends with and was strongly influenced by my Sociology lecturer, B. Disillusioned with the field of advertising after ten years, he became an academic, only to leave the university eventually, disillusioned after another ten years. When I met him he was attempting to make radical changes to methods of teaching and assessment within the Sociology Department which was a particularly lofty aim in those days. As a consequence, he was constantly struggling against the inevitable strong resistance from within both his faculty and the university at large.

I believe he was interested in facilitating a process of relevant, meaningful learning and awareness that would contribute to transformation within the student as well as within society at large. Although at the time, I did not quite understand his complete motivations and vision, I was very drawn to his admirable personal qualities. These included integrity, honesty and above all, a passionate and unswerving commitment to an ideal. I was also impressed with his all-roundedness in terms of character, creative skills and his personal emulation and promotion of holistic learning and living.

It was also the first time I had considered the issue of power in an educational institution as I observed B. attempting to break down traditional barriers of ‘mystique’ and control between teacher and student. He believed that people in considerable positions of power and influence, such as university academic staff, should do some true soul-searching and some meaningful professional action research on themselves. His teaching approach attempted to be both truly collaborative and co-operative, although this was a radical departure to traditional ways at the university. I understand now that inherent in the kinds of educational changes that B. wanted to make, were those which require deep, personal, internal change. B. wanted and indeed expected that both staff and students alike critically examine their own selves, their teaching, learning approaches and roles in order to shift the balance of power more away from traditional sources toward the students themselves.

However, whilst he had strong vision and motivation to emancipate others, he also held assumptions that many would share his vision, values and more importantly a commitment to new behaviour and actions. I think he felt that his beliefs and desires would be powerful enough to break the ‘stranglehold’ that traditional perspectives and power positions held within such an institution. I also now see that the philosophy B. promoted, about changing perspectives and redefining values in an educational institution, was also about challenging the conventional and objective ways of doing social science.
Whilst I, like many others agreed with many of B.’s views and efforts, the enormous expectations that he had of everyone and himself, inevitably set him up for bitter disappointment. He assumed that people would demonstrate their intellectual and theoretical beliefs through automatically changing their ways of behaving and relating in accordance with these beliefs. This of course, was not the case and I intuitively felt that he was trying too hard or too consciously to enforce these kinds of changes. For him, however, it was simple; if you believe in an ideal, you simply live it. I started to feel hypocritical in much of my own behaviour and lifestyle, but as yet was not ‘touched’ enough by my experiences to make deep changes toward more congruency as a person. I was however, very attracted by B.’s unwillingness to compromise on issues of matters of principle. He often became disappointed with staff and students alike and sometimes even quite angry about people’s ‘refusal’ to change. Unable to make the difference and effect the change he thought was crucial, he eventually became disillusioned enough to leave not only the university, but indeed the world of academia in general. I believed the university had just suffered a great loss.

B. more or less ‘dropped out’ of mainstream society and chose to live and build an alternate lifestyle in the bush. I felt very ambivalent about his move and whilst admiring and almost envying the proposed lifestyle, I was as much shocked and rather disappointed by his decision. B.’s personal values, ideals and commitment to change along with the radical effect they had on him, certainly left a lasting impression on me. Whilst I admired his efforts, there was something disappointing about the unreal expectations he held and his finally giving up. Despite these feelings, I have come to realise that it was his unwavering commitment and attempts to integrate the personal with the professional that was such a powerful and magnetic force for me. In practice, B. struggled to facilitate empowerment and social change through personal involvement and direct experience in the learning process. His vision emphasised a sense of meaning for the individual which would in turn provide the basis for a more real, harmonious and effective society. No doubt, B. was a visionary of sorts and in that, very much ahead of his time.

Despite his so-called lack of success to achieve what he wanted within the university, I found B. to be someone to whom I could connect as an equal and not just as a detached academic. I was impressed and influenced by his attempts to demystify academia and to help students respect themselves as worthy and intelligent people capable of fuelling great societal change. B. also practiced what he preached in as many areas of his life as he was able and from then on the concept of teaching by or being an example began to take shape and has become a recurring theme throughout this inquiry. The seed for developing respect for the kinds of personal and professional ideals B. portrayed had also been planted and my interest around the personal development of the educator continued to grow.
One of the highlights of my four years at university was a week-long residential attempting to live out the principles of Marx's "Feminism and Anarchism", an elective I had taken within the Sociology faculty, and organised by B. The lack of formal assessment and the opportunity to experientially and personally connect meaning behind the theories I had been studying, was an irresistible attraction. During this exciting week, I learned that:

Mental facts cannot be properly studied apart from the physical environment of which they take cognizance... Mind and world... have been evolved together, and in consequence are something of a mutual fit. (William James, in Garforth 1966:12)

This context for praxis, provided the essential interactions I needed to make sense of the usual 'distanced' and impersonal theories to which I had been exposed. In contrast with most of my university period, I made long-lasting friendships from this one week's residential during the final year of my undergraduate studies. These friendships provided a much more meaningful and on-going means for intellectual discourse, relevant learning and purposeful interactions. These elements have proved to be essential ingredients for deep and further learning throughout my life.

One other teacher/lecturer, who had a strong influence during my undergraduate studies was the French language teacher, A. His influence was less personal, having more (for me) to do with his creative methods and processes of teaching languages than any particular personal or intellectual ideals. I discovered how formal learning can actually be FUN. The French course itself was experimental, and the methods A. used were experiential, very active and very creative. At times I marvelled that this enjoyable learning environment was actually a university. I recaptured my early strong interest, as well as stimulating a flair I used to have, in the French language. During the lessons, many parts of ourselves, the physical, mental and the emotional were being engaged through creative methods which were greatly enhanced by the dynamic personality and energy of the lecturer. The teaching method itself needed to be guided by a strong personality and indeed A. had a huge influence on many other students as well, particularly the female ones who were probably a little 'in love' with the teacher and therefore, the subject itself.

Both B. and A. as university educators, whilst totally different in personality and teaching approaches conveyed sincerity, creativity and held non-traditional ideas about how people learn. These beliefs and qualities, I observed were difficult to 'argue with' or ignore as the effect upon students was often quite unconscious. It is only since understanding more about the role of the subconscious in the learning process that I have come to understand that most of what is communicated is usually way beyond words. In any case it seemed many students were affected quite powerfully, although no doubt differently, by both of these teachers/lecturers. Apart from these two, I was rarely strongly impressed or influenced by teaching
personals or positively influenced by effective or innovative teaching methods throughout my tertiary studies.

With a few exceptions, during my Diploma in Education course, I gradually became more aware of and quite astonished by deficient teaching methods or at least inadequacies regarding the ability to communicate effectively to students. I wanted to be inspired, to be attracted toward the teaching profession, to discover some of the power and means to transform others and to have a positive effect upon my future students. If it wasn’t for the adult teaching practice I set up as an innovative elective project (see ‘Teacher as Learner’), I would have been quite bored and disillusioned with much of my studies during this particular year. I was very disappointed in the apparent distance between the theories that were presented to us and what I knew and was already experiencing to be teaching in practice. In the end, however, I decided to put aside these less immediate concerns for a while. I needed to focus on getting through my assignments and qualify as a teacher, whilst also learning to be an effective parent of a young child.

Whilst realising the opportunities my tertiary studies provided, I came to understand and experience that much of my deeper learning related to the balancing of all my responsibilities whilst simultaneously attempting to develop different parts of myself. I wanted to achieve academically but certainly not at the expense of other aspects of my life, particularly motherhood. Learning had to be all-rounded for it to make any real sense to me. I also knew by then that I would be working in a teaching or leading role with people and that maintaining harmonious and productive relationships would always remain very important in my life. These kinds of motivation intuitively and eventually led me toward myself and my inner life as much as toward learning from books or by external means.

Despite inadequacies I perceived within the tertiary education system, I look back with pleasure to this period where I first learned that I am as intellectually and academically capable as the next person. I learned that age has no bearing on one’s success or failure to learn. I learned that it is more a question of motivation, attitude and self-esteem that influence the final outcome and whole process of learning. I also learned that there are always a few unique individual educators that stand-out in the crowd for students and who have been the source of true inspiration and encouragement for my own educational progress. They are the kinds of people who are rarely ever forgotten and remain influential throughout the remainder of one’s life-long learning experiences.

In general I began to wonder about what kind of content and processes there were in teacher training courses as well as thinking more about ‘competent personality’ types within the field of education. I have recently been hearing the term ‘emotional intelligence’ which I believe is getting closer to the aspects of character that I am highlighting in this inquiry. In any case, during these experiences with
my further studies, it was clear that when it came to examining teacher's professional skills and personal qualities, in the final analysis I was mainly interested in how a particular teacher's being affected me as a student. That includes how supportive, knowledgeable, encouraging and stimulating they were regarding my current studies as well as in terms of influencing my attitudes and vision for my future.

The Professional Path: Choosing One's Way

Experience is not what happens to a (wo)man; it is what a (wo)man does with what happens to [her] him

Aldous Huxley

Through my considerable experience of learning with children over the years, I had realised I had a deep interest in the psychological aspects of their development. I tended to believe like Dewey that "education, therefore, must begin with the psychological insight into the child’s capacities, interests, and habits" (in Garforth 1966:48). Nevertheless, I knew that by the time I was professionally qualified to teach, I would already have had much to do with children's development through bringing up my own child. Since I also knew I needed to honour the values I had around learning and to be free to teach in a way that suited my personal style, it meant that I would probably not fit into the school system. These feelings led to my growing interest in adult teaching.

Whilst travelling in Europe with my son, during my year out from undergraduate studies, I discovered the professional direction I would take after graduating. I was going to enrol in a Diploma in Education in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages), and would teach adults. This qualification would enable me to maintain global connections here in Australia and also to teach overseas during my travel periods. It would also provide great opportunities for teaching work in Australia with migrants and foreign students. I had realised that regular connection with people from other nationalities and cultures, was becoming essential for my life's meaning. I also felt that my choice to work with adults would provide opportunities to be more on the same 'level' as my students. I felt I could learn a lot about my own psyche by working with adults since I knew I wanted to learn from as much as teach to others.

It was some years later before I realised that my interests in the psychology of learning as well as my continual seeking of connectedness in my work, were leading me toward the spiritual aspects of learning. I have since learned and believe, like Thomas Moore that "psychology and spirituality need to be seen as one" (1994:xv). At the time however, I also largely saw that my future teaching work with adults from all over the world was a way in which I could combine my immediate interests with the vaguer more 'universal' direction I had taken. Although I had never thought to specialise in TESOL before, this decision to do so was so certain, firm and accurate that I never questioned it from then on. I knew it
would satisfy much of my inner motivations and unconscious tendencies, providing the contact with the wider world that I desired.

Upon my return to Australia and university after our year overseas, I found it very difficult to settle down and study. My travelling experiences were so rich, real and relevant in terms of learning and personal growth that the following year back home made university studies seem rather an indulgence. They were also now beginning to feel less relevant, fulfilling and rather disconnected from ‘real life’ or the world at large. These were of course similar to my son’s sentiments about high school. The difference was that I had chosen this way for myself, so had more intrinsic motivation to make the best of it. In any case though, I found myself once again comparing formal learning with learning from ‘real’ life’s experience. However, my goal to finally obtain teaching qualifications which would help me to maintain ‘global connections’, as well as paid work spurred me on. The nature of the subjects I was studying were in any case interesting enough to explore in themselves.

Teacher as Learner: Developing Intuition

*Intuition can help bridge the boundaries that seem to separate us from others and from nature*

Linda Jean Shepherd

My first professional teaching post was an unusual one. It was teaching in the Long Bay Complex of prisons. During the Diploma in Education studies in 1980, Esther Gans, another mature age student, and I, initiated a program of teaching English as a second language to male migrant prisoners in one of the maximum security prisons in the complex. We began by investigating their English language needs and eventually, after much bureaucratic officialdom, worked as volunteer teachers for the remainder of the year. We were subsequently employed on a part-time basis, as the first female teachers to be employed in a maximum security prison in this complex.

Nothing I had learned during my Diploma in Education course prepared me for such an ‘unreal, real-life’ teaching situation. It was immediately evident that what was more important than any specific methodological approach was the ability to handle both the physical and the psychological environment with maturity, confidence and authenticity. So too, was acceptance of the eccentricity and individuality of the ‘students’ themselves. Our own learning in this unique teaching situation grew as we regularly collaborated on creative and positive ways to approach our ‘class’. No doubt any formal teaching techniques, went out the ‘barred’ window as we marvelled at the spontaneous and often enjoyable moments we shared. I often felt there was a sense of complicity involved with the inmates and wanted to believe that at least for some of them, they experienced a sense of empowerment and fun around learning and perhaps some worth and value of themselves during the process.
Whether this was my own wishful thinking is uncertain, but it became important for me to feel useful and to be a positive educational influence. Surprisingly, one of the most unexpected influences we had during this period was upon some of the prison officers. As a security regulation during each class, we were assigned an officer to sit in the room to ‘protect’ us. On frequent occasions, remarks from these officers after the class were to the effect “we did not realise what these guys go through with their language and cultural problems”. Not only would these officers be exposed to some of our innovative teaching approaches, but saw and commented that they learned something of the difficulties and issues associated with inmates’ lack of complete language ability.

Our regular use of songs, jokes and role-play for learning was undoubtedly a great departure from most of their past classroom experiences (for both the inmates and the officers). I was excited about being able to use some of these creative, communicative techniques with such success. I enjoyed what I realised was a different way of approaching teaching, as well as the ‘different classroom’ in which it took place. I also knew we were all having an effect on each other, and I wanted our contribution to be positive, creative and memorable. We as teachers also became learners of life from the ‘inside’, which of course included very different perspectives and experiences from our own backgrounds. I found this fascinating and it made me reflect a lot on the common human qualities and psychological needs that connect us to one another despite very different external environments.

Essentially the most valuable skills I gained during this period had to do with thinking on my feet and feeling the pulse of the learners. Some of the teaching treasures I started to accumulate within this incongruous and unlikely context were, learning to let go of well planned lessons and methods and to trust the process whilst communicating and responding spontaneously, creatively and positively. It is interesting to note that the development of these qualities had little to do with anything I had learned during my academic studies.

Since both Esther and I were mothers, we were both quite experienced in the world and had developed the ability to be flexible, alert, and above all maintain a good sense of humour. We tended to spend considerable time collaborating not only on lesson plans, (a rather fruitless waste of time under the circumstances) but on our own attitudes, and way of presenting ourselves to our students. It became an important concern for me, perhaps because of my younger and more ‘vulnerable’ age. Undoubtedly too, our students were an experienced, worldly lot who demanded that we remain sincere, alert and fundamentally congruent in our attitudes and demeanour. In other words we felt that they would definitely see through any falsity or pretension.

This unusual classroom gave me my first professional teaching/facilitating role. Through team-teaching I gained great opportunities for exchanging professional skills and developing personally. More significantly, it was in prison that I first
became aware of both the direct and indirect effect of our individual personalities upon our learners. My increasing fascination and experiences with this subject continue to have a powerful effect on my own attitude to teaching in general.

My colleague ‘in crime’ was a very amusing, bright and lively grandmother who had the quick wit, charm and humour that endeared her to most people, the students (inmates) and officers alike. Her youthful approach, alongside an undoubted maturity seemed to help transform some often delicate and difficult situations and make learning fun. My own contribution perhaps came in terms of being very present (aware) and feeling an empathy with the students as fellow human beings, as well as with my colleague. I feel that much of this empathy was expressed non-verbally as much as through any spoken language or specific teaching technique, although I liked to use a lot of mime and role play.

I also learned to appreciate the incongruity of the situation - two middle-class women in an all male maximum security prison. I asked myself why I ended up inside a prison, working with some of the most hardened members of society. As well as my zealous nature and a desire to help the underdog, I knew I was drawn more toward the psychology of learning and personal development than to any aspect of linguistics or methodology that I had learned during my training. I wanted to experience going beyond our usual designated roles, such as gender. I wanted to continue to experience communication across different cultures, different lifestyles, backgrounds and socio-economic borders.

I wanted to facilitate English language learning and personal development despite the external, physical barriers. Obviously some of the prisoners’ lack of English gave them a decided disadvantage in ‘getting a fair go’ inside the judicial system so I like to think our presence there was of practical linguistic use and valuable psychological support. The program, as a pilot did in fact expand and eventually we began to teach in two other prisons in the complex. The work was stimulating, challenging and I enjoyed my learning during this first teaching adventure.

I think my deep interest in the basic awareness and attitudes of both learners and teachers originated within these institutional walls. More specifically it was a deep fascination with how people manage to overcome difficult situations which held my absorption during this period. Despite the obvious lack of physical freedom that existed within the limits of the prison walls, I was very interested in the question of ‘choosing one’s own attitude’ over and above external influences. I had frequently been curious about prisons, or human internment and I was interested to know how one could discover and develop one’s own inner potential and strengths within such environments. I often felt there would be some value in being deprived of normal, external influences and support, although I did not want to try it myself! I now realise this fascination pointed to the interest I have held for many years, with the life of ‘inner learning’ and the developmental potential of humans.
In this physical restrictive environment, I observed our students who genuinely wanted to improve their situation, comparing their attitudes with those who had ulterior reasons for attending the classes. As Frankl had learned through extraordinary means, "In the final analysis it becomes clear the sort of person the prisoner became was the result of an inner decision, and not the result of the camp influences alone" (1959:105). I find the psychology involved in making these 'inner decisions' under such conditions, a fascinating subject in itself and one which I believe can still have great bearing on my inquiry. Throughout my two year teaching term in prison, my own intentions and motivations also began to be important to observe and examine. I often felt 'the fear' in experimenting with different ways to teach, but decided to 'do it anyway'. On the other hand I knew I would not be so brave if I had not had a colleague with me. Needless to say, it was not always fun and games teaching in the prison so after two years, bureaucratic complexities eventually discouraged us from staying on indefinitely. In any case it came time to move on and to obtain experience in more conventional teaching posts and to practice teaching with more structured methodologies.

**Language Teaching: Experiences and Influences**

Significant or experiential learning has "a quality of personal involvement ... it is self-initiated ... it is pervasive ... it is evaluated by the learner ... its essence is meaning". Carl Rogers

Since the prison period, 1980-1982, my TESOL teaching experience in Australia has been predominantly with adult migrants and temporary overseas students in a range of institutions from university to private colleges and short periods with high school students. The learners have included many nationalities and ages from varied socio-economic backgrounds, and incorporate all levels of English language abilities and purposes for learning. Significant teaching experience has been obtained with The Institute of Languages, University of NSW, Adult Migrant English Service, TAFE, and in several private colleges. More recent work has included conducting professional development courses for teachers and other professionals through my private consultancy, Realearning.

Initially, I found the 'normal' teaching environments almost a breeze after teaching in prison. The confidence that I had gained from this experience provided a wonderful basis for my further teaching work in any classroom situation and equipped me to respond in practical and functional ways to students' immediate needs. In other words, due to the irregular environment, I had been obliged to place secondary importance on lesson plans and more on the process and psychological factors of learning.

Based on very down-to-earth experience, I developed a faith that the process of learning would always provide immediate, relevant and meaningful opportunities for the students. This is particularly possible because TESOL teaching is in general not content driven, the process, being English language communication, is the content. Over the years of teaching in many varied
classroom situations I have found that following detailed lesson plans and even having specific language aims, more times than not, becomes secondary to what actually happens under the surface of learning. I believe this phenomenon to be a fascinating subject in itself.

Without consciously realising my passion at the time, from these early teaching days to the present, my interests have always been with the psychological and unconscious elements of teaching and learning. During these early ‘normal’ teaching days, I was attracted to several educators who come from the humanistic school of language teaching. These included Earl Stevick (1981) and Stephen Krashen and Terrell in their “Natural Approach” (1983), which places emphasis on acquisition of language than the actual learning of language. Krashen theory states that the way people learn a second language is in a natural manner much the same as a child first learns his/her first tongue. This is in contrast to learning about the language and how it is structured, for example, through learning grammar rules or particular emphasis on structures. This natural approach, to which I was very drawn, but did not explore in any depth at the time, confirmed my intuitive teaching tendencies toward a more organic nature.

The most effective method I developed was to draw out language directly from the students and to ‘upgrade, exploit and recycle’ this as a means of acquiring and learning meaningful and immediately relevant language. This approach encourages the teacher to provide opportunities and develop a range of activities for practical language acquisition. The great benefits in generating language in this way are that most students become intrinsically motivated and involved in their learning because of its immediacy and practicality even if this is the case for only one particular student. I have always found it hard to imagine how even the most current, creative and colourful text-books could be more exciting or relevant than the students’ own lives or immediate needs and concerns.

I was and always have been very interested in students’ own personal and professional backgrounds and found I wanted to utilise this knowledge to be the basis for their further language learning and expression. This learning/teaching approach, which I began to use mainly as a result of my intuitive prison teaching experiences, is sometimes known as ‘student generated learning’ or ‘generative learning’. There is a description of this approach in ‘Raising Awareness within the Learner’ in Chapter 6 and a complete elaboration by John Wade in “Teaching without Text Books” (1992).

Another early teaching influence who has relevance to this inquiry, is Caleb Gattegno who is known for developing a method of teaching, called ‘the silent way’ (1972). He encouraged teachers to become ‘students of learning’, to become “more vulnerable to the minute dynamics of learning” (in Underhill, 1989 a:12) beyond the usual classroom activities. His concept of silence refers not only to a reduction of the acoustic silence but also the psychological noise within both the
teacher and the student. The idea is that one can more easily respond to the subtle aspects of the learning process, hence ensuring overall, more effective learning. Gattegno also proposed that one of the aims of the educator should be to help learners to access their “own supreme learning faculties, which have been manifested by each of us as babies” (in Underhill, 1988 a:11).

The subsequent discovery of ‘Suggestopedia’

The communicative nature of the prevailing TESOL teaching methodologies also provided a rich range of activities and resources that one can employ to promote specific aspects of the target language. However, despite this richness, such as the use of role-play, mime, songs and games, I eventually began to feel a slight sense of dissatisfaction and limitations around my teaching. I was struggling to find ways to deal with students’ stress, maintain relevance and meaning and develop personal integrity through my approach. I began to realise I wanted to move into the personal development aspects of learning through the medium of the English language, in contrast to focussing on specific language items themselves.

I was interested in drawing out students to learn to express their psychological needs as well as their physical needs. This, I was beginning to feel, was a necessity, as well as a developed ‘art’. Although at the time there was still much I did not technically know about how people learn, I felt that if I could respond spontaneously and practically to different levels of their ‘beings’, there was more likelihood of some of their psychological and spiritual needs also being taken care of in a way that is caring and not culturally imposing.

I felt quite adept at this drawing out of students and was delighted that I did not have to concern myself with discipline as I might have in dealing with school students within the system. However, the general style of teaching was still in the traditional form, with the teacher holding all the power, in contrast to real facilitation as I understood it at the time. This was a term with which I had not yet become familiar and most of my role models and teaching influences did not promote it as an alternative to the ‘teaching paradigm’. I had no real way at the

10 See 'Seminal Research: The work of Dr Georgi Lozanov' in Chapter 3.
time of learning from my colleagues about different ways to facilitate. Later I was to discover how integral facilitation is to learning in the new paradigm and understood why I was feeling as I was. As Denis Postle says:

Facilitation is a key concept in the move from the old to the new paradigm. It marks the shift from a primarily authoritarian approach to leadership to a more co-operative one (1988:172).

As yet I was not really familiar with Carl Rogers and his promotion of helping learners to realise their own unique potential to become “fully functioning persons” (1969). I was feeling that, despite my efforts, I was eventually to discover many inadequacies within my own teaching approaches as well as within the students’ limiting attitudes to their own learning. Intuitively, I was sensing the limitations of communicative language teaching methodologies to raise awareness and sensitivity to the subtleties and language below the surface. As I became more interested in the way the mind works, I felt a sense of inadequacy or at least ignorance in knowing how to facilitate the kind of learning processes which would bring about deeper personal growth and even real transformation.

Although in the TESOL field, the traditional teacher dominating as the authoritarian figure, had long made way for a more authentic style of teaching, I was becoming once again interested in the question of power roles, at least in the classroom. ‘The silent way’ had also made me aware of the amount of time that most teachers, including myself, tended to dominate the classroom “talk time” often at the expense of student “talk time”. Despite the creative and enjoyable techniques used, I eventually realised I was as guilty as the next teacher of dominating the learning process and luxuriating in my position of ‘yailer of power’.

I began to feel uneasy about this possibility and yet was also battling with how to encourage students to take their own power and more responsibility for their own learning. Most of them came from very traditional educational backgrounds and already the communicative style of teaching we used required an enormous shift of perception and behaviour for many of the students. Except for the very extroverted and confident ones, it seemed that most students were only willing to go so far in claiming their power. Perhaps they felt that the teacher was abdicating her official role and not doing ‘proper job’ if she allowed the students to take more control and responsibility for their own learning.

Beneath the Surface: Non-Verbal Factors

Silence, accompanied by appropriate non-verbal behaviour, is a natural part of learning, of listening, and of authentic interaction

Adrian Underhill

In any case, as I became more aware of my own state of mind at different times, I became more aware of the underlying personal issues that affected students’
learning, in particular the stress factor. In addition, despite my lack of dependence on detailed lesson plans, I found myself caught up in the increasing teacher stress that surrounds the whole area of lesson preparation. This pressure came both from within and without and eventually I discovered what an insidious power that stress has over much of our learning and teaching lives, for students and teachers alike. I knew that, like other teachers, I cared about my students and I thought that was enough to make them forget their angst. It wasn’t. There was often something missing in the learning process and I knew there were elements beyond the obvious that I had not considered. I intuitively knew that current methods were still inadequate and I knew that if I wanted to remain a teacher, I needed to find the missing pieces.

I was later to discover more of what Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow had to say on this subject. Certainly I felt that in general education tended to be void of feeling or personal meaning, with ‘little relevance for the whole person’ (see Rogers in ‘Potential’, Chapter 6). This growing sense of untapped learning potential was starting to make itself heard to me. Yet it was my growing interest and awareness of the stress factor that highlighted the existence and power of the limiting beliefs we all hold about ourselves. The student beliefs are about their ability to learn, and the teachers’ beliefs about their ability to teach what they are paid for. I also realised how frustrated or depressed teachers could become if the student hadn’t learned what they had been trying to teach. There seemed to be no mention of, let alone emphasis on, the concept of developing human potential within learning and teaching domains. As in the dominant traditional teaching paradigm, it is often assumed that even as adults, they are empty vessels which can be filled and eventually reach a maximum level of capabilities. My intuition and experience was beginning to tell me otherwise.

There was no doubt that my teaching was more effective when I allowed myself to be intuitive and to trust those aspects of myself and to let the process dictate the direction in which the lesson would go. Whenever I did not do this, I realised later it was often because of my own lack of confidence to ‘let go’ of some of the control of a particular agenda, as well as a reticence to ‘be conspicuous’ by doing things differently. Although I began to be more aware of the insidious form that fear and stress for the learner takes, I also began for the first time to become aware of how it was also the case for teachers, especially for those starting out. The general over-focus on lesson plans and content matter at the expense of the natural process, greatly contributed to teacher angst and stresses around preparation and teaching.

I was often prompted to remind anxious, new teachers that their students would be more nervous than they were, and so they should initially just concentrate on building up student confidence and managing the group dynamics, before attempting to teach something. It was becoming increasingly clear that I was not the only one who had not been prepared throughout my teacher training to deal with learners as people with all their humanness. I felt that teaching training in
the field was inadequate, when the subject, for instance linguistics, and even classroom techniques, are emphasised at the expense of the human, personal development factors. This also seemed to validate more and more the intuitive and innovative type of teaching which I was developing and often relying on.

A constant question abounded in the teachers’ staffroom and within our own heads, ‘what am I going to teach?’ I realised later the question was never how am I going to teach? That is, the emphasis was always on the content of teaching rather than the process. This process of teaching would naturally include the personality of the teacher herself. Although I was gradually learning to deal with some of my own stress through the practice of meditation, I had not yet learned how to minimise or deal with my students’ stress and inner fears around learning. I also did not know how people learn differently or how to promote more of their potential. These were areas of increasing interest and importance as I gradually and intuitively reflected more on my own teaching practices and student responses and behaviour in the classroom.

I realised how the ‘blocks’ and stresses around students’ language learning, as well as having to adjust to a new culture and lifestyle, was quite paralysing at times. Stress was an obvious obstacle to enjoyable and easy learning for many, if not the majority of students. Undoubtedly, many of the migrant students were suffering extreme culture shock and many of the refugee students had many other kinds of traumas to deal with. I, like many other teachers, probably assumed that, apart from some extreme cases, all other students would respond to the terrific teaching techniques, learn the language and soon just ‘fit in’. Many did but I also could often ‘see’ some of the negative learning associations and fears of inadequacy reflected in some of the students’ body language and I began to see the temporary nature of some of their enjoyment. I realised there was more to real learning than what I already knew about, and wanted to go deeper, to get to the heart of learning. I also wanted to learn how to give enough of myself in my capacity without becoming emotionally and psychologically drained in the process.

Despite an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with my own teaching and sense of awareness of something missing, it was clear, that for many students, we teachers became much more than just a classroom teacher for them. Many of us received (and still do) letters and calls from ex-students long gone from the classes, and often from across the other side of the world. I began to feel rather uneasy about this and instinctively knew I still had a lot to learn about being a really effective teacher as well as a truly congruent person. I also wondered about all those gaps in my education and past learning experiences. I knew then that these gaps were all essentially about learning more about myself as a person, that is, the ‘inner me’. I began to think about the powerful and possibly lasting influence we were having upon our students, in a way that we may never have imagined.
I also became very aware of the ‘teacher performance’ phenomenon that is still very prevalent today in adult TESOL teaching at least. Many teachers, including myself at times, took on a role more of actor than teacher and thereby, whilst perhaps demonstrating aspects of language, essentially tended to rob the students of power or opportunities for developing it. I began to feel uneasy about this role we often tend to slip into. I also still found that the notions of power and control were no different amongst my colleagues in adult institutions than in the school system. I wondered how student awareness, participation and learning potential could really be maximised whilst there was a constant need to control the students and the process. I gradually became very interested in these questions around development of the teacher’s ‘inner self’, which place some attention on the question of power and control.

My further practices in the classroom were often dominated by spontaneity in an attempt to utilise the creative elements available to me and in the hope that I might reach those students who were shy or stressed. I intuitively felt and had learned from prison that spontaneity, creativity and humour in the classroom provided some of the tools to deal with both the physical and psychological issues in the learning environment. Despite this, I allowed myself to be bogged down at times with what was expected and what the ‘normal’ way to teach was. I also knew I had not yet mastered the art of facilitating true student expression and I developed a growing sense of restlessness around my own teaching, feeling there was something missing, but I didn’t know what and I didn’t know how!

**Reflections on my Learning and Teaching**

*If we are not learning and teaching we are not awake and alive. Learning is not only like health, it is health.*

Marilyn Ferguson

My most significant personal learning experiences had nothing to do with schooling or formal learning. I believed that “schools, books, exams, and prizes are poor substitutes for education which comes naturally from life” (Clegg, 1988:15). I had come to appreciate the ‘educational’ value of my experience which had developed through travelling, and was continuing to develop through the exploration of alternative perspectives, different lifestyles and motherhood. I was beginning to experience a growing sense of inner power that my interactions and connectedness with my child, in particular, were providing me.

This role of ‘solo’ mother seems to have taught me more than any other role or experience I have had in my life. I have had to take much time and care to create the basis for a fulfilling life-long relationship with all the responsibilities that has entailed. It has been and continues to include learning experiences of depth and quality. I have had to examine much of my own consciousness, behaviour and way of being. I have learned about total commitment and unconditional love and in turn nourished the seed for my conscious interest in spirituality.
I also understand how my “experience. . . is a process of continual reconstruction: by drawing on the past for the solution of present problems it shapes itself into new patterns which incorporate expanded potentiality for future experiencing” (Garforth 1966:15). It is the development of these new patterns and new perspectives which have come to interest me and around which I believe much of this inquiry is about. John Dewey’s concept of ‘experience’ has helped me to support and ‘validate’ my self inquiring. I now understand why it has been so important for me to continually dig deep throughout this process. As so much of my life’s learning has arisen from personal experience it is experience itself which becomes the integrating factor in my own education. It also provides a sense of “continuity and connectedness” (ibid p.21) and a greater balance between my inner and outer worlds.

For a long time my inevitable, unconscious and conditioned tendencies had been to search everywhere else but within myself. As I reflect upon my ‘personal roots’, I am reminded of the significance of the Indian story about the princess who searched and searched for years for her valuable, jewelled necklace she thought to be lost, only to eventually find them hanging around her own neck. Steinem found too, that for a long time she had been neglecting her “internal center of power” until she finally began to pinpoint it within herself (1992:22). It has become clear that my personal learning and inner experience have become an integral part of my overall educational and professional development.

When I became a student of meditation and subsequently discovered integrated learning methods, I began to understand more deeply the implications of some of my early educational teaching theoretical influences. For instance, Gattegno’s concept of silence and his contention that ‘only awareness is educable’ (1972), has been a powerful reminder for me of the close link between awareness, and the spiritual development aspects of learning. It is also a reminder not to get too caught up in emphasising content and even different teaching techniques. Rather the emphasis should be more on developing positive personal values and resourceful states of mind. In other words, the silent forms of communication that inform teaching and learning practices are the powers beneath the surface.

I also now understand why I was attracted to the humanistic and communicative approaches to language teaching, especially those that were described as ‘awareness raising activities’. To me these activities were not something I used at the end of the day or as a ‘filler’ or diversion. In fact I intuitively, without knowing the real depth and value behind them, used them as the basis for my whole approach to teaching. My own awareness as a learner was gradually also being raised in the process. I am not surprised then when I frequently see or hear the name of one of these early language teaching educators or particular techniques in association with the integrated learning domain.
For the first eight years of my teaching, I had not yet discovered A/L theories or brain research relating to learning processes. Absorbing and embracing these findings provided me with many answers and filled in many missing gaps in my understanding of being a ‘teacher of learning’. Through my own learning as an adult student and as an innovative and creative teacher, I realised I had often thought about and intuitively practised many of the basic principles that are involved in accelerated learning. During those early teaching years, I also knew nothing of the specialised terminology that is part of the A/L methodologies. Although I had not used the same terms before, many notions like ‘congruence’ and ‘positive suggestion’ were areas below the surface of learning that have naturally interested me in being a ‘good teacher’.

As I began exploring the power of the mind, the idea of spiritual development and even ‘world transformation’ began to have meaning and importance in my life. I was learning that whether I chose to or not, I was having an automatic and significant influence upon my students on a daily level. I began wondering more and more about what kind of sub-conscious messages I was sending to them. I also began to ask more questions about the significance (or not) of my teaching work and to my life as a whole. I wondered if it was really what I was destined to be doing in my professional life.

My learning and teaching experiences and reflections have radically increased my awareness of and sensitivity to the learning process in general, my own as well as my students. I have usually felt as much a learner as the students I teach. I have a deep need for the global perspective within both my teaching and learning experiences and have been intuitive and eclectic in the way I teach within the ‘new learning paradigm’. I have always been fascinated with the universality of people as learners and have often attempted to facilitate deeper connections between them through my way of teaching and being. Until I discovered A/L, I learned more from my students, my travels, my experiences and personal reflections than from books, formal learning or professional teacher training.

I am and have always been rather uneasy about the term ‘teacher’. I feel happier with the term ‘educator’ or ‘facilitator of learning’. In fact I don’t like labels at all. If I am now asked what is my profession, I sometimes feel uncertain of how to answer. Like Carl Rogers, I realise, to some extent, ‘I have lost interest in being a teacher’ (1969). That is in the commonly accepted understanding of the term of being one who has all the knowledge. For me being a teacher means being a learner of ‘things that matter’.

In the past two chapters, I have aimed to draw attention to the benefit of learning through direct experience. I place great value on experience and exploration of a subject or concept in a direct, first-hand manner. I have been an ideal ‘experiential learner’. Now I am learning to be an ideal experiential educator. I am committed to awakening my students to their own beauty and potential and encouraging
meaningful inner development and personal growth through experience, interactions and reflection.

I have also learned to love and value learning from books. I love to browse through them, devour them and to soak up the atmosphere in the buildings which house them. This wasn’t always so. I have grown to love them as I discover many connections of my own thoughts and experiences with respected and admired ‘new paradigm thinkers’ and educators from around the globe. My readings frequently come after my experience, helping to clarify and add depth to my understandings, insights to my past experiences and expansion to my heart and mind. I have now come to realise that it is accelerated personal growth rather than the popularly promoted understanding of ‘acceleration’ of learning, that I am interested in furthering.

My deepest interests and questions around this present inquiry have evolved as a result of my interest in and argument that the personal should be present in both the educational and the professional. This curiosity has evolved not as a result of knowing about new theories of learning but primarily from my life experiences, my continual interest and observations of human behaviour and my vision for the future. I have learned to love learning and I am often passionate about it- mine and others. Today, I am still committed to making my own and others’ learning meaningful, purposeful and transformative.

I have come to understand that my fascination with learning and how it can be facilitated, has much to do with the potential that education has for personal, spiritual and eventual world transformation. I am further inspired by the words and philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore.

But for us to maintain the self-respect which we owe to ourselves and to our creator, we must make the purpose of our education nothing short of the highest purpose of man, the fullest growth and freedom of soul (1951: 5).

This purpose and this passion which I have come to call spirit of learning will be developed and this potential possibility of “the fullest growth and freedom of the soul” will be explored via the educator of integrated learning approaches.
CHAPTER 3

Exploring the Forest: The Learning Context

- Essential Growth
- Branching Out
- Growing Up
- Reaching Higher & Deeper
- Introduction
CHAPTER 3
Exploring the Forest: The Learning Context

Introduction

This chapter is concerned with a context beyond my own ‘roots’ and explores my particular experience and involvement with the domain of integrated accelerative learning. This leads to an introduction of some of the interconnecting, global and spiritual influences and experiences which underpin this domain for me. In doing so, major themes have emerged throughout the whole inquiry. These have become fundamental when exploring the relevance of personal, spiritual development in learning and teaching practices, particularly, for the ‘new paradigm educator’.

Integration is a concept which defines both my inner and outer views and practices as well as underlies the theoretical principles of accelerative learning technologies which I am exploring. It is mainly the pursuit of integration, my original impetus for this inquiry, which has led me far and wide through a forest of exciting, diverse, but interconnected literature, and personal and professional interactions.

I would also like to set the mood for an ancient view embraced by the “sages of antiquities”, which is now re-emerging in the West; that is that we are responsible for the state of our own consciousness (Edrington 1984:2). This view is central to my assumptions around personal/spiritual development within the context of new paradigm learning and teaching. Furthermore, I relate the development of this responsibility to contributing to personal transformation within both the learner and the teacher. This transformation in turn, influences the consciousness of education and society in general and ultimately the global consciousness.

In order to understand more of my thinking around this inquiry, we will together explore some of this rich forest of literature and experiences. We will ‘branch out’ into exploring accelerative learning in some detail and in its most general sense. The aim is not only to facilitate an understanding of this potentially powerful approach to learning, but also to provide a broader and more far-reaching picture for a new paradigm for learning, which I feel, cannot be separated from the essence of my thesis. This paradigm is one which shifts the emphasis from a subject-learning focus to one where learning about the self as a learner takes priority. It is based on the assumption that all learners (you and I included), need to understand about our own brain/mind functioning; in other words, our own consciousness in order to maximise our full human learning potential.
The focus is on exploring the depth and breadth of personal/spiritual development within the A/L practitioner (a self-acknowledged life-long learner). I believe there is a need for an enhanced general awareness, to remove ourselves from the habitual “trance of ordinary life” (Deikman 1982:129). In purposefully dealing with teaching techniques that change people’s states, this ‘awakeness’ and alertness is no more important than for those of us who are engaged in such education. It is also important to understand that the innovative learning technologies we are embracing are not be used at a superficial level as ‘faddish fast fix’ methods to solve deep seated educational problems.

My explorations through ‘the forest’ have led me to a wealth of provocative and exciting dimensions of thought, imagination and vision, where the transformation of consciousness of great masses of students (and educators) is a real possibility. I now invite you to meander with me to taste some of the ‘fruits’ of my observations, understandings and experiences.

Growing Up: Toward the Integration of Learning and Living

A master in the art of living
draws no sharp distinction
between his work and his play,
his labour and his leisure,
his mind and his body,
his education and his recreation.

He hardly knows which is which.

He simply pursues his vision
of excellence through whatever he is doing
and leaves others
to determine
whether he is working or playing.

To himself he always seems to be doing both.

This poem\(^\text{11}\) was reproduced in an article called “Creative Process of Accelerative Learning” by Marie McClenaghan (1988). She felt that the poem “captures the spirit of accelerated learning” and describes it as a “blueprint for success and fulfilment” (1988:112). For me, however, the poem captures a great deal more than the essence of one particular learning methodology, albeit an integrated one. Upon my discovery of the poem in 1989, I realised it conveyed a true sense of my passion around learning, teaching and living in general. Furthermore, it also expresses the deep impulses underlying my pursuits toward integration within my whole life and in turn this research inquiry.

In essence, this integration has been about bringing together my spiritual understandings and therefore my deeply personal life, to merge with and help make sense of my professional work and related activities. The gaps in my earlier education and intellectual outlook corresponded to those in my psyche. There was very often a deep yearning for an explanation of the world which appealed to my whole brain, whole being. I wanted a philosophical view of life which would satisfy both the rational, ‘left-brain’ logical side of my brain as well as the metaphysical, spiritual part of me.

However, I never consciously sought an integrative or mystical explanation of the world until after I experienced a deep change in my inner conscious awareness. This shift came about as a result of extensive personal questioning and questings, overseas travel, practice of meditation, introspection and a deep inner knowing (intuition). I am often reminded that it is not my external activities which have radically changed since this ‘shift’, but the quality of my consciousness, that is my thought processes. The way in which I approach both my personal and professional activities has changed and indeed is continuing to do so.

One could also say that my integrative pursuits are also a search for balance, harmony and congruency between the conscious and unconscious parts of myself. These tendencies are reflected in the integrative nature of the learning technologies I have since discovered. They involve a recognition and use of all aspects of the human brain and self in the learning process. This valuing and inclusion of all parts of the self are integral not only to the learning context for my explorations but also for the process of documentation itself.

Robert Ornstein and Roger Sperry’s work in split-brain studies on the various functionings of the two hemispheres (1977) make an impact regarding the concept of integration as well as supporting my interest in consciousness as a ‘causal reality’. Their work paved the way for educators as well as psychologists to apply the knowledge of how people learn to develop and enhance learning in both the cognitive and affective domains. Ornstein in fact, goes on to elaborate understanding beyond the oversimplification of the left/right brain split and has played a great part in ‘popularising’ the enormous potential of the human brain (1986). There are many others who have also contributed to this field of brain research and in turn to the development of an integrative approach to learning and teaching.

In accelerative learning there is a fundamental and particular focus on whole brain-learning in contrast to emphasising the more traditional left-brain, analytical and logical style of learning. This term for me also implies ‘whole-person’ or holistic learning, with an emphasis on using techniques which engage and integrate all aspects of the brain, as well as the body, mind, emotions and spirit. The association of the poem that McClenaghan makes with A/L then, is apt. It is
also a powerful reminder for me of the reasons for a growing sense of inadequacy and restlessness around my earlier teaching practices.

Despite the enthusiasm for my early language teaching work, I was becoming aware of some of the limitations of the ‘communicative approach’ as explored in Chapter 2. I realised that beyond the teaching of English communication I wanted learners to learn about themselves and to help them integrate positive learning strategies and attitudes into their personal lives. I also wanted to feel that my professional teaching was integrated and compatible with my personal life. This meant that I needed to incorporate new teaching methodologies into my approach in a way that was natural, stress-free, exciting and professionally ‘valid’.

As John Dewey clearly argued that both learning and work should be integrated (in Garforth, 1966), I also realised that I had never wanted to draw distinctions between my learning, my teaching and indeed my whole life. I was beginning to understand the reasons for my earlier seeking of meaning in my daily existence, as well as this later questioning of my own teaching approaches. What I seek now through my pursuits, both personal and professional, is a more ‘whole me’, a more learned or rather a wiser me, and to be part of the creation of a better, more harmonious education and future. I also tend to want to facilitate the same in my learners.

The poem then, has continued to be a source of inspiration, indicating that, underlying my involvement with integrative learning approaches, is a much deeper drive and yearning for wholeness, fulfilment and maturity. I regularly use this poem in my teaching as a beautiful and artistic wall poster, a practice referred to as the use of visual ‘peripherals’ to convey ‘suggestion’ to the sub-conscious mind (see ‘Seminal Research’).

I now view these inclinations of connecting learning with life’s meaning as natural and increasingly urgent just as I would a drive for my basic survival. Bernie Neville discusses the question of how the process of teaching and learning is related to questions of ultimate meaning. He finds this question too hard for him at a conscious level and concludes that “meaning is Psyche’s work”(1989:9). Perhaps this explanation contributes to the reasons for my linking real learning with the more subtle and spiritual aspects of oneself and with finding a greater purpose for one’s education.

Essentially, real learning for me involves shifting, changing, extending and expanding one’s perceptions and consciousness in order to absorb and assimilate new information, experience and understandings. I believe it is in this expansion and the pushing back of limiting barriers that one can experience a sense of one’s own potential and interconnection with the whole of life. My growing awareness and experience as both teacher and learner within this new field of learning, as well as throughout this whole inquiry has tended to highlight these major themes.
It has helped provide the basis and focus for furthering and deepening my thinking, readings and explorations.

As I have travelled upward and outward throughout my metaphorical ‘learning tree’, toward integrated learning and living, I have met or heard, either personally or read through their written works, many like-minded, brilliant and visionary thinkers and authors from around the planet. I have discovered a ‘forest’ of literature and references with regard to the new learning paradigm, which encourages learning as a life-long process and in doing so has the potential to capture the ‘spirit of learning’ (my term). I have also found that many of these tendencies, activities and experiences have come together, to synchronise and synthesise in a way similar to that described by Csikszentmihalyi as a flow state (1988).

The source of this state can be traced to many sources, including the intrinsic motivation that so fascinated Abraham Maslow. It is characterised by “feelings of enjoyment, concentration and deep involvement” (Dickinson 1990:12). As Csikszentmihalyi states there is much more current interest by psychologists in this flow state. This is because past scientific efforts tended to discount “the most obvious aspect of human phenomenon, namely the existence of a conscious self” (in Ferguson, 1988:4). Csikszentmihalyi’s studies focused not only on the effect of the flow state, but on the quality of the subjective experience or in other words the way the subjects were feeling about their own experiences. The results of the studies point to the ‘conclusion’ that from the perspective of a subjective experience, traditional distinctions between work and leisure make little sense (ibid).

The most common fundamental principle of different A/L methods, is to encourage the learner to develop positive beliefs and attitudes about her/his own learning. In turn this stimulates them to access their own motivation and purpose for learning and to ‘self-actualise’ much of their inherent potential (Goldstein in Hoffman 1990:15). Clearly this flow state is an ideal one for learning and so I am naturally interested in identifying and attaining this within myself as well as facilitating the same in others.

The best of these learning approaches also include a regular reflection on how one has learnt something in order to apply the new skills and attitudes as life-long learning principles and practices. The development of the self as a unique and creative learner with unlimited potential is encouraged through the development of a range of resourceful states, positive beliefs, attitudes and empowering, transferable skills. I view this learning development as linking strongly to the spiritual development of the individual, to both the learner and the teacher of the particular method used. In this way I see a power and potential beyond the obvious and the popularisation of such methodologies as accelerative learning.
Branching Out: Accelerative Learning

Inner Nourishment

In 1989, on a special hill-top in Mt Abu, overlooking the Rajasthani plains of India, whilst meditating on this theme of integration, I received the direction and impetus to embark on a new branch of learning and teaching. From India I went to the United Kingdom to attend a biennial, four-day international conference called ‘The Inner Game of Learning’ organised by the Society for Effective Affective Learning (SEAL), the equivalent to accelerated learning societies in Australia and the United States. It was at this college in Reading that I discovered a new world of innovative and integrated learning theories, practices and international networks. I experienced a ‘pot-pourri’ of activities and thinking around this inner game of learning that clearly could not be divorced from the ‘game of life’ itself.

I was introduced to ‘affective, effective learning’ and all its associated terms, aspects of which seemed to connect with some of my deepest spiritual inclinations. It also provided some scientific understanding of what I was learning and experiencing about the development of the spiritual (essential) self. I felt excited and stimulated that my desire for deeper meaning and purpose around my teaching was being echoed and articulated by so many ‘state of the art’ educators and professionals from around the world. Since this period, there is no doubt that I have enjoyed much more integration between the personal and the professional aspects within my life. This experience has furthered my personal growth and spiritual development.

At the conference, I also received a confirmation of much of what I had been doing and feeling intuitively for some years in the language classroom. The research I was to discover gave me an assurance that my questions and explorations around teaching were timely, and were founded on scientific understandings of how the human brain/mind work. I was very stimulated and inspired when I read of leading world psychologists and educators such as Jean Houston (in Rose 1985:3) saying, “we are just beginning to discover the virtually limitless capacities of the mind” and ‘Psychology’ magazine describing accelerated learning as; “The key to the 21st Century”. I started to feel assured that I was on the right branch of my ‘real learning’ tree.

I was interested to later learn that the roots of Dr Georgi Lozanov’s, accelerated learning journey, (he called his method ‘Suggestopedia’), was also in India. Although his main purpose there was to study the yogis and their extraordinary mental feats, he also practised a form of meditation called ‘Raja Yoga’\(^\text{12}\). I too, had been practising Raja Yoga\(^\text{13}\) for the past four years (albeit of a different form), and

\(^{12}\)Refers to Patanjali Raja Yoga.

\(^{13}\)Refers to the Brahma Kumaris practice of Raja Yoga. Headquarters at World Spiritual University (BKWSU), Mt Abu, Rajasthan, India.
was in India on my fourth visit, primarily in order to study spiritual knowledge meditation and to interact with like-minded ‘souls’ from around the world. It was during this period that I also began to experience and reflect upon the deep connection between real learning and inner spiritual growth.

There is no doubt that along this accelerative learning branch, as well as being constantly challenged intellectually, I have also felt inwardly nourished and extended. I have ventured along different sub-branches, investigating previously unknown professional learning areas, discovering many of my own personal learning patterns. Along with my ‘hidden’ potential, I also discovered long-held blocks or lack of confidence in some aspects of my own learning.

It was becoming clear that I needed to examine the source of these blocks, in other words my deep beliefs, as well as develop my innate strengths. As I have begun to uncover some of the “potential possibilities” within myself and others, I have experienced an increasing sense of purpose as my teaching, my learning and my personal life become more closely connected. This sense of purpose has also at times been something of a mission and so I can relate to Marilyn Ferguson’s description of this direction, as something of “a vocation - literally, a ‘calling’ ” (1982:115).

**What is Accelerative/Accelerated Learning?**

The early and essential seeds for the development of accelerated learning as it is commonly called, were planted by Bulgarian psychotherapist and educator, Dr Georgi Lozanov during the fifties and sixties. Some early (and reportedly exaggerated) findings of his research were brought to the West by Ostrander & Schroeder in their ‘Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain’ (1977). This was followed by their popular book, “Superlearning” (1979) and more recently by “Superlearning 2000” (1995) which reports some of the different versions of accelerative learning currently being practised all around the world. Since these very early days there has developed a great “ferment of activity” (Kline 1988:65) around this innovative domain of learning and teaching. The field now includes many other important contributions from and ‘cross-pollination’ of research between several different disciplines, especially from the United States.

When discussing accelerative learning today, I find it most appropriate and useful to use the term ‘approach’, except when describing a specific methodology. By approach I include a particular set of assumptions about the nature of teaching and learning. ‘Accelerated’ or ‘accelerative’ learning today are used as generic terms to describe a ‘whole-brain’ (I prefer ‘whole-person’), enhanced approach to learning which includes a system of learning how to learn’. A/L is based on discoveries in the fields of neuroscience and psychology of how the brain/mind

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14 Term used by Lozanov to describe untapped learning potential at the SEAL conference, April, 1991.
actually works. It also tends to incorporate findings from NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), such as learning styles. Essentially the A/L approach includes a fundamental philosophy which acknowledges and promotes an expanded view of human learning potential, holistic principles and humanistic values. I believe that:

Inherent in the humanistic-transpersonal quest and implied in the Suggestopedic accelerated learning model is a hopeful vision of new and fuller ways of being a [human]. Both view learning and change as inherent process of human unfolding or growth. Provided with the proper environment, stimuli and timing, the process tends to release and fulfill itself . . . raises the interesting prospect that the essential process of learning and change . . . be of a basic unity” (Unger 1991:304-305).

The assumption inherent in this view is that the brain as a whole operates in the ‘parallel’ manner (global - typical of the right hemisphere) with only a small part of the processes occurring in the ‘serial’ manner (analytical mode - typical of the left hemisphere). This view offers an attractive but challenging alternative to the traditional educational paradigm of developmental, cognitive psychology and behaviourism. Conventional methods involve reducing complex ideas to their individual elements to be taught one by one, then building up complexity by accumulation. Integrative approaches to education, such as accelerated learning are in contrast to these traditional, essentially Cartesian methods. I believe like Hooper (1990) that education has been mainly polarised toward the serial mode because of our strong association and familiarity with conscious awareness.

Brain research in terms of ‘other than conscious’ processes in human communication are fortunately, (but only gradually) having an impact upon our educational practices. When the emphasis is on holism, it refers not only to the brain/mind, but also to the body and emotions in the learning process. In A/L, the main reference to integration is to the hemispheres of the brain as well as to integrating the conscious and unconscious mind. Peter Kline says that “we are dealing with a compendium of learning activities involving the whole personality” (1988:65). This view is congruent with the strong emphasis that Lozanov places on the role of personal development in the learning process. Kline relates this approach to the way children naturally learn, as they observe and respond freely to all aspects to their environment. As they move from one aspect to another, they create patterns and unique interactions which are in turn refined and take on useful meanings (1988:65). The idea is that elements of learning should not be introduced in a linear sequence but always in a natural and relevant manner as they may occur.

My first exposure to A/L and its adaptations was at the ‘inner game’, the international SEAL (UK) conference in 1989. It soon became clear that amongst the great variety of learning methods, the proponent of each shared a common fundamental philosophy around furthering human learning potential. The range
of practitioners from diverse fields included those from language teaching, business, all levels of educational institutions, yoga schools and private consultancies. The atmosphere was exceptionally inviting and 'congruent' with the philosophy espoused. For instance the room set aside for quiet introspection or relaxation was an extremely welcome and appropriate facility. At this conference I was impressed by the universal and far-reaching potential and multi-purpose applicability that I felt these new approaches held. More significantly, I was particularly excited by the potential possibilities, I perceived for transforming personal attitudes and behaviour around learning and therefore for life in general.

Since this period I have realised that there are many different ways of teaching in an 'affective and effective way'. For example, each practitioner has a unique way of perceiving and approaching A/L. For me each method can usually be integrated into my own individual perceptions and understandings of A/L. Paris-based Lonny Gold, a talented practitioner of Suggestopedia, (see 'Seminal Research' this chapter), summarises a view of A/L practitioners as he sees them using the methodology.

[Practitioners are] . . . those that use the subject matter as a pretext to teach learners about themselves, firing them up with enthusiasm for everything they can know, and stimulating in them an insatiable curiosity to know even more (1992:34).

Although I understand what Gold is saying, I am uncertain if every A/L practitioner would claim to be teaching 'under a pretext'. It was suggested (Ian Mills, personal communication, 1995) that rather than using the subject matter to teach students about themselves, it is more like using an understanding of themselves to teach them the subject. I really like this 'turn around' and relate better to it particularly since I am not a subject teacher. Rather I use processes and activities to encourage and facilitate the learning and use of the English language. Nevertheless, I agree that facilitating learners to discover their own learning potential and styles and "firing them with enthusiasm", or stimulating a love for learning, is one of the most common goals within the A/L approach.

One of the most basic and common principles of this approach could be encapsulated in the phrase learning how to learn. This important dimension has added valuable weight to holistic and humanistic learning and teaching practices in general. It also implies as it is also often articulated, that A/L promotes a deeper and life-long understanding of the self in regard to learning.

One of the most important new understandings about how we learn, has been the theory of 'multiple intelligences' developed by Howard Gardner (1983) and which is now incorporated into most comprehensive accelerative learning programs. This theory identifies at least seven main human capacities or 'intelligences' that we all have innately. Apart from the mathematical/logical and linguistic intelligences, the spatial, musical, kinaesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal
capacities are all under-acknowledged and under-utilised within traditional education.

Although there are many fine distinctions between different A/L methodologies, there are three basic common elements which were identified by Uschi Felix from South Australia, in her postdoctoral thesis (1989:9). These are the use of relaxation, suggestion and music in the learning classroom distinguishing A/L from other methods with similar strategies and objectives. I have come to agree that in order to classify a particular method as an accelerated learning one, these three elements need to be present in one form or another.

However, there have been many developments in the field since Felix's research was undertaken, and indeed since I first began my own inquiry. Some practitioners would add other dimensions such as learning modalities as well as multiple intelligences and aspects of NLP. In my own case I like to include all these new developments as well as ensuring that personal values and the non-verbal factors of learning which raise consciousness are highlighted.

In summary, accelerative learning claims not only to 'accelerate' the cognitive learning processes, but more significantly, promotes and has a potential long-term positive effect on the learners' self-concept, awareness and attitudes to learning in general. My thesis argues that in achieving some of this potential, the spiritual essence of both learner and teacher is activated.

**What's in a Name?**

Since I would like to avoid any limited consciousness or misunderstanding of the terms 'accelerative' and 'accelerated learning' I will include a brief discussion here of relevant terms and names used throughout this thesis. Essentially and especially for the purpose of this thesis, this means that there are enough similarities in terms of fundamental philosophy between variations on the same theme, to include them under the generic term 'accelerative' or 'accelerated learning'.

Both 'accelerated learning' and 'superlearning' are the names most commonly used in both the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia. 'Accelerated Learning' in particular has become a widespread umbrella term to include a variety of versions and compatibility with related fields, such as NLP. Some other commonly used names include 'optimal learning', 'integrative learning', 'whole-brain/person learning' and 'brain-compatible learning'. 'Suggestopedia' is less commonly accepted in the West, associated primarily with language learning and more popular in Europe for obvious reasons. Many adaptations have spawned from this original method and others directly from brain research and the neuro sciences, mainly from the United States.
Throughout my thesis, the two terms of ‘accelerated and accelerative learning’ are often interchanged, with accelerative’ increasing in popularity in Australia. One reason for this within NSW has been to distinguish it from ‘accelerated progression’, a term used in the Department of School Education to refer to moving students faster than average through different grades. I tend to use both these terms generically to incorporate a range of new paradigm learning/teaching methodologies and more particularly to include the philosophy underlying them.

In including the term ‘integrated’ to my approach, I have chosen to reflect the passion and commitment to my personal vision of integration as well as my desire and interest in emphasising all of the integrative aspects of A/L, including the intuitive and spiritual dimensions. Although there are other learning methods called ‘integrated learning’ or ‘integral learning’, as far as I know none of them specifically include the spiritual aspects of learning as I intend here.

In Australia, there has recently been the initiation of some ‘values-based’ accelerative learning programs which stem from a similar philosophy to my own. This includes an understanding that one’s beliefs, attitudes and values underpin all behaviour around learning and the teaching of others. Partly in response to much of the misunderstanding and scepticism that sometimes accumulates around the name of A/L, as well as the desire to be more inclusive and original, these programs are now known as ‘advanced learning courses’.

I, like many others, am aware that using the term ‘accelerated’, can create confusion and/or tends to focus on the more sensational aspects at the expense of the broader goals. There is now however, so much awareness and literature on the term ‘accelerated learning’ all around the world, it is too late at this point to be concerned about semantics. Lozanov also had to battle with his name of ‘Suggestopedia’ (see next section), which was not at all popular in the West. In any case, for convenience throughout my thesis and as a general explanation to an important new way of thinking about learning, I continue to use the abbreviated name of ‘A/L’.

Finally and more importantly I believe we should be examining the spirit, that is the essence of this approach to learning and teaching in general and ensure that the fundamental philosophy and values inherent within it remain intact. It is for this reason that I usually like to go back to Lozanov’s original research and to examine what I think were his intentions which I have done later in this section. We educators can then take a regular look at our own intentions when we use these methods and check within ourselves for our own integrity as well as for our effectiveness.

15 Designed by Robert Owen and Bronwyn Gowing, New South Wales.
Seminal Research: The Work of Dr Georgi Lozanov

By becoming aware of suggestion, for the first time we are no longer victims of our culture.

Lozanov

Although the development of A/L has been through the contribution of many, Dr Lozanov is considered the major original influence in the field. Certainly he was the first one in our time to remind us that there are other dimensions to the learner than that of just being “a passive, grossly imperfect recipient of knowledge or even an active consumer of knowledge” (Wenger 16). Since I realise I have been considerably influenced by Lozanov’s background research and in particular by the emphasis he places on ‘the development of the personality’, I have chosen to focus on his contribution in this section.

Lozanov’s theories are based on his observations of ways in which learning takes place outside educational establishments. During the fifties, it was his great interest in the unconscious mind that initially fascinated him and eventually took him to India. There he observed the Yogi Brahmans with their phenomenal capacity to memorise enormous amounts of material, such as thousands of verses from their Scriptures. After years of study of memory and learning, much of this also with isolated individuals in Bulgaria, he eventually concluded that the same kind of miraculous memory and learning feats are available to all of us. He also became well aware of how traditional learning environments tend to thwart and inhibit real learning and ‘super’ memory.

Lozanov’s research was initially concerned with the use of suggestion and relaxation within the fields of medicine, psychotherapy, parapsychology and then eventually within education. After years of studying the link between perception and learning, Lozanov gradually developed ‘Suggestology’, the name he called this field of research which lay the foundation for his systemised, educational method, ‘Suggestopedia’. He says that although there are many definitions for Suggestopedia, he emphasised that it involves “the absolute freedom to choose the influences around you” (spoken at ‘The Pathways to Potential’ (SEAL) conference in the UK, 1991). He has always described it as much more than a methodology, and once again stressed the importance of personal development for both students and teachers.

Lozanov’s work with the learning of foreign languages was first brought to English-speaking countries by Ostrander and Schroeder in their book ‘Superlearning’ (1979). Despite subsequent research results never having reached the same rates of acceleration that Lozanov experienced with Bulgarians, Lozanov is well respected and acclaimed for his early research and practice. Much of his findings have been well-documented in an increasing number of books on the subject, one of the best and clearest being Colin Rose’s ‘Accelerated Learning’ (1985).

Since the use of suggestion in the learning process was first identified by Lozanov and is widely considered fundamental to any A/L method (as elaborated in Uschi Felix's thesis), it is important to include the following definition by Lozanov:

*Suggestion* is a constant communicative factor which chiefly, through paraconscious mental activity can create conditions for tapping the functional reserve capacities of personality (1978:201).

Lozanov (1978) believes that suggestion is the link to the reserves of the mind, access to which, is the fundamental purpose of 'the Lozanov method' and as I see it, all authentic A/L methods. The method is to create a positive, stress-free and enjoyable context for learners. At the physical level, Lozanov stressed the need for a light, bright and pleasant classroom environment, and the regular use of 'peripherals' (colourful memory posters and affirmations on wall charts), to facilitate positive suggestion to the learners' paraconscious. At the psychological level for teachers, and in preparation for their teaching, he introduced the concept of 'dual-plane behaviour' which can also be described as an aspect of 'congruence'.

'Dual-plane behaviour' is a way to describe teachers' conscious personality, behaviour and method of communication which runs parallel to our unconscious, non-verbal behaviour and communication. It also describes the constant operating within our beings as we absorb like sponges, stimuli from all sources at a level which are not consciously known or remembered (ibid).

Lozanov claims that it is essential to know how to use the power of suggestion in both the physical and the psychological domains, in order to access our deeper selves and promote *optimal learning states* (ibid). In this state the heart-beat, breath-rate and brain-waves are smoothly synchronised. This means that the body is relaxed but the mind is concentrated and ready to receive new information.

This in effect means that people learn more naturally, more easily and therefore seemingly faster. Lozanov has termed 'relaxed alertness' as the means to describe these optimal learning states which he claims, are the basis for effective learning. Lozanov came to believe that with the right conditions, that is through accessing the state of 'relaxed alertness', as well as creating a conducive learning environment, everyone is capable of learning at a rate two to five times as fast as the present system considers normal (in Kline, 1988:27).

These facts tend to be of less interest to me than that of overcoming the many barriers to optimal learning. I consider that developing beliefs in our innate ability to access and develop at will, one's own states is a valuable way to psychological and therefore spiritual health. In any case a relaxed, alert state of consciousness, brought about through a variety of ways is considered to be optimal for maximising learning efficacy and is therefore a fundamental principle of A/L in some form or another.
Lozanov wanted to contrast the state of awareness and alertness with that of the sleepy state that is usually associated with relaxation and/or hypnosis. The Buddha story related earlier in Chapter 1, tends to also capture this spirit of awareness that I find is inherent in integrated accelerated learning approaches. I, like many others working with these kinds of A/L techniques, believe that they can not only be a means to enhance the learning process, but are also a potentially powerful vehicle for awakening people to their own states. It follows then that relaxed alertness provides the possibility for both students and teachers alike to develop themselves far beyond the confines of the classroom. In other words we cannot only achieve successful learning but can also change and transcend our usual states. We can learn how to control and be responsible for our own states of consciousness, and in doing so, I believe, will begin to develop more of our spiritual selves.

Lozanov’s most significant contribution was that he first identified this power of the sub-conscious or unconscious to stimulate and release more learning potential. Lozanov describes this potential as the ‘reserve capacities’ or ‘reserve complex’, by which he means they are inherent abilities, and includes for example, the notion of ‘super memory’ and ‘hyper-creativity’ which are in fact available to everyone. This belief is frequently reinforced in current A/L learning classrooms through affirmations on peripherals, such as: “every student is a genius waiting to be discovered” and “every child has, at birth, a greater potential intelligence than Leonardo Da Vinci ever used” (quoted in Dryden & Vos 1993:92).

Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences and many other contributors within the human potential movement also naturally dovetail with that of Lozanov’s theories. The increasing fascination with and the commitment to developing more of human potential in general, means to me, getting to the real heart and soul of what makes us spiritual as well as human beings. Since I see the “inextricable link between learning, spiritual development and human potential” (see ‘The Seed’), then tapping our reserve capacities, to me means releasing more of our real selves, that is our spiritual essence.

Although many of these capacities exist in an untapped form, it is the way in which they are accessed that Lozanov emphasised through his Suggestopedic method. This includes skilfully facilitating musical ‘concerts’\(^{17}\) to access memory and activate the sub-conscious in the process. Although there has been much acknowledgment of Lozanov’s research to the general field of A/L, I have observed that the depth and value of the ‘orchestration’ of various techniques has frequently been neglected within many of its applications. Included in this orchestration is the preparation of the environment and most significantly for this inquiry, the psychological aspects. The psychological environment to be prepared by the A/L teacher, is an integral aspect of developing our inner selves, and along with the concept of ‘orchestration’, will be explored further in the next section.

\(^{17}\) Lozanov’s unique contribution and term used to describe the use of music for memorising and learning.
In preference to the terms unconscious or sub-conscious, Lozanov tends to use the term ‘paraconscious’ and I also prefer to follow suit throughout this thesis. By paraconscious, Lozanov means everything which is not conscious and can include the flow and movement between conscious and unconscious as well as the unconscious or sub-conscious itself. Peter Kline has a different definition which is worth including. He describes the paraconscious as; “background thoughts you’re not focusing on at the moment, but could attend to if you chose” (1988:26). Although I find this an interesting definition, I have experienced that the paraconscious is a lot more than our “background thoughts”. For me the attention and the development and refining of the paraconscious is an important step in developing our spiritual awareness.

Suggestion also refers to the power of the ‘social-suggestive norm’, which is an academic way to describe the total social environment that conditions one for success or failure. Lozanov argued that students are often totally conditioned for failure, particularly through their own inner suggestions, often referred to as ‘self-talk’, believing that all learning is difficult or boring. He claims that a starting point in all learning is the student’s deep-rooted or sub-conscious attitude to the subject matter and to her/himself (1978).

Some of the most powerful barriers to optimal learning are those of internal negative suggestion, such as self-imposed limitations, referred to by Kline as “internalised self-oppression” (1988:28). In other words, the learner’s beliefs about her own abilities have enormous bearing on her capacity to learn. Lozanov also argued that expectations of the self and others in the learning process, as demonstrated in the ‘Pygmalion effect’, greatly affect learning outcome. These expectations are in turn transmitted through non verbal communication and influences, such as atmosphere, attitudes, features of voice and body language.

In addition to the social-suggestive norms, Lozanov identified three main barriers which he claims interfere at different times with the natural and “universal inclination to learn” (ibid). The first barrier is the ‘critical-logical’ barrier which prevents learners from seeing the logic of the lesson to be learned. The second is the ‘intuitive-emotional’ barrier which prevents them from enjoying the learning experience, for example due to fear or boredom. The third barrier is ‘critical-moral’ barrier which makes the learning unethical because it may be incongruent to one’s personal value system.

Lozanov claimed that all these barriers to effective learning could be removed through a process of ‘de-suggestion’. Lozanov and followers of his method have from time to time been accused of ‘brain-washing’, to which Lozanov responds with an assertion that we are constantly susceptible to suggestive influences of all kinds:
The point is that we must become aware of the influences we are under. Only then can we have a choice. If we don’t know the real effect of the suggestive influences that are all around us which bombard us daily from television, cinema, music and the environment - then we are allowing ourselves to be ‘brainwashed’ (spoken at SEAL conference, UK, 1991).

Since Lozanov felt that suggestion is an unfortunate translation into English, he has preferred to emphasise the choice factor that is being offered to learners. Through the skilful ‘orchestration’ by the teacher of the three common A/L elements, more of the learner’s brain and innate potential would be stimulated, thereby enhancing and ‘accelerating’ the learning process. Lozanov maintains that there are three essential characteristics of the learning process when people are learning to their fullest potential (in Kline, 1988:26). These are:

i) Real learning is inherently a joyful experience. ii) Both the conscious and the paraconscious are united. iii) It draws on the ‘reserve capacities’.

Lozanov and many other respected researchers such as Emanuel Dochin from University of Illinois, have stressed that most (85-93%) teacher communication and learned information is non-verbal and ‘sub-conscious’ (Rose 1985:83). Whereas the actual figure will vary according to the source involved, it is this knowledge more than many other points that led me to thinking more about the implications for practitioners’ own ‘way of being’.

Although originally Suggestopedia was developed for application in teaching foreign language to adults, it soon became evident that the approach and techniques could be applied to all fields of learning and for all ages and levels of learning. Lozanov was concerned that our much under-utilised capacity to think, create, solve problems and stimulate ourselves to our highest levels of potential was not being realised. He believed that, by tapping into the reserve capacities of the mind, development of the whole person would be accelerated and ‘harmonised’. He reminds us of the depth of potential of this approach to learning:

Suggestopedia liberates and stimulates not only memory but the whole personality - interests, perceptions, intellectual activity, motivation, creativity and moral development (1979:23).

Lozanov developed Suggestopedia as a humanistic and holistic approach to learning and was rigorous in emphasising the paraconscious aspects of the process. In as much as his method stresses the positive, whole-person approach, it can be likened to the work of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. However, it is the conscious use of the paraconscious elements as a learning technique which highlights its uniqueness compared to other humanistic methods. It also gives it the status of being a potentially more powerful and far-reaching learning method than what it might first appear. Bernie Neville expresses much the same distinction his book, ‘Educating Psyche’:
What distinguishes the Lozanov approach from other teaching methods, both behaviouristic and humanistic, is its perspective on the critical impact of direct suggestion-verbal and non-verbal-on the unconscious mind (1989:42).

**Essential Growth: Teacher Development**

*Developing Personal Qualities as an Art*

The degree to which I can create relationships which facilitate the growth of others as separate persons, is a measure of the growth I have achieved in myself.

Carl Rogers

Emphasis by Lozanov, on the role of the Suggestopedic teacher and the development of her ‘personality’, has heavily influenced all variations of A/L in one way or another. In describing the kind of influence he believes the teacher should have, he says: “It is that quality of an individual which naturally, not artificially, inspires respect, trust, attentiveness without fear, suppression or social distance (1978:187). Lozanov has always seen the teacher as paramount in the process, expecting a great deal from each one and seeing them as “professionals with many possibilities” (SEAL conference, 1991).

The particular and refined skills and qualities that Lozanov identified as being necessary for the Suggestopedic teacher are useful to consider when exploring the development of personal qualities as an ‘art’. When I view teaching in this way, I also see that any exploration of the art of teaching has much relevance for the ‘art of leading’ in general. I consider that in developing these personal qualities, a great *love* for ‘the art of teaching’ as well as for our fellow human beings is required. This kind of development is beginning to get to the core of the spiritual aspects that I want to explore within our teaching and learning.

The role of the teacher is of utmost importance in harmonising the non-verbal components of the learning process with the actual content. Lozanov’s teacher training programs place great importance on the development of artistic and creative skills which enable the teacher to orchestrate the whole program with ease and grace. This *orchestration* is the most unique metaphor of Lozanov’s approach and involves the teacher in the role of ‘conductor’.

Elaborating upon this metaphor, I find that my educating roles, just as they are in my personal life, are rich and varied within the ‘orchestra’ or the learning situation. Sometimes, probably often, I am the conductor (the teacher is *always* in this role in Lozanov’s Suggestopedia). However, I can also conduct with another (for example, team teach) or become an instrument. Sometimes I can play a duet or a solo, at other times I simply focus on harmonising events or even the different levels within my own consciousness. The emphasis that Lozanov definitely wanted to make is that the teacher is the ultimate artist.
According to the manner in which Lozanov, along with his companion, language educator Evelyne Gateva, trained his teachers in Suggestopedia, teaching was ‘elevated’ to a level of artistry. The training is intense, not only in the fundamentals of the Suggestopedic technique, but in the additional roles of artist, musician, actor, and architect of the environment. This often includes training in a musical instrument, movement, drama and voice training, all of which are considered to be of great importance. Because the emphasis is on teachers’ suggestive influence they need to develop capacities that will allow them to be totally knowledgeable, positive and artistic. In this way they can gently lead and direct their students to a mastery in their subjects.

Whilst Lozanov and Gateva’s notion of the teacher as a creative artist definitely captured my imagination, the ideal may seem beyond the average teacher’s reach or aspirations. Nevertheless I tend to think that aspects of this vision are greatly needed within the profession. I am reminded here of how Robert Muller ended his article on ‘Good Teachers’; “Teaching in my view, is one of the noblest, most beautiful and most important professions on earth” (1984:22).

If I return to the inspirational poem at the beginning of this chapter, I am reminded that ‘living is an art’. So then must my teaching and indeed my learning also be an art. McClenaghan, an Australian educator describes the A/L teacher as a facilitator who is “the critical factor” and that facilitating this process and expressing the necessary fine qualities is indeed an art (1987:102). To my knowledge she is one of the few Australian A/L educators who has placed specific attention on ‘personal development’ aspects for facilitators/teachers and has identified specific qualities that the facilitator “must develop” within themselves (1987:110).

When Lozanov describes the teacher as an ‘authority’ (strongly distinguished from being authoritarian), and a ‘conductor’, I believe he uses such terms because of the strong emphasis he wants to place on the teacher’s suggestive influences. If she is not constantly aware of these influences she can evoke a subtle sense of personal incompetency or uncertainty in her students at a non-verbal level. He wants to make it clear that in order to create the optimal environment for learning, students need to feel comfortable with and have respect and faith in the teacher who will ‘suggest’ by her behaviour, appearance and demeanour, a positive and capable facilitator for their learning.

I have found these notions a very useful rationale for initially establishing my credentials and professional capacity with, for instance, a new group of traditionally taught students of the English language. The kinds of students of English I teach generally come from very traditional backgrounds. Since my aim is to eventually bring them to a more autonomous level of learning, I need to start with a familiar approach and move gradually into more ‘foreign territory’. I like to entice and encourage them to take more responsibility for their own learning.
myself, this means that I move more into the role of facilitator where my influence, although still strong, is more subtle.

Over the years, my interest in ‘facilitation’ versus traditional teacher ‘domination’ of the learning process has meant that I frequently question the power balance between teacher and students. I had already realised throughout my early language teaching experiences that I did not enjoy being put on a pedestal or having my students overly depend on me for their own learning. For all A/L teachers the depth and expansion of awareness that they usually experience around learning usually develops along the way. Whether we are more in the role of a ‘pure’ Suggestopedic teacher or more in a facilitator role, we can help attune others non-verbally through more awareness of the subtle and suggestive influences we communicate.

These considerations of the teacher as both an artist and a facilitator raise another important question I have for this inquiry. How do we educators make our facilitation of the learning process, an art? Many of the popular and current teacher training courses do impart a lot of enthusiasm, energy and motivation, but have not provided on-going methods or support for the specific development of personal qualities and subtleties within the trainees. I began to wonder about how we might develop our own personality, transform our personal ‘inadequacies’ to become a kind of inspirational role model or artist of the educative process.

Lozanov stresses that the role of the teacher’s personality is so important in the learning process that in the final analysis (even beyond the specific techniques used), she has the ultimate influence upon her students. This seemed to support my own beliefs that this ultimate influence is essentially about the state of mind of the teacher, that is the consciousness which lies at the heart of their personality. Lozanov makes it clear that a teacher should be always positive and even though she may feel low in spirits, she should still never show this in the classroom although he does not elaborate on how this more subtle development might occur. Certainly he did not intend to:

... superimpose a set of suggestions... on the teachers normal way of teaching, but to integrate these naturally, yet consciously, not only into the instruction process but into their behaviour. In other words, the teaching environment as a whole is perceived as positive, supportive and inspiring. (Felix 1989:7).

Throughout my own explorations, I have found that increasing one’s self-awareness is a major key in this development. Felix says that for teachers it means looking more closely at their own “personality and communication strategies”(1989:7). I find the following quotation very appropriate to describe the kind of influence that a self-aware educator or leader needs to be aware of:
We do not act only by our words and by our example. Our personality exercises per se an influence which is as real as it is mysterious. Directly two human beings encounter one another, there ensues a phenomenon analogous to that which physicists describe under the name of OSMOSIS. The intimate and powerful tie between a master and his disciple is sometimes created, not so much by formal instruction as by the instructive personality of the master. Make yourself stronger, make yourself continually better, and then leave your personality to its spontaneous radiation. Unconscious action is often more effective than willed or ostentatious action (Benoist-Hanappier in Baudouin 1923:130).

To convey the same meaning in the educational domain, I often use an expression such as ‘a teacher’s vibrations will be picked up by the students’. The need for this awareness of the paraconscious is greater for the A/L practitioner because of the constant and conscious emphasis and utilisation of these elements for others in the learning process. Lozanov also tends to encourage the development of personality to be ‘better and stronger’ as well as making teachers very aware of the effect of their personalities that is beyond their willed conscious level. I think that he would agree with Marilyn Ferguson. She describes the ideal teacher practising in the new paradigm for learning as “a transforming teacher” who:

...senses readiness to change, helps the follower’ or student respond to more complex needs, transcending the old levels again and yet again.
The true teacher is also learning and is transformed by the relationship. A closed teacher, a mere ‘power yielder’ is not a true teacher (1982: 320).

Other Sources of Nourishment

Lozanov is by no means the only strong influence regarding the development of our personal selves as practitioners. One of the people who might describe himself as a ‘humanistic educator’, and whom I have found to share as strong a view as I do regarding teacher development, is Adrian Underhill, chairman of the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Teacher Development Group (see also Chapter 6). Underhill initiated the teacher development program which publishes an international newsletter within the industry. I first met Underhill in the UK at the 1989 and then the 1991 SEAL (Society Effective, Affective Learning) conferences where I attended his workshops. One was on the subject of ways to facilitate and the other on relaxation techniques for the teacher.

I was rather surprised but very pleased to meet Underhill within such an alternative learning domain. Having known about IATEFL for years through my language teaching, I knew of Underhill’s name and position and so was pleased to meet someone from the mainstream language teaching field interested in this ‘radical’ kind of education. Moreover, he seemed to be promoting the very ideas that I had been developing and feeling passionate about. After a few brief
conversations about my own thesis, I felt very reassured, encouraged and further inspired.

The IATEFL newsletter contains articles on the subject of teacher development which Underhill regularly clarifies and elaborates upon to mean ‘personal development’. The publication is distributed throughout the world and contains research reports, questionnaires and reflections on processes on this subject of personal development for teachers. I discovered that the heart of Underhill’s observations and interests were very similar to my own. That is, his concern was/is for the way in which a particular method is implemented, regardless of the teaching method used.

As an extremely aware and experienced language teacher and trainer, Underhill appears to favour A/L kinds of approaches but always makes it clear that it is necessary to ‘go beyond’ even the best of the learning techniques. He, like myself, is more concerned with placing attention on the teacher’s awareness or consciousness and developing ourselves accordingly. Despite my involvement with A/L, I undoubtedly agree and relate to his frequently expressed concern and passion about the essential “transforming factor” regarding teacher education. In his article aptly called “Poverty of Theory, Richness of the Soul” (1986), he states:

As methods come and go teachers can only rely on their own inner resources ... We are still waiting for the real change, or quantum leap, in our ability to facilitate learning.

Underhill argues for the development of the inner part of the teacher that “... informs, flavours, colours and activates all these outer factors” (ibid). This statement really strikes a chord within me as I observe and experience the fast growing interest and demand for new and innovative learning methods like A/L. Whereas my strong interest has been around the paraconscious and human potential aspects of these methods, my over-riding concern relates, as it does with Underhill to the ‘inner me’ that has to operate the techniques. Underhill also believes that we are already reaching the point of diminishing returns when it comes to methodologies and all the “outer variables”. He argues for a corresponding exploration of all the “inner variables” which “affect the quality of everything we do” (ibid).

Geoffrey Pullen, head of the language department of Brighton Polytechnic at the time, also articulates the need for personal development of the educator. His model “mind-map of desirable targets for the education and training of foreign language teachers” (1990:22) is relevant for educators of all subject areas. Central to these desirable targets, he has placed “competence, responsibility, maturity, authority and self-esteem”. He suggests that personal development become an essential component in the A/L teacher training courses being conducted and developed in the United Kingdom (1990:21).
This indicated that the issue of personal development, alongside professional training for educators was not already being addressed in the UK, not even within accelerative learning training courses.

Eric Jensen was an early influence for me in Australia, firstly at the Society of Accelerative Learning and Teaching (SALT) conference when we first met in San Diego in 1989, and during his subsequent visits to Australia. Eric became instrumental as an A/L trainer in New South Wales, establishing widespread teacher training within the Department of School Education. His aim is to inspire trainees to get excited about learning and teaching. He believes that it is their responsibility to provide students with the resources to become successful. Jensen’s approach is contagious, very popular and successful, and he is well known for the attention he places on being a fine role model. He exudes enthusiasm and motivation for his work, as well as demonstrating personal integrity and sincerity as a person which will be demonstrated in more detail as one of the individual participants in this inquiry (see Chapter 5).

**Further Refinement**

Accelerative learning methods are not only potentially powerful but also intensely subtle at times. The demands on teachers can also be intense and subtle, and strategies to deal with them often elusive. Far beyond the specific skills and positive characteristics required, Lozanov believes that the teacher’s verbal and non-verbal demeanour have the most powerful effect on the student’s subconscious receptivity to learning (1978:187). This means their behaviours must be congruent to the theories promoted and their ‘dual-planes’ are in alignment or harmonised. Interestingly, he says that it is not practice which develops a mastery of the dual-plane, but personal integrity and sincerity (1978:194).

There are expectations that the teacher should convey a deep sensitivity and a subtle and flexible manner at all times in the classroom. The A/L teacher is expected to be constantly congruent, as well as totally positive and energetic. The teaching role requires specialised training, the development of specific positive personal qualities, an artistic flair, a great deal of commitment to the philosophy and a ‘grander’ vision.

Most literature on the subject of the new paradigm teacher or facilitator stresses a need for heightened awareness and a strong sense of personal responsibility and commitment to inspire and motivate learners way beyond that of the traditional educator. There are many subtle demands and expectations in the form of unspoken assumptions that the teacher will immediately and automatically become the ‘ideal personality’ that Lozanov describes and many expect of a teacher or trainer. These assumptions include a necessity to personally and easily integrate theory with practice, to constantly model the teaching methods and in doing so to transform her own consciousness and therefore on-going behaviour. My own early
experiences, observations of and interactions with others, began to highlight some of our own incongruent attitudes and behaviour. I was beginning to question these assumptions and to explore further the question of how one might approach this kind of development and integration within the self.

In the humanistic educational aspects which have influenced A/L there are common assumptions and beliefs that we can only facilitate processes that are going on within ourselves. Rogers for example argues for the facilitator’s genuineness, acceptance and empathy as essential qualities for the classroom (in Underhill, 1989b:258). McLenaghan says that the “atmosphere and conditions” for personal growth must be available to the teacher in order for them to offer them to the students (1987:112). In other words she also argues for the teacher to have developed qualities in themselves in order to be able ‘offer’ them in their students. Marilyn McCutcheon asks some stimulating questions for ‘The Fearless Facilitator’ (undated) in order to check on our own inner strengths, self-image and positive attitudes which will make the link between the learner’s self-esteem and our own.

We need to consider the matter of a deep sub-conscious resistance to personal change or even a sense of ‘paralysis’ to act, that I for one have sometimes experienced. I believe that true learning is about changing and certainly being a ‘change agent’ assumes we are totally ‘into change’. I wonder then what is happening when I experience internal resistance within myself as well as within others. This was more common during my earlier years when there was very little support for A/L. I find that it is often easy to blame personal resistance on the type of class I had, the lack of appropriate environment and institutional support.

Simply because we are completely in accord with a particular theory or philosophy does not automatically mean that overnight we can rid ourselves of particular resistances and unwanted habits, fears and so on. I eventually had to admit the reticence or resistance I experienced at times was due to a feeling of personal inadequacy within me. This may take the form of fear of criticism from the ‘powers that be’, a doubting of my skills, a sense of my own stress or incongruence or even simple lack of confidence or self-esteem. Similar dilemmas have often been expressed to me by other practitioners, particularly when they may be new to the field or in a new and more challenging environment than is usual.

Kline reminds us that A/L makes learning easier for the student partly because it places more responsibility on and effort with the teacher (1988). There are also constant demands to be up-to date with the latest developments in brain research and the new paradigm learning in general. There is an on-going demand to be creative, personable, artistic and energetic to be able to evoke the same qualities in their students.

Edrington believes that A/L and similar methods have not gained greater ‘currency’ because the need is for a special kind of teacher who is:
... not simply a teacher who has been trained to perform prescribed actions, but one who either already possesses the gift of intellectual honesty or has the courage and humility to acquire that rare gift (1984:4).

Once A/L is embraced by a teacher, she usually approaches her work with great enthusiasm and gusto. Nevertheless, we often soon realise that although we believe that A/L is an ‘idea whose time has come’, there are many others who will find some convincing reasons to resist all aspects of it. This kind of resistance can take its toll on a practitioner when on top of the extra work and responsibilities, she has to continually justify, prove and produce evidence that A/L works and should be embraced. Naturally this is more challenging when there is distrust or strong criticism of the approach, a not uncommon occurrence. So too, practitioners are nearly always in the minority in their work place. I have frequently found that as agents of change and innovation, there is a daunting range of obstacles and challenges, to be overcome both internal and external that practitioners must face.

The on-going challenges and demands at both the personal and the professional levels remain high and constant for A/L practitioners. However, my observations and experiences have demonstrated that the majority (if not all) of us would unequivocally state that the extra effort and occasional discomforts are worth it. It is also important along the way to reflect upon some of the benefits and the personal development that practitioners can achieve. Alongside our students, we teachers/facilitators gradually become enthusiastic learners of ourselves. We discover different ways of accessing our own creative potential and begin to realise that this development is of a spiritually unfolding and unlimited nature.

Being in touch with the latest in research developments in the field (a must for the A/L practitioner) tends to further stimulate and expand one’s perceptions and horizons. The implications for society at large seem exciting but awe-inspiring at times as does also one’s sense of responsibility. Most essentially, the use of A/L methods requires a real personal paradigm shift for practitioners who totally embrace the method and the philosophy. This includes letting go of many familiar and traditional ways of thinking and behaving in the role as a teacher. It also involves maintaining a positive world view whilst continuing to develop all of our own ‘intelligences’ and inner resources.

For the educator, however, embracing and promoting these techniques to facilitate change amongst others is one thing. Really shifting and changing oneself and developing consistent attitudes as an ‘embodied’ example is another. In order to become agents of radical change for others (my conviction that this is the real purpose of the A/L practitioner), I contend there is an on-going challenge to push way past our comfort zones to embrace deep change and personal growth within ourselves.
Reflections on my own Personal Growth

I reflect here upon my conscious awareness of ‘something missing’ in my professional teaching before I discovered a new branch of learning. I realise that I was simultaneously and gradually developing a trust in the intuitive processes which eventually led me to a new awareness around learning and teaching. In particular at the start of my ‘branching out’, I enjoyed some great incidents of synchronicity and serendipity where felt I was more often than not, in the exact right place at the right time. For instance, without consciously seeking it, I would meet the ‘appropriate’ people who tended to guide or influence me in my pursuit of integration of the personal and professional aspects of my life.

Through meditation experiences, I had already been exploring the power of the sub-conscious elements involved in developing one’s self. My intuitive and natural teaching tendencies were explained and ‘validated’ as I read and learned more of the scientific basis for much of what I had been doing for some years. The emphasis on the role of the paraconscious within A/L provided a ‘legitimate’ means by which I could make the link between my spiritual development, my learning and my teaching.

My inner experiences laid a strong foundation for the wide reading and passionate, on-going learning in which I have been engaged particularly since the beginning of this inquiry. I have learned that I gain a lot of benefit from both reading and writing. I also know that for deep and lasting learning and personal change to occur, I need to be able to experience life or meaning around written words.

As I venture further out along the branch of my personal growth, I discover more and more challenges, surprises, delights and dilemmas within my own being. I am however, ever keen to confront and eventually transform the limiting aspects before they limit my effectiveness as an ‘agent of change’ and indeed as a totally fulfilled person. I see how my own spiritual growth is tightly connected with both my learning and my teaching, as I aspire toward the ‘Possible Human’ that Jean Houston describes in her book, ‘A Course in Enhancing Your Physical, Mental and Creative Abilities’ (1982). I have learned and am still constantly learning new skills whilst tapping into more of my creative potential around both learning, teaching, living and simply being.

My ‘explorations in the forest’ have offered a proliferation of new thought, readings, skills, awareness, research activities and networks which have in themselves been a rich means of developing my psychological self and broadening my intellectual horizons. I have discovered a wealth of relevant research about the human brain and about how people think and learn, as well as experiencing a connection, and a deep resonance with many and various authors, educators, and experts around the world.
I have also experienced rather an indulgence in the 'fruits' of this tree over the past five years. My enthusiastic involvement in the many aspects and variations of integrated, experiential and accelerative learning approaches has taken me deep into the forest. This has included on-going participation in a rich array of training courses, seminars and conferences from a similar assortment of practitioners and experts from around the world. However, after my initial appetite had been satisfied, I began to feel overfull, over-stimulated and sometimes overwhelmed. I wondered where my deep and lasting passions lay.

My exploring of the forest has taken me outward to different parts of the world, physically, mentally and emotionally, but eventually and more significantly inward toward myself. I have discovered learning approaches and technologies which are complementary and in harmony with my own personal spiritual philosophy. I am connected to my passion and I know my explorations have not been in vain. I have found that the world of education and training is now abundant with rich methods and potential for transforming learning and indeed society in general, that is, if and when society is ready to embrace them.

Ironically then, my branching out into accelerative learning and associated methodologies has finally led me to a realisation that I am less concerned about the emphasis on one particular method of teaching or training of others. I believe that by increasing self-awareness in general, and maximising human learning potential through education, the essential spiritual potential of humans can also be enhanced. I am now only concerned with the facilitation of learning processes which promote the inherent potential of the learner. This means that they need to involve close attention to the attitudes, awareness and values that underpin the particular techniques and processes used.

I have found that it requires personal commitment and courage on behalf of the educator to seriously attend to one's own inner qualities, attitudes and potential. Such is the level and awareness of and personal involvement in the A/L approaches, that it is difficult to imagine a successful practitioner not having developed at least some special inner qualities and skills along the way. My conscious pursuit of spirituality and on-going tertiary learning as an adult had provoked strong interest in the role of human potential, creativity, intuition, and self-esteem in learning and teaching. It was later that I discovered these dimensions underpin A/L teaching approaches and indeed are unique aspects of them.

For the purpose of the inquiry I have consciously focussed on the elements of learning and teaching methodologies which encourage enhanced self-awareness as well as the development of potential for deep wisdom and integrated wholeness. Within A/L they are usually described as the 'psychological factors' and alongside actual techniques, are formally incorporated into the methodology. This new awareness, along with my experiences in communicative language teaching and
with A/L methods have shown me that I am also a co-learner beside my students and I therefore need to see learning as a life-long process. This insight has been much like the exploration of discovering myself for the first time as I expand my perceptions of my students, myself and the world.

The very act of engaging in the self-exploration demanded by this inquiry, began to highlight effective means for further developing my spiritual self. Along the way I have also become aware of my potential for not only being a facilitator of real learning but also an agent of a more transformative and far-reaching kind of change. This strengthening belief heightens my commitment to pursuing different ways of enhancing and accelerating my own and others’ personal, spiritual growth.

This increasing awareness of the ‘essential spiritual self’ along with my role as an ‘innovative educator’, highlights the potentially powerful influence that I and others have upon our students. This in turn activates a corresponding and continuing desire to ‘practice what I preach’ and become an example for my students. In other words I need to learn to become and remain authentic, sincere and congruent with my deeply held values and the learning philosophy I promote. I therefore feel the desire and need to continue learning and developing much more of myself, my natural talents, as well as those of my students. This overall process of self-exploration has involved a spiral of learning experiences for me, bringing about deep personal insights and realisations around learning, educating and simply being.

Since 1989, my own growth along the ‘Accelerated Learning branch’ has been an organic, nourishing and fulfilling experience. It has continued to stimulate my curiosity and enthusiasm for enhanced learning and teaching methodologies which help promote a radical alternative to the traditional educational paradigm. I am also constantly observing the same enthusiasm and curiosity amongst others who remain open to and are involved in the practice of these approaches.

**Reaching Higher and Deeper: Global and Spiritual Influences**

*The transformed self is the medium, the transformed life is the message*

Marilyn Ferguson

At my first entry into the world of ‘radical education’ at the SEAL conference in the UK, I was to be profoundly moved and inspired by Barbara Meister-Vitale (1982) in her plenary speech. For most of her life she believed that she was not capable of learning even at an average level, having always been described as ‘learning disabled’ with an assessed IQ of 40! Upon discovery of the importance of whole-brain learning and ‘learning how to learn’ in her forties, her life radically and very rapidly changed.
Meister-Vitale was eventually to go on and write inspirational books, stimulating many others to discover their own innate capacities and higher intelligence. Despite her increasing age, she became committed to promoting transformative learning technologies throughout the world. She expressed that although at times she would rather have been at home with her husband and family, she felt driven to continue furthering her vision and to play her part in world transformation. She stressed that it was a “matter of survival of the whole planet”!

It was this kind of passion and commitment to which I gravitated, the universal scope of the message striking a deep chord within me. From then on I tended to view most of the integrated and A/L methods as potentially transformative at both the personal and the global levels. After exploring and using many of the techniques themselves, I felt that the A/L practitioner would naturally be a person who was well aware of the deeper and more far reaching implications of the method.

This enhanced awareness, whilst tending to be somewhat truer five years down the track, is not always necessarily evident. As is to be expected, some people have embraced the techniques simply for the immediate benefit they promise to bring. In other words, the emphasis is on speed and quantity of information rather than aiming for improvement in the quality and depth of the learning process. Research has shown that given the appropriate psychological and physical conditions, learning will ‘accelerate’ as a result of an enhanced process. However, this was definitely never Lozanov’s only motivation for developing his method. With the emphasis that he has always placed on developing the whole personality or person, his intentions I believe were far from simply speeding up learning. At the SEAL (1991) conference in the United Kingdom, Lozanov stressed that: “The potential possibility of the human mind is the main point of my work over 25 years and in fact my whole life”.

At this conference where I had the pleasure of personally meeting Dr Lozanov, he also emphasised the benefits of embracing a Suggestopedic approach to a broader audience. He stated that “by stimulating potential possibilities we are saving time, and since saving time means saving money, Suggestopedia becomes an attractive methodology for managers and trainers” (1991). By then the field of accelerative learning had undoubtedly expanded and Lozanov realised the broader interest and application that could be applied with his methodology.

Lozanov’s most recent research during that period was with the concept of ‘time-distortion’. This phenomenon relates to the particular experience of when we are in a relaxed state and time seems to expand. This is undoubtedly a great benefit to all those who practise this kind of relaxation in any busy situation. As a ‘selling’ point to business and managers coping with ‘information overload’ and time pressures, it is also a very attractive benefit. Naturally many people are usually eager to embrace techniques which save them time and bring immediate results.
Unfortunately, the more invisible, but deeper and longer-lasting implications are frequently ignored or unnoticed.

This tendency certainly has a great deal to do with the practitioners themselves and the message they are giving, both verbally and non-verbally, as well as what strikes a chord within the heart and soul of the learner. Certainly I am as interested in time and energy-efficient techniques as anyone. However, exaggerated and externally focussed promotions of A/L frequently minimise the depth and far-reaching potential of the methodology. So too, do those people who miss the whole forest for the trees, that is its holistic nature.

An interesting phenomenon I have noticed, is, that if practitioners stay up to date with developments, remain true to the essential philosophy behind integrated, accelerative learning, as well as to their own souls, they cannot help but be personally transformed in the process. It is this transformation process that fascinates me as I become more aware of our potential to become, not only innovative and effective educators, but also powerful agents of change for others.

Pockets of people all over the world are gradually recognising the need to develop more of their human potential as a means to answer some of our increasing global problems. I have found that a deep exploration of the use of our potential in the learning process has the tendency to unlock inhibitions and bring a certain amount of excitement to the fore. These pockets of people around the world represent a similar notion to Marilyn Ferguson’s concept of ‘conspicacy’ of which I certainly feel a part. More significantly I feel connected with the much deeper and increasingly widespread spiritual conspiracy which involves people of excellence and ‘masters in thought’ from all disciplines. I resonate also, with Ferguson’s discussion on the subject of love that she claims has “infected medicine, education, social science, hard science, even government with its implications”(1982:18). It is this potentially global and integrative influence that Teilhard de Chardin also refers to when he says that love “links and draws together the elements of the world... love, in fact, is the agent of universal synthesis” (quoted in Ferguson, 1982:266).

I consider that it is love and concern for others that drive educators to teach. This impetus is given fuel within the new learning paradigm, by our belief in and an understanding of human potential as well as a new vision of reality. This in turn naturally implies a need for change which is embraced with varying degrees of enthusiasm by us all on different occasions. Inevitably, as we soon realise that this change has to begin with us, the teachers, we also undertake various forms of resistance to at least some aspects of it. Personal change is undoubtedly, at times, a traumatic experience for the individual and personal transformation is naturally an on-going life process.
Ornstein & Ehrlich in their chapter, “A Curriculum about Humanity” say that the minds of teachers and educators need to be convinced of the need for change in order to get the curriculum changed (1991:201). They also say that because the problems of teachers in general are myriad, they need to be empowered, enthused and supported (ibid). I agree, and within the frequently personally challenging domain of A/L this need for practitioners is important as they stretch the boundaries for thinking in terms of learning and human potential.

I wanted to put the spotlight on our own consciousness to pay attention to the parallel inner processes that drive that development. I believe that, although traditional science would not agree, consciousness should be seen as “a causal reality”. I am interested in focusing on what we are or can be, rather than what we can have or observe from outside ourselves. I feel a strong desire and need to make a commitment around this passion of which this inquiry is part. The “new ‘interpretation’ of the mind-brain connections also supports this commitment.

Current concepts of mind-brain relation involve a direct break with the long established materialist and behaviourist doctrine that has dominated neuroscience for many decades. Instead of renouncing or ignoring consciousness, the new interpretation gives full recognition to the inner conscious awareness as a causal reality. (Sperry in Harman, 1987:11)

Given that consciousness now plays a central role both in physics and psychology and is even considered by many in these fields to be as basic a notion as that of matter itself, surely truly inquiring minds should be starting to turn inwards, towards consciousness itself. In the past the very notion that I am responsible for the quality of my own consciousness has not been a commonly held view. It has been far easier to blame other people or external situations for the ills or problems we may suffer. David Russell says:

With the awareness and understanding of the need for transformation, it seems those who have it also share the responsibility in making ‘quality decisions’. We are architects of our own lives and it is us who decide the destiny.

This question of how we can make quality decisions also relates to one of my key questions for his inquiry; that is, how can new paradigm educators remain effective agents for change and how can we monitor and develop our own attitudes and consciousness?

If personal example is one of the most important instruments for social change, then concern with the need to transform many of our present habits of attitudes, values and behaviour is paramount to ensure we can realise our new vision of

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18 Personal communication with Dr. David Russell in May, 1996, based on an earlier, written document, School of Social Ecology, UWS-Hawkesbury, NSW.
reality. As Diane Whitmore (see 'Potential', Chapter 6) has suggested, educators who are concerned with furthering human potential within others, need to re-connect with the beginnings of our own first impulses to teach others. The question is, are we pursuing the original vision we had when deciding to educate others? These and other questions are just some of the many that we need to ask in developing the spiritual aspects of ourselves.

Since 1989, my learning and teaching journey has been greatly enhanced by the rich and wonderful varieties of trees I have discovered along the way. My explorations in 'the forest' have greatly raised my self-awareness, deepened my understanding of the learning process and broadened my intellectual interests to cover many disciplines and fields. I have learned to love learning about learning and in doing so, believe that not only is there a need to put the soul back into education, but in fact that it is definitely possible. Thus I feel reassured that the emphasis I choose to place on my own strong shift in inner conscious awareness, is valid and fundamental to this research.
CHAPTER 4
Nature's Way: An Organic, Integrative Process

Introduction

We shall not cease from exploration
And at the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time
T.S. Eliot

Phase 1 (Chapters 1, 2 and 3) of my inquiry has led me from my past roots, through different self-understandings and professional experiences gained around integrated learning approaches, to readings of a range of relevant literature from many and varied sources and disciplines. I have been learning that at the heart of my motivation to encourage and facilitate the untapped potential in others, lies a desire to further my own spiritual integration. I have observed that working and exploring our inner selves within the new learning paradigm, we educators begin to do things differently. We begin doing things with a different and more expanded awareness, as the basis for facilitating the same in others.

I was eager to begin exploring with other educators to discover how self-aware they felt and to explore ways and means to further our inner selves in accordance with the educating we do. I felt that inquiring with others would provide stimulation and valuable encouragement for sustaining efforts toward our own personal/spiritual development. The process of self-inquiry for those in the integrated learning field is, I believe, essential if we are to become effective and genuine agents of change and transformation.

Chapter 4 tells the story of the process of my inquiring with other practitioners into the variety of ways in which we personally nourish and sustain ourselves so that they support and enhance our professional teaching work. This on-going process of self-inquiry has been found to be greatly supported and enriched by regular, open and honest sharing and experiencing with others in a group situation. My journey of finding an appropriate methodology for the whole inquiry which would deal with its highly personal, subjective nature, is described in this chapter.

The following summarises the stages in this process of inquiring with other educators and life-long learners into our own personal, spiritual development:

A Nourishing Environment: Methodological Considerations

This section focuses on the need to have developed a sensitive and flexible method for the inquiry which is congruent with the deeply personal nature of the topic, as well as to my own communication style and 'way of being'. It highlights the
intuitive factors that emerged throughout the process and demonstrates how these played a crucial part in my approach with others. There will be a discussion of some of the challenges of qualitative research as well as the appropriateness of the design. This places particular emphasis on its flexible, open-ended and cyclic nature, as different thoughts and events have unfolded in a natural and organic manner.

On-Going Exploration: Questioning

This section describes the role of my own inner questioning, developed from personal musings and reflections, and which, is an integral part of the overall research process. It includes a range of many of the formulated but often unspoken questions which have guided much of my consciousness and discussions with others throughout the inquiry. I found that simply by their existence within my consciousness, these silent questions have played a significant part in guiding my interactions and initiatives with others.

Testing the Ground: Early Inquiring

This section relates the experience of exploring with another Social Ecology researcher and innovative facilitator. Inquiring together stimulated my thinking around co-operative planning, participatory research and co-facilitation. It confirmed the value of in-depth open discussions as a means of gaining clarity and direction for further interactions with others. It provided the foundation for the formulation of the first questionnaire which I used with individual A/L practitioners on a one-to-one basis later that year. I also felt ‘alerted’ to the highly sensitive and deeply personal nature of this kind of research, as well as to its potential prolific growth in terms of data around one’s spiritual development.

Natural Selection: Individual Participants

This section describes the method of selecting the seven individual participant A/L educators, and the manner and steps involved in exploring together on a one-to one basis. Brief profiles of each participant are included along with a description of their involvement with accelerative learning methods. Three participants responded directly to a questionnaire, which was initially designed to prompt discussion around the topic. Others began in-depth communications and some still continue to communicate and share different aspects of their own personal, spiritual development.

Spirit of Learning Forum: Exploring in a Group

This section describes the evolvement of the Spirit of Learning (SOL) forum, a collaborative and participative group which originally consisted of mainly educators who use integrated learning methods. Since May 1993, the group has
expanded to include any ‘life-long learner’ who wants to experience and highlight aspects of spirituality as it is connected with learning and teaching. SOL represents a significant stage in this phase of my research as it continues to provide a practical and on-going forum for co-operating and exploring with others. It continues to provide further opportunities for developing ourselves personally, professionally and spiritually within a supportive group of like-minded people. One could say then that over time, the context for my inquiry, that is The Forest have been extended to include any innovative approach to learning and teaching. In doing so, it also demonstrates the flexible and on-going nature of the whole inquiry.

Reflections on Nature’s Way

This section covers reflections in the form of excerpts from my personal journal as well as overall reflections on the whole inquiry process, including documentation of this thesis. The journal excerpts recorded the essence of my consciousness at significant periods throughout the inquiry. They demonstrate some of the ‘inner chaos’ I experienced as well as some of the self-discoveries and personal insights I gained along the way. Reflections on the overall process as a whole include my approach in interacting with others. They include a description of how the natural, organic process is appropriate for and congruent to the topic of personal, spiritual development and how the two are closely intertwined.

A Nourishing Environment: Methodological Considerations

The universe as we know it is a joint product of the observer and the observed

              Teilhard de Chardin

Inquiring alone’ as related throughout Phase 1, and which involved much introspection, observations, readings and reflections, has provided a strong basis for the approach I have taken in this next phase of inquiring with others. My on-going quest for integration of the personal and professional has emphasised the tightly interwoven connections of the overall inquiry process with my deep motivations and life directions. This earlier period involved constant self questioning, not only around the research process and the topic itself, but I soon discovered, around my whole ‘raison d’etre’. As time went on the deep passion I was feeling relating to the encouragement of my own and other’s innate untapped potential became more evident. In turn, this passion has become integral to my quest for meaning and purpose in my life in general and therefore my overall spiritual development.

After earlier ‘testing the ground’ by collaborating with another social ecology researcher, I felt it important to explore further with other educators who were working and facilitating within the new learning paradigm. I wanted to encourage some of the same inner questioning and explorations into motivations that I had been undertaking within myself. I started to wonder about the type of values
which are shared among other A/L teachers in particular. I wanted to raise their awareness and create opportunities for dialogue around personal motivating ‘passions’ and visions in their facilitating/teaching work. I felt that:

I could derive great benefit from talking more frankly and openly with my colleagues about the many factors that concern my inner well-being as a teacher, and from listening openly and supportively to them (Underhill: 1986).

I felt sure that there was very little encouragement or opportunity for A/L educators to interact with their colleagues or like-minded teachers about their own “inner well-being” and on such questions like the following; “What are my aspirations as a teacher? What is my vision for myself and my students? What stops me from achieving this? Am I giving to my job the kind of quality that I would like to give?” (ibid). I totally agree with Underhill’s argument that:

Whatever outer innovations are distilled into the materials I use, it is still the ‘inner me’ that has to operate them. And I can only evoke learning in others in accordance with what is going on in me (ibid).

I would also argue that not only can I evoke learning in others that I am presently experiencing, but also that I have already experienced and that which I am open to experiencing at any time in the future. In other words, my awareness of being a constant life-long learner, along with a preparedness to change, is a major factor in my ability to effectively and caringly facilitate others, particularly within the domain of accelerative learning.

One of the great challenges of dealing with this kind of inward-looking research has been - how to do it? The personal, spiritual development of the self naturally involves an exploration of attitudes and consciousness. This factor in itself demonstrates the inappropriateness of using methods which are intended for the physical sciences or for topics that do not involve a deeply subjective approach. Traditional methods and measuring ‘devices’ do not enable us to understand the mind or consciousness, particularly when there is an emphasis on developing spiritual characteristics such as love, non-judgemental acceptance and empathy. It has become clear that a separate method for scientific research as well as an evaluation of its effectiveness or validity is needed for this particular kind of qualitative research.

In our Western cultures, the separateness between science and spirituality has become so wide that one has tended to invalidate the other. As a friend recently emphasised, “that we have to rely on our intellects to make sense of the world around us is the result of an impoverished relationship with the universe”. This is one of the natural consequences of placing materialism and the intellect in such high esteem. Since a traditional scientific view of the world can have great limitations, this inquiry argues the case for a more experiential, intuitive and
spiritually based approach to making sense of our world. Perhaps we need to look at some of the societies and cultures that have had a more integrative and experiential approach to science, those where there is an acknowledgment of the spiritual in all aspects of human existence.

In referring back to the description of my overall inquiry process (see ‘The Seed’), it will be seen that it is characterised by the essential features of an action research model. This involves a spiralling movement of observations, reflections, planning and action (Kemmis & McTaggart 1988:11). Naturally occurring within each major phase there are many other smaller similar phases which include cycles within cycles or spirals tending to become larger as they incorporate new understandings (knowledge). This movement represents the organic, integrative and on-going nature of my methodology. The nature of my inquiry process also includes, I believe, a movement ‘upwards and outwards’ which takes each level of the inquiry to another ‘higher’ one.

I find that Willis Harman’s model of the “hierarchal structuring of science”, has provided me with a very useful way of looking at my type of research inquiry, that is according to an upwards, ‘teleological explanation’(1987:92-98). His model involves four distinct levels of a ‘type’ of science, each one of which must have its own distinct ‘type’ of explanation (ibid). This hierarchy also implies that there is a need for a transcendence in the explanations of each level of inquiry, which means questions and explanations at one level do not necessarily fit at a different level. This is certainly the case in this inquiry, since the nature of my topic involves the personal, intuitive and spiritual levels of science. These include questions about values, personal meaning and universal purpose and involve other than ‘normal’ states of consciousness. These concerns, according to Harman, would relate to his third and fourth level or the “higher explanatory levels”(ibid). The higher the level becomes, the more subjective, abstract and often complex the explanations become:

The idea that the scientific observer can not be ‘objective’ in the sense of isolating himself completely from the phenomenon observed applies at all levels to some extent, and particularly at the higher ones. What the scientist perceives is a function of unconscious conditioning and previous suggestions picked up for the environment. Furthermore, as the universe is perceived from the higher levels, the contents and processes of the experimenter’s mind can affect the experiment in ways not understandable for the lower explanatory levels. (ibid, p.96)

These are certainly strong considerations and are especially relevant where an exploration of our personal attitudes, values and “consciousness as a causal reality” are significant factors as in my inquiry (Sperry in Harman, 1987:31). In other words one can not apply the usual “strict interpretations of objectivity and reliability through replicability” when it comes to deep subjectivity and dealing with the metaphysical aspects of human potential (Harman 1987:96). Harman further argues
that there must be similar kinds of criteria which are appropriate. He does make some suggestions, such as using the Buddhist notion of "non-attachment" and "something like trustworthiness", established after many "imperfect" tests, to replace "strict reliability through replicability" (ibid). For a discussion on the concept of 'non-attachment' in terms of 'detachment', see Chapter 6, 'Spiritual Awareness'.

In my method, there is a sense of 'transcendence' in terms of explanation and growth. This occurs throughout the research journey as I increase my self-awareness, my intuitive 'intelligence', my perceptual fields and my understandings in general. I believe that this integrative and all-embracing approach is necessary in order to "... reach a higher level from which a wider field of vision is open to us, and from which we [can] see events previously out of range" (Pavlov, in Beveridge 1974:62). In turn this increases my awareness and understanding of and empathy for others as well as heightening my close involvement with the process itself. Inquiring with others illustrates that these tendencies are very similar for them as well.

I believe that we need to give more weight and value to that of the other 'intelligences' that is to the qualitative and intrapersonal capacities such as intuition, spiritual wisdom and universal values as a way of reconciling the gap between these 'higher' levels of science and old 'lower' ways of interpreting and replicating them. This means that "trust in the creative/intuitive mind implies non attachment to the goals of the rational/analytical mind" (Harman 1987:88). For me this means that I have had to place attention on creating a nourishing and creative environment or mood for the inquiry as well as initiating and maintaining genuine relationships with others. There has been a constant need to take a 'bird's eye view' and see the global perspective, that is the entire tree, as well as the interconnecting branches and sub-branches.

In the early days of my undertaking this inquiry, I tried to fit my approach into an already defined, existing research methodology. However, I realised how I was incorporating a range of activities and reflections which aimed to honour and indeed encourage the personal, intuitive and 'organic flow' within the whole process. This flow is about allowing understandings and events to unfold naturally, with minimal manipulation on my part. It soon became clear that if I was to honour the absolute unpredictability and uniqueness of each individual (including myself), as well as of each experience, then I had to provide for these same features in my approach and my consciousness.

In exploring with others I have had to remain constantly sensitive, and respectful in a way which encourages and supports honest and open interactions whilst valuing each individual's personal contributions. I have needed to trust in 'nature's way', that is in the organic nature of the process to guide me in my own personal growth, illustrating how the process becomes merged with the topic, and
in fact becomes the topic. I have discovered that one way of enhancing one’s personal, spiritual development is to undertake an inquiry on the subject of ‘personal, spiritual development’.

It soon became clear that the most important factor I should consider in my approach was that of being and staying congruent with the nature of ‘personal/spiritual development’ and creating and sustaining a natural and nourishing mood. This has at times involved ‘feeling my way’ and learning to trust my deep intuitions. However, since I am writing this thesis not only to tell my story for its own sake, but also to satisfy particular academic requirements, it has not always been comfortable or easy. In any case I have felt the need to establish and identify my own particular approach which I have found to be ‘an organic, integrative process’.

Since I also wish to remain flexible and open to the flow and the intuitive nature of the inquiry, I have tended to put on hold any stage of the process that has not felt in harmony with and relevant to my life as a whole. On occasions, this factor has given me some distance and detachment from my emotional involvement. It has provided further time to reflect, question, change and grow along with the inquiry. Since I experience the process as one of spiritual development, I have often felt a need for a gradualness of space and time throughout. I have, with discomfort at times, realised that the process of personal growth cannot be rushed or forced and made to fit a particular requirement or meet a deadline. This has been evident regarding my whole inquiry where ‘nature has had to take its course’ and as reflected by the metaphor of my learning tree. Consequently, the duration involved in my explorations as well as writing this story has taken much longer than I ever anticipated.

Social Ecological Influences upon my Research

... social ecology is a braiding of doings (and reflections on those doings); a braiding of the scientific and the artistic

David Russell

I like this view of social ecology which integrates two significant aspects of human endeavour and which are generally seen as contradictory poles. In particular I am again attracted to the notion of aspects of living as an ‘art’. One of the original motivations for my undertaking a Masters of Science in the school of Social Ecology was due to the encouragement of the view toward healing ‘the split’ between two opposing world views. I found the idea of “braiding together” distinct parts of ourselves, to be deeply congruent with my own integrative perspective, and undoubtedly the research topic that I had identified. Within this psychologically nourishing and intellectually challenging environment, it became natural and important for us researchers to explore the heart and passion of our projects.
As time went on with the encouragement to explore and express in deep and meaningful ways around our research topics, I began to feel freer to express more of my deeper spiritual inclinations. These opportunities helped me to feel more ‘grounded’ as well as encouraged in my desire to integrate the intellectual with the spiritual in my research. In this environment I also learned to recognise some of the limitations of traditional ways of doing research. I became more interested in learning how to integrate the intuitive, metaphysical nature of ourselves and our environment with intellectual, rational knowledge.

Social ecology is a fairly new academic discipline which has also emerged out of the new learning paradigm. It places emphasis on holism and interconnectedness. The study of ‘systems thinking’ as a means to understand all relationships and ‘the patterns which connect’, is crucial to a social ecological approach. In terms of human relationships this means we need to see ourselves not only as integrated beings but also as being part of the whole system within the universe. The kind of thinking promoted by social ecology provided the next stage of my journey toward a sense of integration within myself. It has helped me to comprehend and to make more sense of my place in the wider world. Social ecology can be distinguished from other related fields by the inclusion of the self, the psychological dimension as an integral aspect of the inquiry, and this for me also leads into the spiritual dimension. When researching with others in this paradigm, there is an emphasis on developing and maintaining quality in relationships which naturally encourages participation, co-operation and collaboration.

For these reasons alone, I believe that a social ecological approach to research requires an exploration of the interdependence between one’s inner self and outer professional work and relationships with others. Murray Bookchin describes social ecology as dealing with:

... social and natural relationships in communities or ecosystems. In conceiving them holistically, that is to say, in terms of their mutual interdependence, social ecology seeks to unravel the forms and patterns of interrelationships that give intelligibility to a community, be it natural or social. (1982:16)

Since I am researching within this academic context of social ecology, which I believe is multi-disciplinary, if not trans-disciplinary, clearly marked signposts along the way are few and far between. Whilst often feeling quite uncomfortable about this situation, I have also celebrated the opportunities it has provided for innovation, integrated learning, development and further personal growth. I believe that innovative approaches to learning are significant in promoting human potential and more meaningful education in general. If one of the aims of doing this level of research is to contribute to new understandings, (and in my case this is about the inner self), then it is natural that there will not always be precedents to follow. So too it is natural that there will be an unpredictability and ambiguity involved in any inquiry into human consciousness and behaviour.
The theoretical, integrative and balanced approach of social ecology seemed to give meaning and creativity to a science from which I had previously felt alienated. This unique learning environment has tended to act as a ‘fertiliser’ to my life’s learning tree allowing the nourishing, feminine aspects of science to merge with the already established rational, intellectual aspects. It has provided psychological support, intellectual freedom and creative stimulation along the way. I have felt inspired and encouraged within this innovative academic community, to merge the many different aspects of my own life, the personal, professional, educational, spiritual and global and to feel validated in the process.

A social ecological perspective of continually promoting an integrative and creative approach to research and learning is naturally congruent with that held by most educators practising within the A/L paradigm. It also stimulates and supports the personal quest for ‘passion’ both within research projects as well as within learning processes in general. Social ecology encourages inquiry processes which emphasise critical reflection and reflexivity on one’s personal experience. It has thereby promoted much of the regular and systematic linking of my own inner and outer learning throughout the course of the inquiry.

The teaching environment in the School of Social Ecology has also provided many opportunities for observing and experiencing the role of the facilitator within an innovative learning context. Although these observations and experiences have not been treated directly in my research inquiry, I have been influenced by them, however subtly, in some way or another. They have contributed to much of my own reflections on the subject, particularly regarding the constant challenges for facilitators of balancing radical ideals with actual teaching practice. Since this will remain an on-going challenge for educators of all kinds, I have continued to remain fascinated with the frequent discrepancies and diversions from congruency that I observe within others as well as experiencing within myself.

Overall for me, social ecology has encouraged the linking of various learning and educational contexts, the developing and refining of new ways of thinking and doing with innovative approaches to researching in the social sciences. I have felt encouraged in the asking of big questions, questions seemingly beyond our research topics and about life’s meaning and purpose in general. I found this perspective of great relevance to my overall life-long learning processes and naturally for this research subject.

There is no doubt that social ecology, whilst offering great opportunities for self-directed learning and enhanced personal development, is not without its problems, limitations and sometimes ‘inconsistencies’. However, throughout my inquiry I have gained considerable confidence to express, further develop and critique my ideas and to finally feel valued for the specialised ‘expertise’ that I have developed along the way. Overall, social ecology has been a significant and valuable influence upon my personal and professional development, having
stimulated a multi-faceted and multi-disciplined approach to research and to my life in general. This educational phase in my life became essentially a re-education, a re-creation, even a recreation and a reward for past sufferings of meaningless, mundane academic learning!

A social ecological approach to education, science and indeed the world in general has paralleled my reflections on many of my earlier learning and teaching experiences. It has provided further understanding and therefore some formal ‘validity’ for this personal questing for integration in my life. On many occasions I have experienced that the creative and stimulating learning community of social ecology enhances the subtle and often unspoken spiritual elements within relationships. In these ways this environment has contributed to filling much of the gap I was feeling between the educational, professional and spiritual aspects of my life. It has left me with more hope for the creation of a new and more integrated way of learning, living and educating others.

**The Question of Validity and Further Considerations**

*Inner experience is no less real than observation of the outer world, but it does require more acceptance of what is deeply felt, and it requires tolerance for images that do not fit standard notions.*

Susan Krieger

*What is valid research? This is an important question when we are concerned with unquantifiable, qualitative issues in a world of ‘multiple realities’. As there is an inherent subjectivity when inquiring within new paradigm research, the subject of validity can be complex. I don’t believe there is one neat answer to the question nor is the notion of one single truth adequate. I feel there is a strong need for further exploration into methods of research which are simultaneously holistic and intellectually rigorous. I felt in accord with John Heron at his opening speech at the SEAL (1991) conference. He stressed the need for “a new type of research to fit the new learning paradigm”. I believe that while we are feeling our way within this new paradigm, that in social science,” . . . we must acknowledge the personal far more than we do” (Heron, 1991). I also agree with Krieger that “we need to find new ways to explore it” (1991:183). These personal aspects must include such elements as self-awareness, intuition and subjectivity, alongside respect for the uniqueness of each individual’s involvement.*

Because of the many ambiguities and uncertainties involved in research which deals with people, as I see it there can be no one certain and unambiguous way to approach it and to check for its validity. It is the free exploration of different kinds of research processes that will ultimately lead to some more explicit and useful guidelines for validity and rigour, both essential factors in any good research. This in turn will help others in ensuring their research is valid and honest. Certainly when dealing with people, participation, co-operation and collaboration are definitely important factors. However, I tend to think that it is the depth of self-exploration as a researcher and the intention behind the influence they impart on all aspects of the research, that should not be underestimated. Naturally in my own
inquiry, explorations into my own consciousness are an essential feature of the
inquiry subject itself. Some aspects of these experiences are expressed in my
personal journal, excerpts of which are included later in this chapter.

When exploring with others, I often asked the question "how do I honour the
authenticity and complexities of each participant and make their responses and
personal stories accessible to others?" After each dialogue, taped interview or
detailed correspondence with individual participants, I typed up the responses
either in full or in essence and sent a copy to each one in the form of transcripts
along with my written interpretations of our exchanges. These have included the
highlighting of various overall connecting and recurring themes or patterns as I
have been calling them.

Once I finished the relevant section involved, each participant received a copy to
approve for final presentation within the thesis. This means that there was no
question of misunderstanding any particular question or my having
misinterpreted their answers and contributions. I am aware that there are
undoubtedly a multitude of ways to relate personal experiences and I hope that the
manner in which I have woven their stories into my personal narrative and
informal style of writing will do justice to the interactions that I have shared with
other participants in this inquiry.

Whilst drawing on some of the characteristics of participatory action research, such
as flexibility and responsiveness, my approach is also eclectic and involves a rather
more subtle approach than is usual in qualitative research. For instance the stating
of my assumptions and intentions as well as my own state of consciousness along
the way, including my doubts, concerns and challenges is an attempt to find an
authentic way which is in harmony with the nature of the topic. In this way I feel
that the question of validity can be answered by attempting depth, honesty and
quality of self-exploration.

Regular reflections on my teaching and training practices have provided time and
space between overflowing thoughts and external daily activities. These have
demanded that I regularly observe myself and critique my assumptions and my
behaviour. The eventual aim is usually to share my new understandings,
interpretations and insights with others by some means or other. I have held the
hope that they will illuminate some inner knowing within other participants,
'passers-by' and/or readers and that they will feel some empathy and connection
with them. It has become clear to me throughout this inquiry, that regular
reflection on significant life learning experiences becomes a teacher for the self as
well as being important and relevant in the educating of others. In this way,
leading by example begins to have more practical meaning in daily life. As Richard
Winter emphasises:
The process of understanding must start from a reflection upon one's own experience, and that the sort of wisdom derived entirely from the experience of others is at best impoverished, and at worst illusory (1989:vii).

Willis Harman raises some issues around research which I believe are relevant and important to my own approach. He states that when dealing with the "spiritual sciences", questions concerning other kinds of consciousness will be appropriate (1987:92-93). Harman states emphatically that if science can not ask these questions who can? I agree! Once again the asking of important questions is an important step in coming to deeper understandings of ourselves. If we ask pertinent questions I believe we are on the right 'branch of our tree'. Part of this process requires patience, faith, courage and a sense of ego-lessness involved in not always having an immediate answer and feeling the need to be always 'right'.

I believe much of my research inquiry could be described as a 'spiritual science' and that different aspects could involve "higher explanatory levels" (ibid). For instance, the use by teachers, of the paraconscious in accelerative learning has been described in Chapter 3. The understanding and use of this element has the potential to awaken people to their own resourceful states, providing further tools for accessing these states at will. In order to facilitate others deep learning and inner potential through the use of paraconscious elements, educators need to regularly explore their own consciousness and motivations outside, as well as inside the classroom environment. Although some individuals undoubtedly already do this for themselves, it is uncommon to inquire with others in this way.

Harman claims that within the sciences in general, there have not been enough "qualified observers" (1987). By 'qualified' he means qualified in terms of their own inner development. To this end I am suggesting that within the professional contexts of human resources there should be more people who are prepared to explore relevant aspects of their own psyches with others. If this is done in systematically active ways, 'the number of 'qualified observers' will increase. I feel strongly that it is necessary to find different means to transcend old ways of doing science. The recognition and use of alternative states of consciousness and integrative perspectives need to become acceptable and valid and in fact essential for human evolution.

My view of science, like Linda Shepherd's, has a "feminine face" which sees "the workings of the world as cyclic and interactive, rather than simply linear and hierarchal" (1993:153). This view argues for the valuing of process rather than simply aiming for an end result:

In this sense, how science is done is just as important as what science accomplishes. Values of love, attention, and caring contribute to the quality of the process, and in turn influence the resulting product (ibid).
Since my research topic is inextricably tied up with the actual process, the resulting ‘product’ can never be a final one. The development of one’s spiritual consciousness, once awakened, will continue to expand and interact in a multitude of ways. I believe that for this inquiry to be valid and rigorous, the emphasis must necessarily be upon developing depth and quality of experience, illuminating personal learning, and heightening and expanding one’s consciousness.

I also feel confident that my organic integrative approach which values self-awareness, intuition and interconnectedness is not only an appropriate and effective one, but also parallels some of the major themes that have emerged out of the inquiry. Focusing on the continual process of becoming or on the essence of our being rather than on having or even knowing, undoubtedly requires a significant shift in perspective and attitude. However once the shift is made, one’s ‘essential self’ naturally becomes more receptive, aware and eager to transcend old ways of doing science and make alternative states and viewpoints acceptable and valid. The ever changing nature of the world, has been described as the one central certainty that has replaced the classical scientists’ ‘certainty principle’. In her discussion entitled “Quantum Theory as a Voice of the Feminine”, Shepherd states: “When we consciously acknowledge our uncertainties, rather than passing over them, we are more inclined to be open to other methods of proceeding” (1993:112).

The very nature of this inquiry, including the kinds of questions being asked, tends to involve participants in a way that helps to integrate the many different aspects of our personal, spiritual growth. This involves acknowledging our fears, our limited thinking, our weakness of habits as well as our innate potential for deep learning and personal transformation. Our self-explorations which involve subjective research on deep inner experience or on the higher explanatory levels, naturally imply a “willingness to be transformed” (Harman 1987:97). Certainly it is clearly evident that I have not remained unchanged by my experiences and reflections during this whole process. Rather than struggle against this inevitability, (which at times I still do), I have also begun to embrace and welcome change of the kind which has the potential to transform my limiting ways of being and doing things:

Objectivity is a figment of man’s mind; it does not exist in nature

Skolimowski

A consideration of validity for me relates not only to the overall quality and depth of the process but also to its broader implications. That is, does the research make a small but positive difference in the world? With the establishment of the SOL forum as well as the positive feedback from individual participants, who in turn influence many others, I feel that my explorations are doing this. Some of my concerns however, have included fears of the inevitable limits of ‘linguistic intelligence’ to capture the depth and spirit of the study through the writing of this
thesis. Nevertheless I have discovered that the strongest element of validity for me, has been the regular checking for on-going passion at each step of the inquiry, including the different stages of documentation. Since I realise this passion comes from a deep source within, I see it as a potent inner guide which I must stay in touch with. While the passion for my inquiry remains, so does the impetus, the energy, its honesty and integrity and therefore its validity.

I have found that expressing myself through the means of a personal journal has been a useful means for monitoring my on-going passion, direction and relevance along the way. It has provided some detachment from my emotions on those occasions when I have needed to work through some compelling personal issues! I have also been able to reflect critically on both my topic as well as on the overall process. Even when I felt 'lost' on occasions, either through writing or deep introspection, I always eventually discovered that the original impulse and commitment was still very present. This factor confirmed for me my need and willingness to continue. I have learned to become very aware of the presence (or not) of these elements at each phase of my research. The more I explored and articulated this phenomenon, the more I had to carefully examine my explanations and check my current state of passion and sense of relevance to my overall future.

In these ways, I have been able to step back, monitor the integrative nature of the whole process, and attempt to maintain the integrity to be true to my original, driving impulse, which is intricately connected with my overall life’s mission. I believe that to be truly fulfilled and to become a 'master in the art of living', we need to love our work and education with a passion. For me this has meant that the process of my inquiry finally became more important than the end result; in this case the finished thesis.

A significant realisation along this research journey has been that to serve in a spiritual sense is a strong motivating force in my life. Consequently, I have had frequent concerns along the way, of being self-indulgent, in spending so much of my time in 'just' thinking and writing. I am far more accustomed to 'doing' in an active sense. I know that I have a strong desire to contribute to society at large and so have had to learn to see that there are many different ways of contributing. 'Just being' and remaining awake and developing an elevated consciousness is certainly one of them.

I have also come to the conclusion that by communicating our inner-most concerns, fears and 'hang-ups' around our life passions, and in particular about our own personal and professional development, we are creating valuable learning opportunities through our openness and vulnerability. Furthermore, I believe that this honesty must contribute to the validity and authenticity of the research. I have found that to the extent that I am aware, then to that extent I must remain completely honest.
On some occasions I felt I needed to feel the pulse of others in a way that is not so rational and logical but allows for more sensitivity and empathic listening than would otherwise occur. Through my meditation experiences and spiritual teachings over some years I have been learning to see and relate to others as spiritual beings as much as possible. This is often easier said than done as the experience involves a slightly altered state of consciousness based on relaxation and a certain inner ‘knowing’. Nevertheless, I have found it very important and natural to tune into this state as much as possible during this inquiry with and for myself as well as with others.

I have found that developing a spiritual consciousness always helps me empathise deeply with others. I am more able to facilitate their participation in a non-judgemental way and to ‘let go’ of any sense of power or control that I may have. In other ways accessing this state has also helped me to detach emotionally from participants’ responses and any of their revealed stories. Although the ‘soul conscious’ state is a subtle and gentle one, it is also a powerful one and promotes a deep connection which goes beyond the usual level of communication.

Within the Spirit of Learning forum for example, the question often arises of “How do we relate to one another in a way that promotes spiritual development but does not impose one particular belief system upon another?” As a group, we make continual efforts to finding the common spiritual ground and to co-operate, collaborate and create with each other from that point. Discovering and accessing one’s spiritual consciousness alone is a powerful and effective basis for developing and maintaining valuable relationships with others as well as with one’s ‘higher self’ or source of spiritual power.

**On-Going Exploration: Questioning**

_Even the questions themselves, like locked rooms... live the questions now. Perhaps you will then, gradually, live along some distant day, into the answer_  

Rainer Maria Rilke

From the beginnings of this inquiry, I have spent considerable time experiencing, observing and reflecting upon the behaviour and attitudes of ‘experts’, teaching and working in the new paradigm learning domains. Along with the potential power of the techniques we use, I had become more aware of the far-reaching potential influence each one of us holds as individuals. Through insights gained in meditation as well as knowledge of the power of non-verbal communication, I came to understand and experience that the very essence of an educator or person in a leadership position, is what is communicated and taught.

A/L teachers in particular are very well-aware of the paraconscious elements in the teaching process and so it is frequently quoted that the medium is the message. It is also generally understood that accelerative learning not only deals with cognitive knowledge but also with personal development elements such as self-esteem,
positive attitudes and beliefs. I believe that the subject of personal development as an integral aspect of the A/L approach, can not help but place an emphasis on the same within the practitioner. As Lozanov illustrated, the teacher as a suggestive influence is of paramount importance and that we have a life-long-lasting effect upon our students.

Undoubtedly many educators have their own highly refined means to develop themselves personally and spiritually, especially those with the full knowledge of the influence they have on their students. I was becoming more interested in knowing how individual A/L practitioners dealt with their own influence since it is such an acute awareness within this learning domain. I had come to believe that the committed A/L educator is essentially an agent of positive change. I wanted to find out how our authentic and spiritual essence could emerge and develop in a way that would support this role. I already had strong beliefs about the need for ongoing inner exploration and about providing opportunities to share them with others within a safe and stimulating environment. At this stage however, I did not know how this might occur.

As I have related in phase one of this inquiry, during significant stages throughout my life I have asked significant questions, frequently of and to myself as well as to others. These questions have usually been provocative in as much as they have often ultimately brought about some major change in my overall life direction, either externally or internally. Over a period of years of informal researching into different learning processes, I had come across many examples of the power of the question for gaining understanding. I have since learned that the asking of a certain question can be provocative enough in itself and does not always demand an answer.

I have found that this is very often true when it comes to meaningful, spiritual inquiring. If I ask a significant question with a pure heart and positive intent, sooner or later, in one form or another, an answer usually and eventually comes. I also know that I need to be clear to receive answers in this way. I need to maintain an alertness to the paraconscious as well as a faith in my own ‘intuitive intelligence’ 19. I have since found inner questioning a powerful personal means for learning more about myself and the way I think, feel and evolve.

Becoming a formal research student encouraged and obliged me to become a questioner, although naturally the questions were not always spiritually inclined ones. In order to identify my specific topic (through finding my passion), I learned more about the need to ask lots of interesting and probing questions. However, during the early stages of my research, most questions were asked of me. I learned a lot through contemplating the very nature of the questions themselves as well as ways to become more effective in my own learning. For example, I found that I

19 See Chapter 6, ‘Furthering our Spiritual Potential’.
learn and read more efficiently if I always have a question or two at the back of my mind. Nevertheless it took me some more time before I knew what questions to ask myself, as well as others, in order to get started on this inquiry. Perhaps this was because this particular academic context which involves a new researching paradigm, was also breaking new ground. Consequently it has not always been clear what the ‘ground rules’ have involved.

Eventually I began my spirit of learning exploration through creating a variety of questions, some which remained unspoken but were consciously reflected upon. Others emerged and remained as part of a questionnaire, originally intended as a starting point for further dialogue with individual participants. I came to formulate one main overall question which I believe incorporates all other questions within the context of this topic: How do practitioners of integrated accelerative learning develop, nourish and sustain positive inner qualities and personal growth in order to pioneer and sustain changes within education?

Since my early interest in this overall question, I have found that many questions around my inquiry have accumulated. These act as constant stimuli for further exploration and on-going personal growth. Some of the questions in the initial questionnaire were intended to prompt participants to discuss freely the subject of their own personal, spiritual development. Due to the organic nature of the process with others, as well as the practicalities involved, many of the questions which continued to be generated along the way were not directly posed to participants within the inquiry. Rather, many have remained, sitting at the back of my mind, allowing natural processes to occur when they might.

In some cases, if the circumstances were appropriate, they tended to emerge spontaneously in interviews or conversations. Other questions have remained unarticulated. In any case, this constant questioning has become an on-going part of my methodology for my own personal growth, and therefore this inquiry. I have come to believe that even at the unspoken level, silent questions have the potential to sub-consciously influence or stimulate others to ask similar questions of themselves. This approach of formulating and recording questions has also helped reduce my influence or intervention in direct communications with others. In this way I believe it prevents pre-empting too much and hindering personal self-discovery. This is particularly so since my questions are no doubt loaded with personal assumptions and reflect my own special interests or concerns.

Sometimes a response comes to a specific question either in the form of a spoken concern or a rephrasing of the same question. This may come from another participant in the inquiry, from an article in literature, a workshop or course, or it may not come at all. I have also discovered a benefit in not expecting immediate (or even any) answers to many of my questions. The purpose has been to raise my own awareness, focus my thoughts, generate a range of possibilities and in general, serve as a method to continue exploration within myself as well as within others.
Most of the questions remain as relevant and as interesting for me now as when I formulated them. In most cases it does not matter if they are not always answered, which they are often not. Other new ones have been added and some eliminated. Since the continual formulating of questions is not only a power in itself, the process of inner exploration around spiritual development becomes a life-long process, and also tends to emphasise the on-going, cyclic nature of the inquiry.

This on-going inner questioning has had the effect of sustaining my own curiosity and interest in my inquiry as well as helping to focus on different aspects of personal/spiritual growth at different times. I have discovered a power and practicality in privately asking these ‘smaller’ questions, putting them aside into my sub-conscious and leaving them to contribute to my main question.

Along with the expansion of the domain of integrated accelerative learning, the contextual boundaries of my inquiry have also expanded. My questions therefore concern innovative educators in other non-traditional ‘ground-breaking’ areas of learning and teaching. Certainly they are relevant to educators within the Spirit of Learning forum and many of those who now work within a paradigm of facilitation rather than one of traditional teaching. For the purpose of familiarity and convenience, I shall still continue to use the abbreviated term ‘A/L’ (integrated, accelerative learning) in its broadest sense as first described at the beginning of the thesis (see ‘The Seed’).

As are other aspects of this inquiry, the following questions are relevant to and significant for many other holistic, humanistic learning and teaching methodologies. They all include, in most cases the assumption that facilitators of learning within this paradigm are also agents of change. I have placed the questions in categories for easier recognition and perhaps further inquiring will reveal some significant answers. This kind of on-going questioning has consciously or sub-consciously guided my explorations from the beginning.
Guiding Questions

General
* How do we develop our own inner potential and expanded creativity?
* How can educators learn to trust, support, inspire and share with our colleagues to further our own personal growth?
* What is the most effective way of developing congruence between the inner self and the philosophy we promote?

Challenges
* What kind of inner challenges are raised for new teachers of A/L as they learn to deal with ‘suggestive’ teaching methodologies?
* How can practitioners develop inner powers to manage resistance to new approaches from outside? (eg from students, colleagues, authorities)? When is this resistance telling us something to which we need to listen?
* What are the difficulties in putting theory into practice (eg always modelling positive attitudes, having a relaxed state)?
* How do you deal with challenges from others in relation to the term ‘accelerated learning’?
* What is the greatest challenge you have faced in the A/L domain? How did you deal with it?
* How can I bring my essence to bear creatively and positively on the problems that I meet in the learning environment?

Attitudes and States
* How do we facilitators access and maintain our own resourceful states of consciousness as well as promoting those within our learners? How do our own states affect those we teach?
* How much of what I do unconsciously works against what I attempt to do consciously?
* How are my energy levels while I am training/teaching?

Change
* Why do we as ‘aware’ educators often resist real change within ourselves (given we are committed to facilitating the same in others)?
* What are the essential qualities, attitudes and values that an effective educator needs? How do we know if and when we have them?

* Are there any common underlying values, vision or goal that new paradigm educators share?

Practicalities

* What effect do your personal values and/or qualities have on the implementation of the techniques you use, as a learner or a teacher?

* How can valued qualities, visions and personal growth processes be identified, shared and incorporated into teacher training programs?

Inner Nourishment

* What different kinds of support do you take in terms of your own personal growth and from which source?

Spirituality

* How does our experience with integrated learning methods enrich our personal, spiritual lives?

* How can they be made relevant and available in all professional contexts?

Teaching/Facilitating Others

* Is it essential to change ourselves before we can be effective agents of change?

* How can educators continue to raise awareness, expand thinking and shift perception amongst our learners?

* How can we utilise our personal change processes to facilitate the same in our students?

* How can A/L be a powerful and ‘accelerating’ vehicle for personal, spiritual change in ourselves as well as in others?
Testing the Ground: Early Inquiring

We need to link our statements about those we study with statements about ourselves, for in reality neither stands alone.

Susan Krieger

Collaborative Planning and Co-Facilitation

During the early days of my inquiry, I found myself engaged in numerous, in-depth discussions about our individual research topics with a fellow Social Ecology course member and workshop facilitator. Ahtee was interested in “personal, internal, self-directed change processes” and mine held an underlying assumption of the need for personal change as essential to the educator’s personal growth. Our discussions included the similarities in our projects as well as the differences between our researching methods and the context in which we were exploring. They also included stimulating conversations about innovative learning approaches which pay particular attention to transformative and emancipatory processes.

At this early stage of formulating and refining my topic, I felt the strong need to dialogue with someone who really understood what I was on about. At this point I had not yet explicitly articulated the term ‘spiritual’ within my topic. It was during these discussions that I first realised how much I had been wanting to highlight the strong link I perceived between learning in general and spiritual development. Exploring with Ahtee provided the opportunity to talk through some of my concerns and questions as a way of gaining clarity of my passions and values for my research. Our discussions also gave me confidence to stick with my topic which, I was realising, had the potential to be extremely broad and overwhelming. In achieving these understandings, I also realised that part of the answer to my overall key question (how to develop oneself personally and spiritually) lay simply in having the opportunity to make the ‘unconscious conscious’.

I found this experience of deeply sharing not only our research in progress but our philosophies, personal visions and values as well, to be empowering, confirming and validating. In turn it inspired me to consider sharing some of my ideas and questions with other interested facilitators and life-long learners. At this point I had only half-formed ideas toward the design for further exploration with others. However, I was beginning to realise the great value of one-to-one collaboration and in-depth discussion as a way of gaining insights about the self from another perspective. The deeply personal nature of our topics also seemed to demand a sensitivity and intimacy of dialogue which in turn engendered a sense of trust in each other.

Merging our different cultural and professional backgrounds (he a Malaysian architect) was rewarding by and confirming of the global relevance of both our topics. From then on, our interactions encouraged the continued expression of the
spiritual within my notion of personal development. We discovered that at the heart of both our projects lay a fundamental desire to maintain and promote soul in learning processes. In exploring together, the feeling of interconnectedness that can exist beyond all kinds of boundaries was also highlighted.

Through Ahtee, I was learning a different approach to facilitation. As a facilitator without a background in teaching, he had not developed a lot of the tendencies of dominating and controlling the learning process for others, as I had certainly done in the past. His approach was simply to set the mood for the group, provide the space and ask pertinent and provocative questions of the participants. I learned how purposefully one can use questions to further learning and self-understanding. Ahtee’s use of and comfort with fairly long periods of silence within the learning process was also something I valued and learned from. I was again reminded as I had been with the educator, Caleb Gattegno, of the power and use that silence can have in the learning/teaching process (1972). I also learned the great value in building into learning sessions, the essential element of reflection time. I found some of the processes Ahtee had learned through his study of facilitation as an art, as well as his own particular nature, fascinating.

Ahtee and I decided to run a weekend explorative workshop as a means to articulate some of our aims and research questions and test them out amongst other interested facilitators. He and I had already collaborated on producing “The Life Game”, part of a “Global Vision Manual”20 which is for facilitators interested in educating for a transformational kind of change. Our experiences working together had so far found us, although totally different personalities, very much ‘in tune’ philosophically. Because we felt we would work well together, we decided to check our understandings and assumptions about collaborative research and co-facilitation.

In the meantime another researcher interested in exploring both personal development and accelerative learning, came to me to request a weekend workshop around my topic. Soon after we formed a small group which consisted of eight professional facilitators, half of whom were Social Ecology course members and the others colleague-friends. All were very interested and engaged in some course of personal or spiritual growth within their own lives. I invited Ahtee to share the facilitation of the workshop with me and we chose a title which we thought to be appropriate for both our inquiries: ‘Exploring the Process of Personal Transformation through Integrated Accelerative Learning’.

We both felt very strongly about stating and clarifying the basic assumptions and values that drove our individual projects and attitudes toward collaboration and facilitation. A starting point for Ahtee was his belief that unless each individual

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20 Global Vision Manual (1991) was inspired by ‘visions of a better world’ from people in over 120 countries and collected and collated by Global Co-Operation for a Better World project, co-ordinated worldwide by the BKWSU.
takes responsibility for him/herself and begins to change from within, then the world is "doomed". This view, although I did not express it in this way, resonated with the strong feelings I had about 'self-transformation before world transformation'. I shared my own assumptions about the potential for integrative learning processes to be an appropriate and powerful vehicle for facilitating social change. Ahtee referred so often to the term 'change agent' that I realised that is also what a new paradigm educator is. This further served to confirm my thesis of the need for on-going personal exploration and personal development for ourselves around our professional roles.

We decided that Ahtee's interest in the process of personal change would become the topic (the content) of the workshop and accelerative learning would provide the context (the process). I showed Ahtee a list of the questions (see below) that I had devised for participatory exploration. We decided they would be appropriate in the beginning of the workshop to set the learning context I wanted and to prepare participants for his wider context (life). I offered to first answer the questions myself before holding the workshop.

I found this a useful exercise as I recalled that the strongest feature of my own past learning was mainly having a positive person (for example a mentor or teacher) to believe in me as a person and to encourage all of my 'intelligences' and full potential. I wondered about some of my past school teachers who had tended to do the opposite. I also realised how difficult it is to fully encourage another's potential whilst holding a negative or limiting view of the self. When I took this time to reflect on why I was so committed to facilitating and encouraging the development of innate potential within others, I felt energised and excited. I enjoyed once again re-connecting with my original motivation and passion to be involved in helping others find a new paradigm for learning.

Ahtee explained the basic steps involved in the way he thought any group should be run. It should be experiential with a lot of questioning on the part of the facilitator and that little should be pre-empted or given to participants in advance. Naturally this is in complete contrast to the traditional teaching way. We decided to use the basic and general steps for facilitation (the process) for groups from the Institute of Cultural Affair's (ICA) 'Winning through Participation' (Spencer, 1989) which are as follows:

Firstly establish what stands out in general, then examine the associated feelings of the subject at hand. Then ask, what took place? Finally analyse, interpret and reflect upon the experience. A final step involves some possible course of action. The rationale behind this process is that it allows for individual self-discovery rather than the facilitator attempting to tell 'how it is'.

Whilst planning with Ahtee I was beginning to have concerns about the breadth of our topic as well as our obvious different personalities and facilitation styles. I
benefited from Ahtee’s insistence on going back to the basic questions and concerns both of us had. I had the tendency to feel a bit of pressure to get on with it - to plan each activity step by step. It was here that I was being more subtly challenged to practise what I believed. I decided that whilst also enjoying and learning from our collaboration, I should also let go of too much planning, ‘go with the flow’ a bit more and ‘trust the process’. I was beginning to realise that when exploring such highly personal topics as personal transformation and spiritual growth, that there would inevitably be challenges, within ourselves as well as from without.

I had been becoming more aware and sensitive to different styles of communicating and facilitating and I appreciated and learned from Ahtee’s quieter, relaxed, Asian way of doing things. I decided that the most important thing to do would be to maintain a positive intention and remain constantly alert to the learning process.

The Workshop May 1992

The overall plan for exploration of the topic, ‘the process of personal transformation’ was as follows:

* Draw or symbolise your life’s learning journey and major changes throughout (inner work)

* Share the major ones (if agreeable) with the group (guided conversation)

* What is significant about these? (reflection and sharing of the process)

I was to ensure that this exploration was to include some of the features of A/L, the use of relaxation, visualisation and music.

In order to get participants thinking about the subject of learning in general, relating to their present life, I first gave them a list of the following questions.

1. How could you best summarise your formal learning experience?

2. What kind of messages did you receive and give yourself about your learning capacity?

3. What kind of effect do you think your past learning experiences and associated messages have had on your attitude to yourself and subsequent learning situations and potential?

4. Describe a profound or significant event, person or period during your days of learning.
5. How do you connect your learning with your *personal development and growth*? Describe fully.

As the first step, I started with a relaxation exercise, followed by a visualisation which would take participants back into their past formal learning environments. These activities were intended to act as a prompt for the rest of the workshop, to prepare participants to explore the subject of ‘personal transformation’. However, a different result occurred. People became very engrossed in the activity and then in sharing their past learning experiences. Most of them said they had not thought about these issues in such depth before. They had not seemed to make the connection to their early learning and its effect on their current personal attitudes. This was despite the fact that they were teachers, facilitators and post-graduate students. In fact, the exercise took up a great deal of time and could have been the basis for an in-depth workshop in itself. It also stimulated much discussion, debate and some personal realisations and insights.

As it eventuated, Ahtee’s time to facilitate some in-depth exploring was cut drastically as we seemed to need to follow the natural course of the process. He demonstrated the *spirit of a true facilitator*, with the genuine interests of the group at heart. He allowed the flow to happen, without intervening or rushing activities, even though this meant a great reduction in his own planned activities. To me it demonstrated the great flexibility one requires when operating in a facilitative role particularly in collaboration with another. It also demonstrated the benefit of humility and preparedness to give the power to the group. I enjoyed the philosophy of this kind of facilitation and although I felt that much of my teaching aimed to do just that, I realised I had a fair way to go before getting the balance of many factors just right. I knew that there were many subtle forces happening within to which I needed to continue paying attention. I knew that constant awareness of the self, others and of the process itself are key factors in facilitation of this nature.

*Group Responses to Past Learning Experiences*

After the visualisation and examining the questions, we as a group, including both Ahtee and I wrote down some key phrases to summarise what came up for us. They include the following:

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Overwhelming experience of losing sight of own goals... Fearful and no confidence in system - led to self-directed learning... I knew anything possible but needed to find alternatives... Positive but insecurity. Had sense of deep worth but couldn't succeed in academia...

There was an overwhelming tendency for participants' past formal learning experiences to be largely negative or at best limiting. The results surprised us all. The atmosphere was so heavy following this reflection that I decided to do a positive, suggestive exercise which would change the overall state of the group. I was reminded of how the knowledge and experience of 'changing states' at will was a valuable life-long skill. I also realised how constantly aware and flexible at every stage in the process a good facilitator must be.

It appeared that the most significant question for members of the group was in relation to the 'messages' they received. In other words the basic elements of suggestion and the paraconscious as Lozanov had identified, emerged as the overriding influence from their past formal learning experiences. I felt reassured that our questions and discussion on these aspects of personal development would contribute to my further explorations. In any case I knew I wanted to provide opportunities for other facilitators of learning to articulate more of their own past learning experiences. In this way I felt they could link their own experience more explicitly with an understanding of their current philosophies, attitudes and practices. Individual insights can enlighten us toward helping create a more relevant and a more spiritually sustaining education system.

**Reflections on Early Inquiring**

I realised the strong sense of satisfaction and achievement I obtained from sharing ideas about innovative learning processes and facilitating collaboratively. It was particularly rewarding because it involved our deepest passions about our personal, spiritual selves. I realised that this early inquiring was integral to my own development, both personally and professionally. It provided opportunities to articulate my personal approach to my work and to develop some new skills and awareness in the process. The most significant learning I gained was in the value of *reflecting at each stage* of one's particular journey or process.

Once Ahtee and I had established and clarified our basic assumptions and questions, respect for each other became an important factor in our facilitating together. I remembered how, except for my co-teaching in prison, most of my experiences had involved planning and facilitating alone. Collaborating with someone closely on a topic of such depth and personal significance is particularly revealing and rewarding. In general I found discussions and planning meetings to be exciting, encouraging and inspiring.

Since I had long been interested in the concept of power within a group situation, I naturally gravitated toward Ahtee's philosophy of self-directed learning for
students, which involves little intervention by the facilitator. My increased awareness regarding the styles of facilitation and shifts in power in general led me to think more deeply on this subject. I began to ask questions about how I could always be sure to teach and facilitate professionally in accordance with my own values, educational philosophy and personal style. I was also discovering the great value in reflective processes to enhance learning in general, as well as for increasing self-awareness and understanding. From then on I decided I was going to allow much more time and space for all my students to reflect upon their learning activities. I also wanted to allow more opportunities for them to contribute within and about the learning process. I therefore felt it essential to build in reflection and feedback elements into any of the courses I was conducting.

I knew in the end that what was most important was to continue exploring different ways of facilitating others’ learning processes. I also wanted to be able to express my own essence, remain true to my core values and personal style and facilitate the same in others. From then on I decided to remain even more open and constantly alert to facilitation processes in general as well as to my own consciousness during the process. I wanted to continue learning from any educational area in which I might find myself and I also knew I did not want to become a slave to any one method.

This early inquiring taught me that sensitive and effective facilitation around deep topics such as ours required a balancing of many factors, both internal and external. It seemed to me that developing and maintaining a balance within the person of the educator must surely be an important starting point. From then on I found myself constantly focusing on how styles and methods of facilitation and leadership roles always seemed to point to the that person’s inner world. I realised how I could not get away from myself and what was happening within!

**Natural Selection: Individual Participants**

Research with people (in contrast to on people), that is co-operative or collaborative inquiry as it is encouraged within the social ecology paradigm, greatly appealed to me from the beginning. Since I had had no previous experience doing research in a more traditional researching paradigm, this approach to social science was totally natural and expected from my perspective.

For some years I have been initiating, maintaining and developing connections within various network systems, particularly those which are globally and spiritually focused. These networking tendencies have been an organic and informal means for my explorations with others. They have provided opportunities for finding interested participants for my inquiry.
My original intention was to explore my topic with like-minded and experienced A/L practitioners within a group situation. However, it soon became clear at the time (1990) that there were only a handful of educators in New South Wales who were experienced within the A/L field. Given that A/L was still relatively new in Australia, I would have to either form a group of predominantly inexperienced educators or find another way. I chose the latter, or perhaps the latter chose me.

My earlier inquiring with Ahtee and others had demonstrated that the subject of personal, spiritual development in relation to educating and learning was relevant and significant in any learning/teaching domain. Collaborating with him confirmed the value in deep and meaningful dialogues on a one-to one basis. Our co-facilitation provided further means for self-understanding and professional growth.

The overseas A/L and ‘affective learning’ conferences and courses had introduced me to the work and ideas of many practising innovative and experienced new paradigm educators from around the world. I began to get a feeling for some of those whom I remembered vividly or who had had a strong and positive impression on me, in one way or another. I was interested in finding practitioners in the field who wanted to explore the deeper and more subtle paraconscious elements of our own teaching practices as well as within ourselves.

After establishing several individual participants in Australia, I took my next opportunity to find a few more interested people overseas. Early in 1992, armed with a dozen copies of a questionnaire I had designed, I approached various people at the Society of Accelerated Learning and Teaching (SALT) conference in Minneapolis, USA. Initially I did this out of a certain logical sense of appropriateness or convenience where I happened to be a participant in their workshop or if they were ‘a name’ in the field. Interestingly, none of the people whom I approached in this way actually responded and became contributing participants in my inquiry, although initially three of them said they would be interested (perhaps out of politeness).

On the other hand, the two educators I asked in an intuitive or spontaneous way accepted immediately and became very engaged in the inquiry. These intuitive feelings involved a spontaneous and unconscious ‘tuning in’ period (possibly only seconds in length) and either a ‘gut’ feeling or a strong or sudden visual ‘flash’ or image which pointed to this person being appropriate or ‘right’ in some way. These two seemed to resonate strongly with the topic at first mention and I had a sense of sharing congruent values and/or similar vision with them. There was naturally no need to use exercises to test for personality, to evaluate suitability or even to declare their personal/professional vision or values. Rather, it seemed there was an unspoken feeling and strong attraction toward the topic as well as between ourselves.
Once I had established the working definition for a practitioner of ‘Integrated Accelerative Learning’, I checked with proposed participants that they were comfortable with the term. Eventually seven people with whom I could engage in deep and meaningful communications on the subject of our own development, emerged as individual participants for my inquiry. One participant, Ben may not have previously or otherwise described himself as an ‘A/L practitioner’. Nevertheless he was already using many of the creative A/L teaching techniques, such as drama and music and his philosophy and assumptions about learning were in accordance with the methodology. He quickly became interested in knowing more about the theories behind A/L which tended to confirm what he was intuitively already doing. We both felt satisfied with the description to suit our purposes.

I needed to consider the question of what number of total participants would be manageable for the inquiry, suspecting that qualitative research would probably generate enormous quantities of data - and it did! At first, I tended to think that the more people involved, the better. However, I was soon reminded by my adviser that, in order to attain the depth and quality of inquiry that I was seeking, it was not necessary to have large numbers of individuals for the research to be valid and significant. I have since wondered how I could possibly have managed with more material.

**Profiles of Individual Participants**

Whilst attending my first (SALT) conference in California in 1989, I first met Eric Jensen, A/L educator and author of several books on accelerative learning (1988 and 1994). We have maintained contact as friends since this period. Eric was one of the first A/L educators from overseas to be contracted by the Department of School Education in New South Wales as well as being one of the first to earn a reputation as a sought after expert and A/L trainer, and in particular as one ‘who practices what he preaches’. He is responsible for much of the training of NSW teachers as well as many other company trainers, school students and members of the general public. He first came to Australia to train others in A/L methods in 1989 and is still coming twice yearly, such has been his professional popularity and the growth of this industry since that period.

I had already come to know Eric a little from attending his training sessions in Sydney and had also had several informal discussions with him around the subject of being an A/L practitioner and the field in general. I found these mixed exchanges with him very positive and empowering and felt extremely comfortable with his relaxed and congruent personality. He was the first participant to respond to my questionnaire and assured me that what I was doing was valuable research at both the personal and professional level. Since he was one of the most experienced and well-known A/L practitioners in the field and I was still feeling my way in
approaching others on this topic, this early positive encouragement proved to be most significant in my own development as a researcher.

This interview session was held over a relaxed dinner in a restaurant in his home town in San Diego in April, 1992. The follow-up was made some months later by fax and telephone when he was training in Sydney as we were unable to personally meet at the time. Due to increasing work commitments, Eric was not able to correspond on a regular basis from the United States, but approved and returned by mail my typed copy of the exchanges we had had. He has remained an enthusiastic and encouraging participant.

Dr Gloria Marie Caliendo is Assistant Professor of Spanish at Central Connecticut University, USA. I heard Gloria speak at the plenary session at the second SALT conference I attended at Minneapolis in 1992. I did not personally meet or speak to her at the conference but as a result of a spontaneous and intuitive impulse, I wrote to her from an airport stopover after leaving the conference to return home. She agreed to participate in the inquiry and she answered my questionnaire with an offer to contribute in any other way. We corresponded several times after that but probably due to much delay on my part in re-connecting, I did not receive a further response.

Lonny Gold is a very experienced, professional Suggestopedic practitioner, originally from Canada and now living and working in France. Lonny has his own ‘Institut de Suggestologie’ in Paris, and his main teaching work has been conducting commercial courses in the English language for French company employees. He uses ‘pure’ Suggestopedic method, writing his own tailor-made courses for each group of clients and is a particularly talented and creative practitioner. He has a total commitment to furthering personal growth and human potential through empowering learning methods which tend to focus on the development of intuitive and perceptual skills.

I first met Lonny at the SEAL (UK, 1989) conference and have become good friends from a distance since this time. He was recommended to me as a well-known and ‘first-class’ Suggestopedic teacher. I asked to observe some of his classes in a business company in Calais, France where he was teaching English to some of the employees. He agreed with pleasure and arranged wonderful country-side accommodation for me outside the town. We enjoyed several long and stimulating conversations about the implications of the Suggestopedic teaching method as well as the intricacies and philosophy behind it. Since A/L had not yet taken off in Australia, Lonny offered to do anything he could to help me promote the methods in Australia.

Our meeting came shortly after my meditation retreat in Mt Abu, India and I was bursting with questions around the subject of the parallels between spiritual growth and A/L processes. Although I had not yet formally begun this inquiry, the
developing friendship and our mutual interests and sharings contributed to the original conception for it as well as much of my thinking around later research questions. We enjoyed several long and stimulating discussions around the deeper levels of A/L and the role of the practitioner. I felt delighted when Lonny later accepted to participate in this exploration in a formal capacity, although he made it clear that his contributions by mail would be limited. Lonny answered one questionnaire in writing followed by another informal brief meeting at the SALT conference in Minneapolis, USA in 1992.

Christian Drapeau from French Canada, has trained as a neurophysicist and is also an author, teacher, trainer and consultant in the use of accelerated learning and other techniques which promote human potential. We started to chat briefly when he sat next to me in a workshop at the same SALT conference in Minnesota (1992.) My invitation to Christian to be a participant was an extremely intuitive gesture since it came after I had hardly spoken more than a few words to him. He responded immediately and very favourably to my subject. Following discussions over lunch, he demonstrated his enthusiasm for the subject which he expressed was very close to his heart. Having only just discovered A/L, he was approaching it very much from a spiritual perspective. Since this period, Christian has become relatively well-known in his country as an authority on A/L methods, natural medicine and healthy, holistic living.

Christian has become a keen and much valued participant, contributing through regular and long letters which he has written in response to the questionnaire and on the subject in general. He has also continued to send interesting articles he has written as well as relevant literature and references. He has shared much of his thoughts and experiences on his concept of spiritual growth in regards to accelerated learning. He has found the topic to be of great significance and relevance to his lived experience and is enthusiastic to continue communicating.

Here in Australia, in the capital city of Canberra, a most obvious and valuable participant is John Wade who has been a mentor of sorts to me ever since I first discovered A/L. I first met him whilst he was presenting a workshop for foreign language and TESOL teachers at the Alliance Francaise in Sydney. My memory of him and the workshop is of doing some strange and dynamic activities followed by some introspective and meditative type exercises, which I subsequently learned to be visualisations and an integral part of the A/L methodology. As I had been a student of meditation for some years, I was surprised and delighted to find someone using mental relaxation as a technique in practical and effective ways in their teaching practice. I had been frequently thinking how valuable it would be for my students, but at the time had little idea of how to integrate it into the classroom. Since I was also consciously seeking an integrative approach to my teaching, John was an absolute ‘find’ - and he was living here in Australia, albeit another state. John is well acknowledged both here in Australia and overseas as an
A/L pioneer practitioner and respected author of two books on practical A/L teaching techniques.

Ever since we met, John and I have been firm friends and close colleagues on particular assignments. I learned that he was a regular meditator and I thought he would be interested in exploring my topic. We continue to discuss and exchange our thoughts and experiences on the topic. John has responded in person and in detail to two questionnaires, one exchange was recorded on audio cassette and the other recorded by written notes. Since we are in regular and frequent communication, the telephone has often been the medium for some very fruitful conversations about our own personal growth in relation to our work with A/L, NLP and other innovative teaching techniques.

During 1993 when I was searching for a piano teacher for myself, I was referred to **Eva Pascoe** as a Sydney music teacher who uses A/L and NLP methodologies. We discovered that we had met at one of Eric Jensen’s A/L training courses in Sydney in 1990. I soon learned that Eva is also very much a natural healer and, in fact since these first early meetings, she has shifted her professional energy and time from teaching piano to working in this capacity. My piano lessons soon made way for some rewarding and interesting discussions about inner healing and overcoming ‘energy blocks’ as the first and essential step toward effective learning. My music lessons were transformed into discussions about healing, including a session for myself. Our roles continued to change and Eva became an enthusiastic and natural participant of this inquiry.

Before Eva became a formal participant, we had several unplanned discussions relating to my topic. Three more planned sessions followed involving in-depth taped interviews and discussions using the questionnaires as guides. We both felt it important to have follow-up meetings so that she could clarify, explain or correct the transcript of her interviews.

**Ben Weiss** is a TESOL teacher from Sydney, who uses an integrated approach to his teaching. He uses a rich variety of creative activities, including drama and yoga to teach his classes of adult migrants. We first met briefly whilst both studying French and Drama at university in the 70’s, then again many years later at a conference on spirituality and again at an A/L workshop that I was co-facilitating. From then on we tended to unexpectedly meet up with one another at similar events. Ben and I always ended up having some very stimulating and in-depth conversations around learning and spirituality. Ben’s unique bubbly nature and ever-smiling face makes him the perfect example of a spiritual person (he is a Buddhist) who practises what he believes.

Ben has become a participant and friend with whom I feel I could continue to dialogue and share experiences around this topic indefinitely. Apart from numerous spontaneous conversations around spirituality and learning, there
have been three rounds of in-depth meetings, using the questionnaires as a guide. The first exchange was taped and transcribed with a follow-up session of reflections and clarifications. A further interview/dialogue was held following the second questionnaire as a guide. During the period of most of these interviews and dialogues between 1992 and August, 1993, I also had several in-depth discussions with Ben on the telephone. These related to the connection of spirituality with learning in general and to his growing interest in articulating this notion for himself.

The contributions made by individual participants has varied in length and depth according to various circumstances, such as geography and availability. The Australian participants have had, for obvious reasons considerably more shared involvement within the inquiry than those from overseas. The exception to this is Christian who has been a regular and frequent correspondent. In the case of both Lonny and Eric, our personal connections and subsequent meetings, although brief, have helped keep their involvement very ‘present’. It is the particular nature and atmosphere of the in-depth one-to one exchanges that has provided a trusting atmosphere, privacy and freedom to express ourselves fully and without judgement or pressure. Furthermore, these meetings have tended to stimulate further interest for participants to initiate related individual projects relevant to one’s own specific interest and skills.

Part of my desire and intention all along in this inquiry has been to provide opportunities between new paradigm educators for full and on-going expression of our own personal, spiritual development. The hope has been that this would encourage and inspire personal insights, illumination and clarification of our own values, vision or life purpose in relation to our educating. In the case of more casual participants or interested ‘passers-by’ throughout my explorations, I feel that if the seed (the idea of on-going deep exploration of our inner selves) has been planted, who can tell what kind of self inquiry may be occurring right at this very moment?

**Spirit of Learning: Exploring in a Group**

**Background Seeds**

In contemplating the far-reaching possibilities of my inquiry to make a positive difference in the broader sense, I realised the power and influence small groups of committed citizens can effect. I also realised that my personal networking tendencies had led me to an expansion of contacts and ideas in various parts of the world, as well as around Australia. This has been particularly significant from the time I first discovered alternative, holistic learning approaches in 1989. Upon my return to Australia I was keen to find ways to share what I knew with others about A/L and to promote the furthering of human potential through these learning
technologies. I was keen for members of the public to know that there were alternatives to the existing way of educating our children and ourselves.

Budding A/L teachers in New South Wales were having little or no contact or support from experienced practitioners or from each other since they were very few and far between in those days. There were also no official training courses or opportunities for interested people to gather, share and reflect on their practices, concerns and interests. Since I had always worked as a teacher in a freelance or part-time capacity, I had never been involved in the formal organisation of a professional group or institution before. However, through my regular contact with the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University, various global projects including large group meditation, I had certainly experienced the power of the gathering. Although I had not yet fully developed and refined my own A/L teaching skills, I felt instinctively drawn toward bringing together like-minded people to share and promote the concept of ‘integrated accelerative learning’ in the community.

These strong drives led me to initiate the gathering together of a small group of interested people to establish the New South Wales branch of The Accelerative Learning Society of Australia (ALSA-NSW) of which I became president for the subsequent two years. This association, like its counterparts in the United Kingdom (SEAL) and in the United States (SALT 21), was a non-profit making association with branches in three other Australian states. I felt that ALSA-NSW would provide a forum for mutual sharing and opportunities to help develop some of our potential possibilities around learning and particularly teaching others through A/L methodologies.

My role in this society became a significant learning experience in itself. It provided valuable opportunities to work closely with others and to learn a variety of management and organisation skills. It helped me to discover personal areas in which I need to work on myself, uncover and release limiting blocks whilst developing more of my own untapped potential. My position as president of ALSA particularly heightened my awareness of how our personal issues impact on our professional positions and relationships with others. Whilst I was fast learning new professional skills and developing confidence in my new capacity, I was also learning the ‘art of assertiveness and persuasion’. In general, my experiences with ALSA laid the ground work for wanting to explore, within a group, the deeper personal issues involved in learning and teaching in the new paradigm.

Since most ALSA members were learners in the field and it was still pioneer territory within education, there were sometimes common feelings of inadequacy or even being ‘threatened’ by cynicism or the over-critical attitudes of some individuals or traditional organisations. As an innovative educator, I felt there

21 Now called International Alliance for Learning.
was a need for on-going dialogue with others about these kinds of experiences, our fears, uncertainties and challenges as well as our achievements. This, I thought would include ways of dealing with the inevitable resistance to change and fear of new ideas that these technologies often triggered within people.

As it eventuated most of ALSA’s activities were focused on providing new skills and information about resources and networks to our members. This meant that although the association filled an important need at the time, it was not an appropriate forum in which to explore the deeper realms of learning and teaching as they related to one’s spiritual development. More likely, it was probably that it was not yet time for such exploration amongst most members. In 1995, ALSA was incorporated into and became a significant branch of the larger and effective Australian Consortium of Experiential Educators (ACEE). This move was a positive and practical one, demonstrating the considerable overlaps of these two branches of learning and teaching practices. It now provides a stronger and more united force for innovation and change in education at large.

This still left a gap in terms of opportunities to explore more deeply in a group situation. During my discussions with individual participants, as well as in my early inquiring with Ahtee, many of these deeper, spiritual interests naturally emerged. My inquiring both formally and informally with others, through networking, correspondence, taped interviews and informal discussions soon highlighted the strong link between spirituality and life-long learning processes. I felt sure that it was a subject which could be explored more explicitly and fully amongst a broader spectrum of people. I also knew that people many innovative educators and thinkers would benefit from such an opportunity.

As the human potential movement and new paradigm learning domain continued to grow, I began to realise how my essential thesis was as relevant for all educators committed to encouraging the full creative and learning potential of others. Since for me, an expansion of human potential and spiritual growth are essentially the same, I believe all educators and influential leaders should aim to become spiritually integrated within themselves. I feel the key to this is to learn to become “what we may be” (Ferrucci 1982), and to learn to develop all dimensions of ourselves. I also realised how my original and powerful drive to integrate my spiritual life with my professional life, was still as strong and as important to me. I felt strongly that diving into the much deeper, spiritual realms of learning and exploring the subject of integration needed to be an on-going one.

*The Birth of SOL*

*The spiritual network is potent*

Marilyn Ferguson

Early in 1993, over a casual conversation with another educator interested in ‘spiritual learning’, I discussed my research passions and the philosophies behind integrated, accelerative learning approaches. During the course of this
conversation, it occurred to me that gathering together a group of educators with
diverse spiritual backgrounds to explore our own personal development in
relation to the work we do, could be the ‘final’ stage of my formal inquiry. A
regular forum for exploration into the deeper and personal areas of our learning
and teaching would provide opportunities for other interested educators to be
challenged and moved to change and grow. I was excited at the prospect of this
occurring, sensing that it could provide creative and stimulating opportunities for
individuals to explore and express their essential spiritual selves.

In contemplating a name for my thesis, ‘Spirit of Learning’ came to me in the
middle of one night and I knew it was just ‘right’. This then became not only the
title for my research thesis but was also later adopted by others who came together
to form an on-going inquiry group. Early in 1993 ten people from diverse
backgrounds including a meditation teacher, university professor, private training
consultant, three school principals and several adult learners formed Spirit of
Learning (SOL) forum. These people were brought together through personal and
professional networking. Since then all SOL events have been promoted through
our many and various networks and personal connections. Throughout my thesis
this group is mainly referred to as the ‘SOL forum’.

The initial idea was to create an opportunity mainly for innovative educators and
trainers in the community, to explore and experience together the connection
between spiritual development and the learning process. It was felt that there was
a considerable number of people who were using aspects of spirituality in their
professional educational work. Early contacts with some key educators
immediately confirmed this and demonstrated the strong interest and timely
nature for the initiative. My initial idea was that a focus would be placed on the
educators’ own personal development in relation to our professional work, just as
is the case with individual participants.

Although members of this early group were not all classified as A/L educators, as
I’ve defined them, they were all very familiar with many of the techniques. More
importantly they were all in accord with the underlying philosophy and attitudes
involved. In any case, I was well aware that this was of no real consequence to our
overall purpose. What did matter and was very reassuring, was that there was
enough interest in the subject of spirituality and its connection to learning to be
taken up and explored by a broader group of people. I felt excited by the prospect of
moving into another dimension of my inquiry which would provide on-going
opportunities for further growth and on-going exploration.

Without any pre-mediation or design, it eventuated that five of this original
group were visiting the Brahma Kumaris University in India, in February, 1993.
There our early ideas for the forum were given ‘the blessing’ (strong
encouragement to proceed) by one of the head senior yogi sisters who responded
positively to the whole concept. It was an auspicious start for the group and
seemed to get us on to a strong spiritual footing which was inclusive and respective of each individual's different spiritual pathway and inclination.

As a core group we spent considerable time exploring the concept of spirituality for each one of us as well as the overall purpose of the group whilst making plans to hold our first event. Although we had no definite plans beyond this as we were still feeling our way, what did seem to be a commonly shared feeling was that the time was right! We were all drawn strongly to the initiative which aims to effect transformative changes to educating in general and provided opportunities to develop our inner selves.

Over the course of time, five of the original members of the core group have moved on with five members amongst this original group remaining committed to attending each meeting and event. Part of our approach to co-ordination and planning is to remain open for anyone to contribute and support in a way that does not bind them. The aim has been to encourage continuing participation according to individual interests, commitments and opportunities. We take a flexible and individual approach to the organisational aspects, with meetings open to anyone interested in attending.

Since our 'seeding' period, SOL forum has now widened. We embrace not only people who use particular learning or teaching approaches, but all those who are interested in exploring the link between the development of human potential, spirituality and learning in general. Since March 1995, Spirit of Learning forum has been incorporated as a non-profit association within New South Wales. Members come from all sectors of the community and pay a nominal annual fee to cover mailing and other regular expenses.

The SOL core group meet at least monthly and more frequently when necessary. The intent of our core group meetings is to go beyond an organisational, co-ordination level. Members take the opportunities to examine closely the nature of our communications, our inter-relationships with each other and our attitudes and consciousness within the group situation. One main aim is to explore particular concerns and relevant issues, and to overcome any blocks to enhanced communication with each other.

There is unanimous agreement that we need to meet no only to organise events but to examine our own relationships within the group. This has not always been psychologically comfortable and sometimes even rather confronting. However, there is a general agreement by those of us who continue with these processes, that our involvement has brought us insights and facilitated some major positive shifts within ourselves. I also believe that these kinds of experiences help us develop more spiritual attitudes and will better eqip us to facilitate similar processes within others.
Our planning meetings are better described as gatherings which are marked by connecting, consideration, co-operation and caring for each other. There is an understanding that these gatherings provide valuable on-going opportunity for our spiritual development, both individually and as a group. It is recognised that there is a constant need to listen, hear and respect each other and to constantly evaluate our group progress, our vision and our purpose.

We have all acknowledged the benefit gained from our group interactions which complement our individual meditation and spiritual practices. A strong feature of our gatherings is that we allow as much time as possible, frequently holding them over an entire day or even a week-end. In this way, we are reminded of our commonly held beliefs about enjoying and learning from the experience and allowing intuitive and flow processes to occur.

SOL encourages all those interested in exploring our theme, whilst accepting our articulated assumptions, vision and overall purpose. During our forums, we focus on learning to allow for the exploration of all parts of ourselves as well as promoting harmonious connections with each other and our environment. Both terms of 'learning' and 'spirituality' are implied in the most general and creative sense. Spirit of Learning is more about 'learning from the inside out'. It involves the development of our whole human and spiritual potential as the basis for effective and meaningful learning and teaching. The following sentence has been incorporated into one of our publicity brochures for our forums:

The overall **objective** of Spirit of Learning is: to push back the barriers to real education and to push forward the frontiers of learning.

**Nature of SOL Events**

In May 1993, the first SOL event, a week-end non-residential gathering, was held at The Queen Victoria building in Sydney, attracting around 75 people from all areas of the learning community, educators and learners alike. Since this time, regular one-day events have been held with the aim of building toward an annual 'Global Forum' which is held in October or November each year. These events are residential, held over a weekend in a beautiful natural bush setting outside of Sydney. A variety of opportunities are provided for participants at these events. We encourage connecting with each other to explore the deeper, universal attitudes, values and aspirations around learning and educating. Residential encourage participants to explore in depth particular areas of learning and teaching as well as deepening their relationships within themselves, with others and the environment.

Programs emphasise the development of practical strategies for implementation in both the personal learning and professional teaching arenas. Many experiential, integrated and accelerative learning techniques are used with the main intention of engaging 'spirit', along with the mind, emotions and body into the learning
processes. An example of commonly used techniques are visualisation, guided imagery and non-verbal activities, which tend to be naturally integrated into nearly every workshop or activity. SOL incorporates a fundamental assumption that the development and refinement of our inner vision will greatly enhance our outer personal lives and professional work. There is a growing recognition that by developing and expressing our creativity, spontaneity and our intuition, these will create a bridge to accessing and expressing our spiritual essence and our interconnectedness.

Great care is taken to ensure the environment is always supportive, safe, respectful and spiritually stimulating for each participant. There is a focus on reflection of the particular processes used as well as exploration of the underlying spiritual values and attitudes involved in each activity. Programs include an exciting variety of workshops and activities from a range of talented, skilled and creative facilitators who are committed to the vision of SOL. There is often no strict adherence to, although there is respect for, time-tabled activities. The program is frequently negotiated, collaborative and flexible and we are constantly experimenting with different ways to facilitate events. There is an emphasis on joyous and empowering processes which focus on the transpersonal elements in learning, bringing an experience of 'the spiritual' into all our activities.

A more recent direction for programs is to reduce the overall structure and control over each session to encourage the natural flow that we all agree is representative of spiritual connections between people. This means that there is more space and time for spontaneous participation by each person. The focus on spiritual attitudes creates a strong, positive, underlying force which helps "shape the unseen, unspoken ground rules by which the group operates" (Underhill 1989b:253). Participants of SOL events come to intuitively understand spirit through coming together in such a unique environment, and getting in touch with this natural essence of themselves. This makes a complete contrast to the average educational work-place where such concepts (let alone the experience) as spirit, soul and true integrative, holistic and experiential learning are almost taboo topics.

Regular activities include experiences of meditation in various forms, 'sacred' or circle dancing, exploring the self as a life-long learner through art, drama, music and interactive reflection. To date, it has been a general vote of the core group that we do not want to generate an array of intellectual material from our forums. Everyone is well aware of the limits to the written word, particularly on this subject, and are committed to finding alternate ways to promote our philosophy and our activities amongst the wider community.
My research inquiry up until a group formed to create Spirit of Learning forum, has mainly involved communicating on a one-to-one basis, and has been extremely fruitful and rewarding as a result. However, I am pleased that there is now an opportunity for on-going exploration within a group situation. In doing so another fulfilling dimension to the inquiry, that I have been unconsciously seeking has developed.

I began to again contemplate the significance of intention in the whole scheme of things. I realize how those of us who had been thinking and feeling along similar lines have undoubtedly connected in unexpected ways and ended up creating something new together. In this case it has meant that our own awareness and consciousness has played a big part in the establishment of the SOL forum. Although the groundwork was laid as a result of my inquiry, I believe that there are never any totally original ideas 'under the sun'. Rather it seems more a question of timeliness, openness and willingness on the part of key people who in this case have come together and helped to plant the seeds for new beginnings. I have also realised how important it is to continue to be flexible and open to unexpected directions that my explorations might need to flow.

The way that the SOL forum has been taking its natural course, also complements the nature of the process of both my inquiry and my 'accelerative learning journey' from the beginning. My original desire (intention) was that eventually a group of people with the same motivation and commitment, would be able to provide a creative, intellectually stimulating and spiritually inclined environment for on-going self-inquiry. I had no particular expectations or desires beyond this. I simply felt strongly about helping provide some initial energy and opportunities to do this, and in this way have perhaps been the planter of seeds. My experience of establishing ALSA (NSW) and examining also in a group the subject of innovative learning approaches was useful. The establishment of Spirit of Learning provides opportunities for further and deeper explorations. It is interesting to note that there has now developed enough energy, and dedication amongst the core group, for the group to continue to grow and thrive, without the need for any one particular individual member to drive it.

Spirit of Learning forum represents part of an on-going cycle of spiritual exploration and self-inquiry and I believe has been and will be responsible for the planting and nourishing of many future trees and forests. My involvement and experiences have personally brought me great rewards. It has provided the inspiration and motivation to bring the formal phase of my inquiry to a close and allow the flow of a much larger, 'never-ending story' to occur.

As education in small pockets around the world is currently being transformed and people realise that learning is for a life-time, so too perhaps will the significance of
the ‘spirit of learning’ gradually start to have a positive impact on education in general. The SOL forum is indicative of and responsive to the unique times we live in. I have found that we need to begin the process of transformation in a small way but with depth, quality and integrity.

Since the evolvement of the SOL forum, the dimension of values and even spirituality has been included in several accelerative learning and state of the art commercial programs. This correlates with the emphasis of values in training and learning organisations in many parts of the world and reflects universal concern about our under-use or even misuse of human resources within organisations. This phenomenon I believe, also adds weight to the timeliness and overall value of the innovative nature of SOL and its focus on linking spiritual development with learning in general. Certainly I see it as a potent network that is operating in often unseen and sometimes unconscious ways.

Reflections on Nature’s Way

Excerpts from my Personal Journal

September, 1993

In the process of exploring the subject of spiritual development for myself, I have come to understand that:

The desire for and the courage to bear loneliness and quiet belong to the general ascetical attitudes. . . . If I desire to serve God I must be able to stand myself. I should not always flee from myself in useless gabbing, busy work, and distraction. . . which can easily be. . . an escape from a true interior life (Karl Rahner 1965:78).

As I sit down to reflect on the past two years since I first decided to undertake this inquiry, I become aware of the need to re-connect with the impulse that drives me in the form of energy and enthusiasm. I need to feel my ‘passion pulse’ to see if the original impulse and motivation still exist. I need to also check the relevance and meaning of my exploration for today. I know that without connecting to this inner drive, I feel almost paralysed and incapable of proceeding and writing with integrity.

I recently moved from the city and my hectic lifestyle to the countryside for a quieter more contemplative one for a temporary period. I wanted to reassess my present state regarding the inquiry and indeed my whole life in general. This appears to have had the effect of slowing down all aspects of my research as well as my professional work. I feel removed from much of my usual ‘busyness’, daily stresses and deadlines, free from others’ expectations, free to think about what I want, and to take as much time as I want. In the process, I have realised the easy tendency to clutter and complicate my consciousness and how my spirit has been
lapping up this chance for solitude, introspection and a peaceful, slower-paced environment.

I frequently find myself totally absorbed in just being, enjoying surrounding nature and its silent sounds. At times it has seemed an absurd and very self-indulgent thing to be doing. At other times, it seems as though there is nothing more important to do at this point in life, than to explore my own essential (spiritual) consciousness as a way to understand, develop and strengthen my complete self. I have felt pulled again to view my whole life from a different perspective. I am aware of how different this experience is compared to many of my past overseas travels. These have rarely allowed much time for deep introspection or solitude, except when I am on that hill-top in India! Although I am accustomed to meditation and the mental space and ‘distance’ it can provide, country life and its pace is just ideal for me at this moment. I am treasuring each day I am here.

I realise too, I can not continually hide my weaknesses under a cover of external activities and amongst the constant company of others. Frequently alone with my thoughts, and much less daily activity than usual, I have the opportunity to take a really good look inside. I can not avoid examining some of my fears, feelings of inadequacies and my ‘self-talk’, and to do some honest assessment. On occasions, life seems so simple and I am amazed at how we human beings complicate it. I find each moment precious as I re-connect to my essential self and the natural environment around me. Although my sense of connectedness with others has been well experienced throughout my life, it has been the taking of time to experience my own separateness along with my own consciousness and specialities, that I am presently appreciating.

I enjoy being released from the constant organisation, controlling of events and the co-ordination and facilitating others that my professional city life tends to demand. I am simultaneously aware of both the preciousness and ‘pressures’ of time and my commitment to my research work and my writing. Nevertheless, I feel at times paralysed into inaction and something urges me sit still and listen to my soul. I include these words which recently and gently flowed into my mind during one of my ‘soulful’ experiences. They are a reminder for me in times of ‘inner traffic jams’ and chaos.

Meeting Silence

Silence approaches,
like a long lost lover from ages past.
Listen to the yearnings, deeply felt stirrings
Heart strings touched
against the madness of my mind.

I find a space to greet my friend
and let her mercy embrace my being,
cressing my soul with gentle sounds
of lingering love
and peace.
I recall the sense of flow that has frequently marked my research journey and indeed many aspects of my life over recent years. I want to be sure that I can re-connect with and maintain much of this flow throughout my explorations. After all, I felt the attraction toward this research, because it was not 'just a Masters' I was doing - 'this was my life', and there is no separation from me. If my life becomes tumultuous, so does my research and my writing, that is if it even happens at all! Despite the time and energy already spent, I make a decision to cease my formal inquiring if it becomes too 'academic', arduous or removed from deep meaning and purpose.

March, 1994

Finally, after some awkward, 'rocky' periods and waves of uncertainty around my spiritual development and therefore this inquiry, I feel invigorated again. I am clearer in my purpose and direction and re-confirmed of the value and meaning in what I am doing. The fact that I undertook this inquiry as an extension of the most important driving forces in my life, has already been documented. Since I know nothing stays the same and that these forces vary in intensity, the fluctuations are being reflected in my approach to my research. Eventually I have become aware of how the renewed purpose, passion and pleasure I derive from getting on with it, begins to motivate and re-energise me. As I sit down to commence writing and gather up some of my tree's branches and twigs in the form of energy and data, I am immediately provided with valuable feedback as to where I 'am at' in my whole life. I become even more aware of how I can not divorce either my research studies as well as my professional work from my psychological, spiritual state.

I want to continue to be aware of my own consciousness throughout this whole journey. Inquiring within an academic environment, albeit a non-traditional one, obliges me to be more rigorous and systematic than usual. I feel it is a useful way of furthering more of my potential and self-discovery processes. This is not to say I am always successful in immediately altering my state of mind to a more conducive and productive one, even with a strong will. My knowledge and experience of attaining powerful states of consciousness, do not automatically and easily propel and keep me constantly in those states. I feel sometimes, a need to create good reasons why I should keep my consciousness high.

Although I am aware of my capabilities and potential inner powers, it seems that I sometimes unconsciously choose not to do anything about really changing and to see what happens instead. On occasions, I feel a need to be convinced that I must continue making efforts to look after and take responsibility for my own consciousness. Perhaps more accurately, I feel the effects of long-term personal habits of thought and behaviour which sometimes seem too powerful to resist. On these occasions I fear I lose some strength of commitment and forget many of the spiritual lessons I have been learning.
We human beings often feel powerless to overcome or change very deep negative habits of thought, although we know perfectly well that we want to and 'should' do so. In other words, awareness of the need and a desire to do, is only the very first step of the process. My experience had shown me that I need to firstly detach from my own 'body consciousness', not just from a physical environment, such as from the city to country, but from limiting attitudes of mind. For lasting spiritual empowerment and real transformation, I also need to connect with a higher source of power. Despite knowing and having experienced this phenomenon on and off for years, I allow my weaknesses or resistances to emerge. At times, I feel like a needy, petulant child, pushing the boundaries of reasonableness even though my spiritual awareness, experiences and intuition all tell me otherwise.

In any case whenever I suffer from scattered energies, this is naturally and always reflected in my work, my relationships and my expression, in this case my writing. I would describe this scattered state of being as being characterised by a lack of focus and inability to see the forest for the trees. It also includes a lack of concentration power and commitment, self-doubts and low confidence and is marked by a 'stop/start' flow and lack of rhythm and energy. Many questions arise during these periods, so I reflect upon and hope for some order out of my inner chaos. During this time, I suffer from doubts whether my 'learning tree' will come together in the form and shape it is meant to possess. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to take regular time to reflect and observe myself and my thoughts, no matter how uncomfortable this feels at times.

On the other hand characteristics of the ‘flow’ state are those that were missing in my scattered state. They also include high passion (and consciousness), which provides energy for each action I have to do. There is a feeling of synchronicity and accuracy about my research activities as well as the methodology itself. There is increased confidence, a feeling of getting somewhere, a sense of integration and overall meaning in both the subject and the process.

November, 1995

With an enhanced awareness of my own thoughts, attitudes and motivations, I have come to realise how each personal learning experience has taken me closer toward some deeper understanding about my self or others. This inner knowing sometimes involves strong flashes of clarity and insight and at other times has rather hazy edges. I receive it with grace and find that if I allow the time and space, I can check my 'inner barometer' for the direction I should take. With awareness that this knowing is available to us all from and within our own selves, anywhere anytime, I am grateful for the shift that occurs within me on these special occasions. This shift is like the removal of a dead weight which drops off and brings both light and lightness, ease of thinking and being and a sense of movement toward my personal vision.
My reflections around this inquiry have included questions such as: How can I be academic enough with such a deeply personal subject and methodology? Is the inquiry practical and useful research for others? Finally and most importantly I ask, does this research still contribute to my spiritual growth as well as having potential to stimulate the same in others? Since I believe that education is the major key to societal change, and as my concerns for the globe continue to increase and intensify, this last question becomes important to me.

Above and beyond, my research, I have concerns, passions and commitments and I want to continue to contribute toward creating a better world. I am concerned with the spiralling downward direction of the planet. I want to be part of a creative and positive solution in terms of an evolving human consciousness which will in turn precipitate an external positive and eventually harmonious transformation. I therefore need to assure myself that in some small way, my inquiry is making a small but positive difference.

**Reflections on the Overall Inquiry Process**

*Reflection is a total response to experience*

Marilyn McCutcheon

A strong overall feature of my research process which I have wanted to highlight, has been the need to develop more self awareness as a way to enhance the quality of our inner experiences. My interest in examining our own nature and mind, our personal motivations and concerns is inextricably tied to my global awareness and sense of interconnectedness with the whole tree and the forest.

I have become knowledgeable and aware of the richness of ‘other than conscious learning’, that is the paraconscious elements, I have wanted to understand more of ourselves and to (re)discover this realm within us in relation to our lives in the world as educators and life-long learners. This has involved examining responses of all kinds from both inner and outer sources. I have discovered that regular reflection on our inner experiences provide opportunities for deep insights. It also provides the basis for further growth, spiritual expansion and positive ‘worldly action’. As Richard Winter expresses:

> This then is the basic reason for trying to make explicit our concerns. We want to dig down to find the foundations of the interests we bring to a topic, to reveal the themes and beliefs on which our interest depends, to make explicit the contradictions and ambiguities which will be an important resource for developing our thinking (1989:163).

I have wanted to place more value on self-exploratory processes as means to explore more of our thinking, our perspectives and our education in general. Certainly I see that they should be an integral part of our on-going professional development and growth as educators and facilitators of change. I have also wanted to contribute toward ‘mending the split’ which has developed between
external methods, daily demands and inner feelings. I believe this separateness has taken us far from our original and essential spiritual selves.

Overall this research story is a never-ending and intricate one as it continually emphasises the interrelatedness of our own beings and inner growth to our outer lives. At times, it has turned out to be overwhelmingly more complex and complicated than I ever anticipated. I accept that the very nature of the inquiry highlights the view that everything we do, say and think has a complex, powerful or subtle effect on external situations and other people. Sometimes I have experienced new insights, expanded my creativity, and seemingly developed new behavioural patterns. At other times it seems I have learned little when some of the patterns of habits of thought seem too deep to shift.

Since so many of our inner processes remain unconscious and unarticulated, there is no clear definite beginning and end as one’s essence is in a continual dynamic state of growth. This inquiry, like nature’s way is cyclic and re-generating. Seeds have been planted, taken root, and much food for thought and opportunities for transformation have been generated along the way. Original ideas, questions and discussions have become the basis for further growth, starting with the inner life of the individual and manifesting in a variety of rich and sometimes ‘mysterious’ ways.

I feel comfortable with this unfolding process where nature takes its own course. My understanding of the power of the paraconscious in all communications, assures me that there is another dimension involved in my explorations with others. It is a dimension which is occurring in a constant, invisible and seemingly unknowable manner, but which is, all the same, powerful and potentially transformative. The continuing interest in and development of the Spirit of Learning forum in particular, provides a source of nourishment and enrichment for my learning tree, as I know it does for many others.

Certainly, it is clear that I have not been able to will things to happen throughout this natural, integrative process. Instead I have had to consider the question of balancing a range of internal and external expectations, challenges and activities. I realise how the most powerful demands and expectations are usually those I place on myself and I become more aware that I am the creator, sustainer and potential destroyer of my own thoughts and work.

I see now that what I have been aiming for in this inquiry, as a basis for personal and spiritual integration, is somewhat like the perspective transformation that Mezirow (1981) discusses as the third and most unfamiliar dimension of adult learning. At the heart of this transformation is learning through personal experience and reflection upon one’s experiences. In turn this becomes the raw material for critical reflectivity. Mezirow describes this dimension as:
... the emancipatory process of becoming critically aware of how and why the structure of psycho-cultural assumptions has come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships, reconstituting this structure to permit a more inclusive and discriminating integration of experience and acting upon these new understandings (1981:6).

Mezirow is relating this process within the context of adult learning and education. It is also highly relevant when exploring processes for learning about the self, as in the case of this inquiry. Mezirow relates this third dimension as being essentially the same as Habermas' emancipatory action and Freire's conscientization (1981:vol 32,1). I relate more to Carl Rogers' explanation of this dimension as a quest for meaning as a way to better understand ourselves and to anticipate and contribute positively to future events.

During the first phase of this research, my own quest for meaning emerged, the essence of which was related in Chapter 1. This quest eventually brought about a 'perspective transformation' which has greatly affected the way I view my self and others as well as future events. I have found that the path toward this kind of transformation, is not always an easy one. It requires constant self-reflection and self-critiquing as well as in-depth explorations with others. I have found that the quality, depth and breadth of this reflexivity is a key factor to my overall approach. I believe that these factors are crucial to our eventual true "perspective transformation or personal paradigm shift" (ibid). I would also add that it is important throughout one's personal quest, to not only help bring about 'emancipatory action', but to remember to celebrate the 're-discovery' of spirit in our daily activities.

As a member of global innovative learning 'communities' which tend to challenge traditional ways of learning, I have felt that when and if the need arises, I must be consistent by also challenging 'the norm'. Along with learning and teaching in general, this also includes challenging traditional ways of doing academic research. Consequently, I have found that when breaking new ground in any area, I have to expect internal and external discomforts and challenges. Following my 'natural way' of this research, without clear and specific guidelines and outcomes, does involve a certain amount of personal risk-taking and vulnerability at times. On the other hand, I feel that it is this openness and willingness to take risks that has kept me motivated, curious and challenged. These are all good states for enhancing one's learning and growth.

I have found that my approach with participants in the inquiry has tended to bring out a depth of self-awareness within themselves. This encourages more self-understanding, including an expanded sense of our own creative learning and

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22 These communities refer to the accelerative and experiential learning societies around the world, (SEAL and SALT), Global Education Network, the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University (BKWSU) the Social Ecology learning community at University Western Sydney-Hawkesbury and the Spirit of Learning forum., Australia.
spiritual potential. It also acts as 'fertiliser' for becoming more aware of and sensitive toward others and their particular natures. Increasing my own self-awareness has allowed for 'reading' carefully the differing responses to participants' personal stories around their spiritual development. It has also improved my ability to respond more accurately to my students in my teaching practice. Along the way, I have found that there has been a refining of my intuition as well as more awareness of my overall intention. In turn it is about learning to trust that this intention would help guide me through 'the forest' in a creative, appropriate and ethical manner.

**Reflection: The Writing Process**

*DURING THE COURSE OF WRITING THIS BOOK [THESIS], I'VE NOT ONLY LOOKED INWARD, BUT I'VE GAINED A NEW PRISM THROUGH WHICH TO LOOK OUTWARD.*

Gloria Steinem

My experience in documenting this thesis can certainly be expressed in the above words. It has also been significant in many other ways. Firstly, it has taken much more time and energy than I ever anticipated. Secondly, since the subject itself has continued to be the process, I have needed to document my personal learning and spiritual journey whilst simultaneously tracking and experiencing it. Whilst drawing together the various 'branches' of my experience, readings, responses and observations, I have aimed for congruency and authenticity. In other words, at each step of each phase throughout the inquiry, the documentation process has demanded congruence with the topic itself. This has meant that my own state of being has been integral to the writing process.

Finally, the entire research process has been more challenging both intellectually and emotionally than I had ever anticipated. This challenge has included sifting through some deeply felt experiences which needed to be absorbed, understood and reflected upon before they could be expressed. If I was feeling unconfident, stressed or concerned with any aspect of the inquiry, or indeed my life in general, I felt obliged to continue to dig deep until I either found some resolve or managed to detach and get some power back. On other occasions I would just keep writing anyway as a way to get through the 'blockage' to a sense of freedom or achievement.

From when I first perceived there were parallels of my spiritual path with that of the essence of A/L approaches, I was moved to uncover and highlight them. These parallels relate to the consciousness of the alpha state of mind as a basis for accelerative learning and the soul conscious state as a basis for Raja Yoga meditation and philosophy. Throughout this writing process and indeed many other aspects of my life, whenever I could access my soul conscious state of mind, I would find myself operating at a different, more effective level and with a lot less stress as well. I have discovered that much of the research about relaxed, alert states
of consciousness and limiting self-talk in learning has been as relevant for me as a writer as well as a researcher during the whole course of this inquiry.

Despite the power and personal benefit gained throughout this writing process, and along with my love for the language of words, I am also reminded of the limits it poses. Since the heart of learning for me is in developing the spiritual, inner self, experiences naturally often transcend language. I have become even more aware of the inadequacies of language to capture and express the essentially limitless experiences of the 'unfolding self'. I have frequently found it a great challenge to access and develop my creative expression. At times I have wanted to synthesise and encapsulate the essence of my deeply-felt experiences in much fewer words.

Nevertheless I have learned to write by writing. On occasions I have oscillated wildly between outbursts of energetic creativity and complete ineptitude to write a single thing of value. Ultimately I have learned that writing this thesis has been a wonderful means for self-discovery and inner illumination. It has nurtured my imagination, generated and expanded ideas and developed and refined some new skills. It has taught me some much needed self discipline, provided an exciting alternative to my usual verbal expression and has shown me some deep insights into my essential self along the way. I have found strength of resolve and persistence through the many lessons I have learned along the way. I have no doubt been quite changed as a result. Throughout the writing process, I have reflected much upon one's spiritual essence in general. I have explored some of the deeply held values and visions we hold and about the way we learn and grow in relation to our learning and teaching practices.

It is not uncommon for adult educators and carers of people to identify and acknowledge the effect of their own significant life-learning experiences through writing diaries or personal journals. Since we write from a position of who we are, writing "becomes a process for discovering the unique meaning in your life" (Rainer 1978:268). I would like my writing to also connect with others in a way that resonates for them. I would hope that it stimulates a 'multiplicity' of meaningful experiences (ibid p.1), as well as inspirations for further personal learning and spiritual development.

Finally, the overall experience of writing this thesis has been much more personally fulfilling and professionally expansive than I had expected. I have discovered that writing can be a potent means for developing and stretching the self, both personally and professionally. My learnings and self discoveries have been manifold. The period from conception to 'maturity' has also been long, complicated, time-consuming and often disillusioning and very difficult. Along with a deep sense of pleasure and achievement, I have also experienced a fair share of 'pain and paralysis' at times, both in travelling on and in describing my exploration of 'spirit of learning'. It has definitely highlighted the personal vulnerability sometimes involved in undertaking a journey of this nature.
I now have a much greater appreciation of the pains, passions and pleasures of the creative artist and all that it involves. Despite my feeling of vulnerability and fears of exposure in making this part of myself ‘public’, I am grateful for the many opportunities writing this thesis has provided me. In being obliged to not only connect deeply with my inner self, but also with others and the wider world, I have had to take a bird’s eye view of my whole inquiry process. I have felt the perspective and learning gained to be deep, and intellectually and spiritually integrative.

In contemplating this process of writing as a creative means to represent and express my vision and spiritual intention, I have felt very connected with Lewis Thompson. In his book, “Mirror to the Light: Reflections on Consciousness and Experience” (1984), Thompson describes how he rejects any traditional “literary creation for its own sake”. He writes in a totally intuitive manner and “solely as a form of spiritual exercise the most sparse and urgent communication conceivable” (1984:20). Whereas my own writing has been far from “sparse”, I believe that the result, for Thompson is quite extraordinary and profound. His aim was to “overcome the mind, even on its own ground” and believes that ‘philosophies’ in the end can only be seen as poetry (1984:38). In many ways Thompson’s words capture the feelings and intent behind much of my own writing of this thesis:

Do not think that the meaning I choose to give to Poetry - or any perspective I build - is to be taken as fact or truth. . . . One controls and effectively understands only the ideas one has developed organically, that serve one’s integral purpose. Do not believe what I say, any more than you would believe a poem: only see the intention, what it means spiritually. There are enough theories and dogmas as it is. (ibid, written in Benares, 1948)

In exploring with others, I have attempted to convey respect and empathy when integrating their stories into my thesis, since it is not my intention to speak for others. I can not make judgements as to their ‘improved selves’ or self-understanding. I have however, attempted to capture the essence of some of their stories and motivations in the following Chapter 5, ‘The Harvest’.
CHAPTER 5

The Harvest: Responses from Others

Introduction

Finding Connections

Going Deeper

Continuing Growth

Summary

Reflections
CHAPTER 5

The Harvest: Responses from Others

Introduction

The path of narrative is intuitive and imaginative. Together, they speak of an appropriate education and a meaningful research.

David Russell

This chapter will describe how others participated in the inquiry in different ways. For individual participants, this was in the form of discussions, interviews and correspondence over a two year period. This one-to-one inquiring provided opportunities for open and in-depth communication, resulting in intimate, meaningful and supportive insights and understandings. As I have done in my ‘Background Roots’, these participants in particular, tended to naturally and necessarily express their ‘raison d’etre’ behind the work they do as innovative educators.

The impetus to share the essence of our life stories in relation to our learning and teaching, was one of the root reasons for the initiative of the Spirit of Learning forum. Inquiring within this group situation evolved as a result of a more general interest amongst other educators to experience and share deeply with others, those personal, spiritual factors around learning and teaching. The SOL forum became a significant step in my inquiring with others. It continues to provide safe, supportive and spiritually stimulating opportunities for on-going self-discovery amongst a broad range of educators and ‘life-long learners’.

Eric Jensen, Gloria Marie Caliendo and Lonny Gold all responded directly to the initial questionnaire. Christian Drapeau from French Canada, and John Wade, Ben Weiss and Eva Pascoe responded in more depth. The tendencies with the latter group have been for us to maintain and sustain on-going ‘depth dialogue’ and communication with each other. In all but one case, John Wade, with whom I had already been sharing aspects of the topic, dialogue was first initiated with this inquiry and is continuing in various ways and at different levels.

In order to respect and value each individual’s contribution, I have attempted to maintain the spirit of their unique communications whilst also highlighting the most relevant and common overall themes. I have been able to reproduce all of the responses from the three participants from overseas and have drawn out the essence of the longer exchanges with the others.

In the case of SOL forums, I have selected a sample of quotes and short responses from participants and members who have attended various events since its conception in 1993.
Finding Connections: Direct Responses to Questionnaire

The first responses from others came from three overseas participants in the form of question/answer based on an early questionnaire (see overleaf). The responses from Lonny Gold and Gloria Caliendo came in writing through the post, with no further significant elaboration on these. Since I was able to spend some time in person with Eric Jensen, we were able to have some discussion and elaboration upon aspects of the questionnaire. These three early questionnaires included seven questions for Eric and Lonny and Gloria received six questions to answer.

It is important here to note that during this period (1991), I had not yet emphasised the term ‘spiritual development’ in my inquiry, and most of the time interchanged ‘personal development’ and ‘personal growth’ as the commonly used terms. The language of spirituality evolved as a result of my growing confidence to articulate my deepest passions, underlying assumptions and motivations around my topic. Undoubtedly my early exploring with Ahtee facilitated this confidence. A perceived increasing interest and support in response to this articulation, provided further confidence and determination to keep the term and to expand upon its meaning in connection to learning and teaching. It is interesting also to note that for these three participants, the term ‘spiritual growth’ was only used in question 3 where it provided an alternative to ‘personal growth’.

From the very beginning of the inquiry, sub-consciously at least, I wanted to highlight the connections of this A/L journey to our ‘spiritual development’. However, I had initially used only the phrase, ‘aspects of personal development’. We can perhaps compare then the kinds of responses that these three participants gave, with those of later, more involved participants who became very familiar and comfortable with the term, ‘spiritual development’. These people also had opportunities to explore and discuss their own interpretations of what the term meant for them in relation to their work in ‘integrated accelerated learning’.
Questionnaire for Individual Participants

1) What would you say is/has been the personal driving force behind your work in this field of integrated accelerative learning?

2) What kind of connection do you make between the techniques and skills of accelerated learning and your own personal/spiritual growth?

3) Do you apply some of these techniques/skills to further your own personal growth? If so, how?

4) What do you see as the most significant elements of personal development within accelerative learning?

5) What problems are common to most people/students in their approach and attitudes to their own learning?

6) What personal characteristics do you see as common to successful learning among people?

7) How do you see the relationship between the personal development of the practitioner and his/her effectiveness in the group situation or classroom? Give examples of your own experiences (both positive and negative).

8) How do you think aspects of personal development in accelerated learning (both for practitioners and learners) can be encouraged and promoted?
As expressed in previous chapters, the concept of spirituality will naturally mean different things to different people. I use the term ‘personal development’ and ‘spiritual development’ to essentially mean the same, with the idea that developing the personal self is the first stage in developing the spiritual self. By the time I came up with the name ‘Spirit of Learning’, which was also adopted for exploring in a group forum, the term ‘spiritual development’ appeared to have much wider acceptance amongst different learning communities. This was reflected within the school of Social Ecology at the university as well as within experiential and accelerated learning circles in general.

The following responses from three participants have been reproduced verbatim, because of their brevity in answering the specific questions. The italics throughout this chapter are my emphasis as I see these concepts, values or themes being the most significant and relevant to the overall thesis. I also see many of these highlighted and recurring themes as demonstrating further ‘the patterns which connect’. Most of these smaller themes can further be incorporated into three major overall themes which I identify in this chapter and which are integral to the spiritual development of the A/L educator, and indeed it could be argued any educator or life-long learner.

“Making a Difference” Eric Jensen
California, April, 1992

In February 1992 in his home town of San Diego, USA, I interviewed Eric in an informal and relaxed setting. The questionnaire method seemed to suit Eric’s personal style, and gave focus to our respective interests in accelerated learning. Some of my supplementary questions throughout this meeting are included, abbreviated to ‘S Q’. Eventually I typed his responses up, sending them back for approval and/or clarification or elaboration as required. Further communications with each other directly relating to the topic were less involved since he did not have the time to correspond on a regular basis. However, six months later when he came to Sydney, I was able to hold several brief telephone conversations in which I clarified further questions around the topic.

Q1: What would you say is/has been the personal driving force behind your work in accelerated learning?

Eric: A/L is like a vehicle which allows me to ‘make a difference’. This means to impact/influence the moment - It was not a matter of whether to make a difference but how to.

SQ: When did you know you wanted to make a difference? Was it something that happened, for example some kind of realisation?

Eric: It was more like a process over time. It was probably the workshops I had been attending.
SQ: You mean personal growth kind of workshops?

Eric: Yes and when I started reading people like Buckminster Fuller and started thinking about consciousness. The experience was like an internal shift, like a vision, a mission.

Q2: What kind of connection do you make between the techniques and skills of accelerated learning and your own personal/spiritual growth?

Eric: Most definitely I would say congruency. I think this is a critical connection. That is social and professional congruency but it is both a blessing and a curse.

SQ: How is that?

Eric: People expect you to turn integrity on and off like a switch. People’s expectations are very powerful and there is often not a lot of contextual support for having integrity outside the working situation. For example after talking about the possible negative effects of chemicals in the body in a workshop and then afterwards people expect you to drink and eat whatever with them.

SQ: Why is it a curse for you?

Eric: People are uncomfortable with people living their life with integrity. They are attracted to it but . . .

Q3: Do you apply some of these techniques/skills to further your own personal growth? If so - how?

Eric: Yes. Most important is the environment. For example as in my work life, such as the use of peripherals. Positive nurturing such as affirmations in my daily life - I write them in my diary and so on.

SQ: These tend to be relating to the physical, the external - what about the internal environment?

Eric: Yes - by allowing a sense of peace, power and energy to my work. There is a carry over and I feel good about myself. I know I feel good about myself and my work.

SQ: How do you know that these things (techniques/skills) work?

Eric: “I think it is mostly intuitive. I have very little tolerance for margins for error. For example I haven’t had to take a day off from my work in 10 years because of ill-health - that’s important- physical health.

SQ: What gives you a ‘buzz’ with your work?

Eric: “Feedback - that is in general- not that from the workshops, although that is partly useful. The biggest enjoyment is weeks and months later when teachers tell what has been happening to them”
Q4: What do you see as the most significant personal growth/development aspects of accelerated learning?

*Eric:* Congruency (for the practitioner) and environment - physical and psychological (for the participants).

For the participants it is flexibility - making them think of things they wouldn't normally think of - taking them out of their comfort zone.

Q5: What would you say is the main personal development element common to most situations for a) participants/students and b) facilitators/teachers.

*Eric:* a) Treating each other as a whole person - that is what they *could* be, not as they *are* now- eg treating each other with more understanding, being more respectful.

b) The more respect I have for the learner in the classroom the more likely it is to carry over into my personal life. I think the thing that hooks people is the *example* of the practitioner. That is they are attracted to such things as being positive and relaxed in their work etc.

Q6: How do you think personal development aspects of accelerated learning (both for practitioners and learners) can be promoted and encouraged?

*Eric:* At the advanced levels of training, it must be introduced slowly so as to be attractive and safe to the learner.

It is clear from Eric’s responses that for him *congruency* and *being an example* are some of the most important factors for the personal development of the A/L practitioner. He is well acknowledged for his own commitment to practising what he preaches and has a well-deserved reputation of a person and A/L practitioner of integrity. Eric has always stressed the importance of identifying one’s personal values and following one’s personal vision as an important guiding influence for A/L practitioners. His daily use of A/L classroom techniques for his own development, such as affirmations and ‘peripherals’ no doubt contribute toward the positive attitude for which he is well known.

In Eric’s case he feels the impulse is like his life’s mission, and to this extent, it is a powerfully driven motivation. No doubt this could be true of many educators anywhere, but A/L provides opportunities of developing further and makes these ‘unconscious drives conscious’. Intuitive knowing, positive feedback from students that his work is valuable is also a strong factor in motivating and spurring him on to continue. Eric’s drive to make a difference appears to have always been present, a natural impulse, with the eventual realisation that it is part of his overall life’s purpose (or mission). I see that this kind of impulse to make a significant difference in the lives of one’s students, is essentially a spiritual impulse, a subject which will be discussed further in ‘Furthering Spiritual Potential’, Chapter 6.
One of the other most notable and agreed upon personal characteristics that Eric has for his work is that of enthusiasm. This is reflected in the following excerpt from an interview he had for the ALSA newsletter in May, 1992. Eric first discovered accelerated learning in 1980 and was asked by Fiona Meller: “Were you a teacher at that stage?” Eric replied “Yes... It’s been exciting for me to see people get excited about learning. I’ve always loved learning and I guess my job is to turn people on to learning”.

This response seems to confirm Eric’s sense of destiny that there was no question about wanting to make a difference - the question was simply how to. His response reminds me of the numerous times that Eric uses such terms as enthusiasm, excitement and fun when “turning people on” to learning through the ‘vehicle’ of A/L training workshops and courses. Further on in this short interview, Fiona asks of Eric if “In the 12 years since you started with A/L are you as enthusiastic about it now as then?” Eric replies:

Yes. I’d say maybe more so. The great thing about A/L is it’s a very dynamic field, it’s nothing that you master all at once. I don’t care how good you are, you couldn’t master it in three years because it’ll change over the years. It’ll keep being new and different, so it’s a process. That’s what I like about A/L. My journey has not only been a process to learn, but also the skills to learn. If you do go into this journey of A/L, you’re going to get personal benefits too. I think it’s difficult to be a good A/L teacher without growing... That’s why it’s great to be a part of it (1992:3).

Eric very much views the teacher as a learner, one who can’t help growing through the processes and who will also learn new skills and gain personal benefits as well. Once again, Eric’s use of language stimulates enthusiasm within me as I re-read this interview, and I recall how I never heard any negative or ‘weak’ language from him. He well understands the power of suggestion through language - to the self as well as others, and seems to have imbied the practice into his daily life. If one listens to his tapes, and hears the constant positive energy and language one will understand why he has often been described as ‘Pollyanna-ish’. He argues, though, that is how he feels and how he really is as a person. In the average world of schooling and learning, constant, ‘unadulterated’ positivity and enthusiasm about learning from students or teachers is a rarity. For Eric it seems absolutely natural and I believe in many ways quite contagious.

It is these very qualities of personality and being that Lozanov (1978) has in mind when he promotes his development of the personality of the teacher. They are amongst the most powerful aspects of para-conscious communication which are ‘contagiously transmitted’. Despite the common scepticism that often abounds in traditional educational institutions, one can make a positive difference. Eric Jensen has been doing this, not only within the United states, but also Europe and within the NSW Department of School of Education where he has been training teachers in A/L methodologies, since 1989. As Eric also told Fiona Meller, “The effect of A/L in the world is that it creates more awareness about the brain and learning, which I
think is very powerful". Eric’s professional growth over the years speaks for itself after reading his latest book (at the time of writing), The Learning Brain’ (1994).

"Developing Intuition" Lonny Gold
Responses posted from France, 1991

Although Lonny’s responses following here are brief, I had the opportunity before I began this inquiry, and shortly after discovering A/L, to talk to him about this new world of learning. In particular, since the spiritual link was already beginning to fascinate me, we spoke at great length on several occasions, where we were able to develop a strong rapport and enjoy several ‘deep and meaningful’ exchanges. Lonny encouraged me to pursue A/L, offering to help in any way he could, even from across the other side of the world.

I found this early encouragement very important and reassuring. He became a friend who was very much on the same wave-length across the world who would be there as a psychological support within this ‘new’ (at the time) learning domain. Although our meetings at several conferences since have been few and brief, they have had the depth of communication that I have always appreciated. I believe this is due to the essence of the man himself, and perhaps our unarticulated spiritual interest in teaching within A/L.

Q1: What would you say is/has been the personal driving force behind your work in this field of integrated accelerative learning?

Lonny: Disgust and hatred of the system I had to endure.

Q2: What kind of connection do you make between the techniques and skills of accelerated learning and your own personal/spiritual growth?

Lonny: Total! There is no separation.

Q3: Do you apply some of these techniques/skills to further your own personal growth? If so, how?

Lonny: I try to increase my perception and develop my intuition at every moment of my life.

Q4: What do you see as the most significant elements of personal development within accelerative learning?

Lonny: If people start seeing and feeling, they will become richer, happy and will tend to become more and more grounded.
Q5: What personal characteristics do you see as common to successful learning among people?

Q5a: (For participants/students)

Lonny: Empowerment.

Q5b: (For facilitators/teachers)
Lonny: Getting over the need to be needed and thus really helping learners be autonomous.

Q6: How do you see the relationship between the personal development of the practitioner and his/her effectiveness in the group situation or classroom? Give examples of your own experiences (both positive and negative).

Lonny: When the practitioner is grounded and not self-interested learners feel safe, open up, take chances, are creative and allow selves to be carefree.

Q7: How do you think aspects of personal development in accelerated learning (both for practitioners and learners) can be encouraged and promoted?

Lonny: By the creation of totally new role models. Redefining what is possible in terms of life fulfilment. Using learning situations as a pretext for an environment where new kinds of relations are possible.

Lonny’s first succinct response, demonstrates the power of his early learning experiences which were obviously quite negative, impacting on his whole world view. He became aware from an early age of the inadequacies and the misery of limited and limiting education. What I am reminded of here, in knowing Lonny, is the absolute dedication and commitment that he has for his work in A/L, and the unswerving focus he has for the direction in which it takes him. His response to the second question leads me to reflect on his integrated nature and personality. For Lonny, I know there is ‘no distinction between work and play’, and his answer to the third question highlights that he also practices what he preaches.

In these ways, these two very different personalities, Eric and Lonny, have much in common. Eric’s comments about this also being a “curse” because people are uncomfortable with integrity indicate the challenges and efforts that are sometimes involved in living life with integrity and being a congruent person. Eric uses these terms in a way that indicates they are synonymous and I believe they sit under my broader overall theme of ‘Integration’. Through his responses to questions five and six, Lonny moves into an area which particularly interests me. This is the concept of power and roles in the teaching process, and no doubt these could be the subject of a thesis in itself. Significantly, Lonny sees and promotes a method for the practitioner of “being grounded” for empowering others and really providing opportunity for them to redefine “what is possible”.

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I see that this 'being grounded' also relates to the concept of knowing the essential self, a theme which has been a major one throughout the thesis. Each one of my participants have either demonstrated or discussed the need for a strong and positive sense of self, high self esteem and a belief that 'who I am' is important. In this A/L paradigm of teaching and learning, if this is one of the strongest messages we are trying to get across to students, it is naturally one which we need to address for ourselves.

Many people who know him would agree that Lonny is a strong identity, an energetic, integrated and honest 'personality'. He is a great facilitator of learning with a strong commitment to furthering learners' perception and intuitive skills. He creates and promotes a lot of enjoyment and dynamism in the learning process. I believe that he does this by being free of much ego and desire for control over others. I have also observed Lonny as a practitioner as well as participating in his workshops. He is a master in his own way, with a tonne of energy and positivity, making learning fun and light whilst simultaneously being deeply thought-provoking and memorable. His responses here, although brief remind me of the depth of someone who admits he is not concerned for academia, does not feel the need to publish much written material, but does believe in concrete and positive action.

Lonny's main commitments in his work is to promote learner empowerment and full, creative potential; to increase perception of what's possible as a human being. My observations and experiences have shown him to be highly professional, energetic, very positive and dedicated to his chosen path. I also interpret the essence of this drive and commitment as being a spiritually motivated one, particularly where he argues for, (and demonstrates) the necessity to go beyond our limited roles, to go beyond self interests and the 'need to be needed'.

It was a strong intuitive spontaneous impulse that led me to invite Lonny to the first 'Global Dialogue' in Mt Abu in 1993, organised by the Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University. Although he had had no knowledge or experience of the organisation or their philosophy, he called me from France to say that out of all the many overseas invitations he received each year and could rarely attend, on this occasion he felt strongly "pulled" to go to Mt Abu. This particular mountain retreat has become significant in terms of my seeking integration in my life and therefore within this inquiry. It has provided much of my spiritual sustenance as well as for the spiritual encouragement we early core members of the Spirit of Learning group received there.
"Willingness to Take Risks" Gloria Marie Caliendo

Responses posted from USA, 1991

As related in Chapter 4, I felt strongly from Gloria’s responses as well as her accompanying letters that with closer proximity, there would definitely have been more involvement on her part, in this inquiry. I am aware that in this case, I was very remiss and slow with my return correspondence over a period of time, and eventually we dropped out of touch with each other. Gloria, however, responded promptly by mail and with interest to my initial questionnaire, the following answers are in response to this (italics emphasis in dialogue hers).

Q1: What would you say is(has been the personal driving force behind your work in this field of integrated, accelerative learning?

Gloria: The personal driving force behind my work in A/L stems from my introduction to it by way of a literature professor who mentioned Lozanov’s work in class one day... I was so intrigued (as an undergraduate) that I pursued research on my own and later decided to write a doctoral thesis about the Lozanov method, (Suggestopedia) and its Americanised adaptations, (Accelerated Learning.) The most intriguing piece of it all for me is the attention that is paid to the psychological level of both the learner/teacher. The ideal of dual-plane-ness (conscious/unconscious) being inextricably linked in terms of all input given to the brain. Also, the other result of this research lead me to have a fascination with brain research theory and to also studying it with Dr. Lozanov personally (Florence, Italy, 1989).

Q2: What kind of connection do you make between the techniques and skills of accelerated learning and your own personal/spiritual growth?

Gloria: It has helped to enable different pieces of my personality to emerge. For example, my love of art/drawing has been rediscovered both in me and in many of my students (I do lots of art activities), my sense of drama has definitely grown (role play) and more than anything my overall willingness to take risks and to try new things. I now see all learners as possessing great potential and not being in need of comparison to anyone else other than their own growth... co-operative vs competitive learning.

Q3: Do you apply some of these techniques/skills to further your own personal growth? If so, how?

Gloria: Yes, for example, as a way of completing my own doctoral thesis, I added lots of techniques such as mind-mapping out my hard data for analysis, doing Edu-K before beginning to write/rewrite and in general to help with balancing. I tend to use music a great deal as well (depending on the activity that I am engaged in performing).
Q4: What do you see as the most significant elements of personal development within accelerative learning?

Gloria: The myriad ways in which it enables each and every learner to discover more of him/herself and to constantly discover new talents/potentials and therefore be willing to take greater risks and make larger strides in overall breadth of knowledge.

The incredible manner in which it fosters growth of positive self view/image. It tends to be contagious. A re-discovery of enthusiasm and love of learning in general... more than that a sense of self being able to attain higher levels.

Q5: What problems are common to most people/students in their approach and attitudes to their own learning?

Gloria: (a) For participants/students: Self-esteem growth (positive), enthusiasm about on-going/new learning experiences, willingness to take risks, low anxiety levels while learning.

Gloria (b): For facilitators/teachers: much the same as above... however, I have found personally that I have more of a sensitivity for every learner's potential for great strides, no matter what the past has brought that person (negative suggestion). I respect every person's right/need to be a positive, non-stressed learner.

Q6: How do you think aspects of personal development in accelerated learning (both for practitioners and learners) can be encouraged and promoted?

Gloria: Provide opportunities for traditional teachers, etc., to have first-hand experience(s) with some of these methods... particularly in a subject area that was rather negative for them as a learner. You'll be amazed at how little else has to be said... then they will want to hear about the theories, etc., show them... get their reactions (do a pre/post test) (sic)... devise appropriate steps for training from then on...

Gloria's attraction to A/L was developed from an overall sense of intrigue or curiosity, which is one of the acknowledged effective learning states in A/L. Here, Gloria also strongly demonstrates the concept of the teacher as a learner where, through A/L, she has learned not only classroom techniques but has developed more of the personal self in the process. This includes being more sensitive to students' potential, having rediscovered much of her own creative potential, such as art and drama talents. Her belief in human innate potential is now based on personal experience, thus creating a platform for on-going non-stressed learning for the self as well as for her students. She also links the development of learning and creative potential to furthering self esteem, both for herself and her students, as well as more risk-taking, which plays an important role in the development of herself and her students.
Gloria’s responses and approach to A/L indicate to me a sense of integrity where the theory is well-grounded in personal experience and where A/L provides opportunities for teachers to learn and grow as people, along with their students. Undoubtedly, her training with Lozanov gave Gloria some first hand experience with the concepts of dual-planeness, the paraconsciouss, stimulating her interest in the psychological factors of both teacher and learner.

**Going Deeper: In-Depth Responses**

"Choiceless Awareness" Ben Weiss

*Sydney 1993-1995*

My interactions with Ben were the first in-depth ones during this inquiry, which began with the questionnaire as an introduction to the topic. The first question about the driving force behind the integrated teaching work he does, immediately stimulated Ben to reflect on his life’s learning journey. This in turn led up to his current TESOL teaching practices which are also with adult migrants. The dialogue below was the beginning of a very long exchange from which I have taken excerpts:

*Ben:* What comes up for me is that I actually had what I would describe as a pretty miserable education.

*Dawn:* That sounds familiar!

*Ben:* In fact it was so miserable it sent me in the wrong direction in my life and I then had to spend the next twenty years completing my so-called ‘formal education’ in a process of what I would call ‘informal education’ to re-educate myself to find out what the hell I was here for, what I was trying to do...

*Dawn:* So you automatically linked your learning with your life’s purpose at that point?

*Ben:* Oh, I don’t think quite so consciously, on reflection I did... unconsciously I was aware... consciously I was just aware that something was seriously wrong with what I was doing with my life. I became painfully aware of this when having completed my university degree as a Chemical Engineer, I started working in a Chemical factory, and feeling like I was a totally alien from... you know, I was alien to this environment.

During this period, long, “inspiring and amazing conversations about the theatre” with a fellow worker and part-time actor began to highlight for him just how limited his interest was in that environment. He knew he needed to do something else with his life. Ben had had an on-going interest in all aspects of the theatre, and was already taking acting classes at the time.

*Ben:* ... My whole fantasy at that stage was that I wanted to direct films basically, and... but I had this idea, which seems to keep recurring in my life. I didn’t want to just direct them you know, I wanted to write them, create them, and make them and... do everything... Anyway... as I came to actually go on the journey of following that,
by going to film school and doing all that stuff. . . it began to change, and I became really aware. . . over the years I have become aware that I wasn’t actually interested in film- I was interested in spirituality. The only place I’d actually managed to experience spirituality in my life was in the so-called ‘art-movies’, and in particular in theatre, particularly at the Ensemble, which was a pretty interesting sort of place in the Sixties.

_Dawn_: When you say you changed your interest to spirituality, would you have consciously described it at that time as spirituality?

_Ben_: It was a search for meaning! . . very much a search for meaning.

This declaration then led on to his describing a major “turning point” in Ben’s life, where he first started making his _search for meaning_ (and therefore his spirituality), conscious.

_Ben_: My turning point, which I suppose was really significant in terms of this, was . . that I had an industrial accident when I was at ICI, where I inhaled a whole lot of chlorine gas, and I ended up going to hospital.[_Ben then sidetracks to highlight the “wrong direction” he was just beginning to realise he had taken, and the opposing views of education reflected in the people around him as well as within himself._]

. . . . . I was with this older bloke who was a foreman, who to me were the most interesting people in the place, these foremen, very much sort of working class people who are also somehow self-educated. So unlike the engineers . . . they became leaders and they had much more understanding of what was going on in that place than people like engineers, who were formally educated . . . _See, my parents were very split in this way, that my mother was formally educated, whereas my father never really succeeded at school, and he used to always talk about the university of life, life experience being the true teacher._

Ben described all of these opposing views of education and learning which were around him as “a real split”, his awareness of which eventually laid the basis for a total change of career.

_Dawn_: So all of this was helping you to understand reality.

_Ben_: In retrospect, what I’m thinking now is that what I was unconsciously aware of at that point was that my education, my formal education, had not prepared me to deal with the very reality that it was proposing to prepare me for. So there was like this absurd internal contradiction that the education system was supposed to be preparing me for life, but in fact was preparing me for death!

_Dawn_: . . What do you mean by this internal contradiction?

_Ben_: Within the education system itself. But while it was constantly saying, ‘this is good for your future. . . , my own experience of that was that this was the worst thing I could do for my future! . . I shouldn’t have been in a bloody chemical plant in the first place! I remember some years later talking to a man who was a retired industrial chemist, saying if anyone is creative in the least, they should have nothing to do with a chemical factory. . . it’s completely the wrong place for them. . . All the people who were looking after my so-called ‘education’ were unaware of the fact that it was totally inappropriate for me.
Ben’s reference to death relates to the death of his creative and spiritual self as well as the possibility of literal death through working with poisonous chemicals.

_Dawn_: Did you sense some wider caring or responsibility for others, some sense of irrelevance for others . . . ?

_Ben_: At that stage, I was just unconsciously aware that something was wrong, that my life lacked meaning . . .

_Dawn_: So it was still unconscious at this point?

_Ben_: Yes, right . . . and what happened was, that after the industrial accident, I recognised that as the turning point, where I was attempting to make it conscious . . . Since that time . . . and my first stage in doing that was to turn to . . . was to reconnect with my creative self, which had gone into ‘suspended animation’, for about six or seven years. And that linked in with my whole spiritual development that had completely stopped . . . my spiritual self had at the age of about fourteen or fifteen . . . suffered a serious rupture.

This “rupture” from his spirituality that Ben experienced, related essentially to what he perceived as _hypocrisy_ and _irrelevance_. This included his disillusionment with traditional religion, the classical music that he had grown up playing, and “the modern scientific view that says ‘well, God’s a lot of rubbish and doesn’t exist anyway’“ . His rebellion led him to rock and roll music which soon gave way to the protest songs of the Vietnam war and the sixties during his early student days.

His singing and playing guitar became a medium “that was probably my greatest solace in the time when my creativity went into suspended animation otherwise - I still had my music . . . “. Ben is very clear about the linking of his creative development with his spiritual development. He realised that rock and roll for him lacked spiritual meaning, discovering instead that folk music and folk culture became for him,

The only spiritually connected living culture that was relevant to my time. The _Times are a Changin’_ was like my theme song, you know and whenever I’ve travelled I’ve always carried my little booklet of songs.

The creative arts for Ben have always been a means through which personal change and growth could occur. His “bible” in those days of early rebellion and self-awareness, was a book called “Art and Revolution” which focussed on activities in Paris in 1968. Students were inspired by the artists of the time and events were orchestrated as theatrical events. Ben’s imagination had no doubt been captured by such a revolution, increasing his faith in the arts as a powerful medium for human development, and therefore providing a strong basis for the use of the arts in his teaching practice.

As a language teacher using integrated learning techniques, Ben is aware of the practice of using songs and music in the classroom to encourage natural, spontaneous and rhythmic production and I know he does just that. At several
SOL forum events, these abilities have also provided enjoyable opportunities for all to experience meaning and connection beyond literal language. Ben’s special ‘energy’, with his guitar and his natural ability to provoke deeper meaning and learning through music, is one of his great natural gifts. In other than language teaching situations, he also uses a lot of chanting, Eastern kinds of music and communal singing to stimulate a sense of spiritual connection with each other. When joining in these kinds of musical activities, the spiritual atmosphere is greatly enhanced, at a deep para-conscious level, strongly felt but not verbally articulated.

Although Ben says that “change is very threatening”, I believe he displays a living and growing example of being prepared to do whatever it takes to be true to himself and find his spiritual and creative self. In his case, as soon as he became aware, or even as soon as he started to feel “something was wrong” with his life and his work, he was able to completely change his originally planned life direction, eventually becoming a language teacher. It is clear that his theatrical and musical involvements had not only helped him link with his spiritual self, but have provided a firm basis for the integrated approach he takes in his teaching practice.

Ben had always been an avid user and promoter of drama techniques and songs as a means to stimulate spontaneous language production in the classroom. He didn’t need to know about the research from accelerated learning circles that promotes the stimulation of the ‘whole person’, particularly the non-verbal and creative faculties of the brain. Ben was using these elements naturally and intuitively well before he discovered this research. Before he reached the classroom as a teacher, and for some years, he journeyed through his loved world of theatre, studying and working in various exciting capacities including the well-known Swinburne film school in Melbourne.

I did a year of the course there, but I also didn’t find what I was looking for, so I left and then went to London and worked there in theatre. I ended up working in theatre lighting in Covent Garden. I won’t go into all that but that put together, music, and theatre and lighting. And light was what I worked with in theatre, which I realised later was quite significant, because I’m very into light. At that stage, I was working with external light, whereas now I’m working with internal light.

I commented here that it seemed so clear that his whole external journey was a metaphor for his internal seeking. No doubt this is much clearer to perceive in others’ lives than in one’s own. Ben appeared to feel amazed at times, at much of what he was saying himself and said, “I keep thinking I really need to write all this down”.

Ben continued to be attracted toward the theatre but felt “totally unbalanced” due to his past formal education in the scientific and technical fields. He eventually went back to university to obtain an Arts degree to re-dress the balance and “correct his education”. Along with Drama and Sociology, Ben studied French, which had
close links with Romanian, his father’s first language, and therefore helped to “connect with his roots”. During this period at university, he eventually became disillusioned with the way many academics were “completely out of touch with reality of the students apart from a few”. These ‘few’ turned out to be the same ones who had made a lasting and positive impression on me during that same period (see ‘Further Studies’, Chapter 2).

Fundamentally it was a spiritually integrated process I was looking for.

This statement by Ben tends to capture for me his acute awareness of the meaning of his life’s learning journey. He had been reflecting upon his varied interests and pursuits within the theatre and music arts, including his desire to write, produce and direct a film. Before he embarked on a career in any of these desired fields, he had the above realisation. He adds” I was actually not looking for a career in any of those things. I thought I was, but that was still part of the ‘maya’ (illusion)”. Ben’s journeying included his search for relevance and purpose in his everyday life and the connection he feels with his music, the theatre, his “re-education” and his ultimate role as a language teacher, which he says is “the essence of what I was on about”.

By the time Ben and I had engaged in this inquiry I felt that our individual learning paths had crossed and that we had come to some very similar realisations around ways of teaching, or what we both might now say ‘ways of being whilst teaching’. We had both become “mature age” students, both undertaking the same subjects for our Arts degree and both ended up becoming TESOL teachers of adults, without knowing this or seeing each other over a ten year period. However, most significantly, it is our unconscious and conscious “search for meaning” as it relates to our own learning and teaching, that is a powerful common ‘motivating’ force behind the work we both do as teachers of integrated learning. This understanding has been greatly enriched through our inquiring together on both a one-to one basis as well as within the Spirit of Learning forum of which he is also a member.

As I continued to listen to Ben, I was feeling that his openness, honesty and determination to be authentic, to remain an essentially spiritual person, were great powers in themselves. During our next meeting, however, he is very specific about the qualities he sees as being most essential as a teacher of integrated learning. To him the key is “openness”, and he explains further here;

*Ben:* I have been influenced by Krishnamurti and the concept of choiceless awareness; that is the taking from intuition of what’s important at the moment - at this time, there are no ‘shoulds’ and there is a trust in the response.

*Dawn:* Do you mean instinct?

*Ben:* There is a difference between reacting to and responding to. Reacting to is instinctive and responding to is intuitive. It’s not like I’m doing anything, ‘it’s getting out of the way’. One needs to be open - that’s why I like the term a “spiritual warrior”
as this means working with the spiritual centre. I can call on whatever power I need at the time- there is no fear. (Ben here refers to the book - 'Love is Letting Go of Fear'.) All this is fundamental to the kind of teaching I do - that is constantly and consciously responding to the situation at the time. All I’m doing is responding to the energy of the group.

Ben continues and then refers to the ‘pedagogic moment’ which he describes as being real learning and happens, for example, when a student asks a question.

Ben: It is not just for that one student - it is like it is on behalf of the group. It is important to meet and face the questions - responding to the person and where they are coming from, rather than just answering the question . . . So the challenge of teaching is in the ability to respond.

Dawn: Has your ability to respond increased?

Ben: Absolutely!

Dawn: How has it been enhanced?

Ben: Through meditation, yoga, drama, psycho-drama. . . but all this takes a lot of training.

Ben goes on to connect his experiences with psycho-drama, with teaching/learning situations, particular emphasising the need to be “in touch with your own body and mind”. Following this meeting Ben felt the inclination to elaborate further on the concept of choiceless awareness. He writes:

The importance of ‘choiceless awareness’ as a practice is a way to learn to respond to people - as a teacher this means being able to respond to students - not just to the surface features of the student, but to where they are really coming from. This process - this ability to respond to the moment, means that teachers, like certain actors, sports people, dancers and musicians, are beginning to recognise the need for on-going development programs, or else they fall into the danger of either burning out or getting stale.

This strong awareness and “ability to respond to the moment”, is a strong example of the aspect of inner development that I am highlighting in my thesis. That is developing the ability within an educator to be aware of, read and respond to the subtle aspects, such as energy and consciousness of others, and to be able to use this ability in positive, productive ways to facilitate true learner empowerment. In his own words, Ben teaches “in an intuitive way” which I believe, incorporates much ‘responding to the moment’.

In Ben’s case, this includes being constantly aware, having a deep feeling for the natural rhythms of language as well as possessing highly developed creative abilities. His additional knowledge of the research of accelerated learning and related fields, gives him further understanding of why he does what he does.

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23 Term used by Kathleen Bailey, Lecturer in Languages at ATEC conference, Sydney, 1992.
However, at times I have been reticent to label Ben a teacher of integrated accelerative learning. It seems to me he is more an integrated person who naturally and intuitively uses approaches to enhance the learning process and which he later discovered could be called accelerative learning techniques.

Ben’s studies, interrupted by significant twists and turns in the form of dropping out, theatre pursuits and further overseas travels, were eventually resumed after he had been described on more than one occasion, as “the natural teacher”. His experiences with yoga and Zen training led him back to his university studies and his realisation “I was also on a spiritual quest”. He went on to elaborate on his still strong interests in theatre, books and his eventual inspiration to write a book about the ‘Buddha nature’ of theatre. When I asked if he ever did it he said no because “the book turned into my life! . . . How the hell can I write about Buddhism unless I know something more than having read a few books about it?”

It was at this time that Ben displayed what he means by “looking for a spiritually integrated process” which I believe he realised as a result of his continual efforts to being constantly self-aware, congruent and authentic. His obvious anathema to hypocrisy and irrelevance throughout his life has tended to motivate him to make the changes and shifts necessary to integrate and embody many of the theoretical principles he espouses.

Ben went on to study yoga in depth, learn about Zen and had a powerful “mystical experience” through meditation. As a result he realised that much of his disillusionment and ‘anger’ toward male authority figures, like his father and various academics could only be resolved by finding his “own centralised internal power”. Eventually, Ben’s Zen master and yoga teacher “made me aware that what I was really interested in was teaching”.

Ben’s sharing of his experiences of “being thrown off course” from the essence of what he was ‘on about’, highlighted for me the importance of the recurring concept of being *constantly conscious* or aware. In turn Ben’s awareness provided for him the power to change his life’s direction, maintain strict discipline and develop an extremely broad intellect and a strong spiritual and creative self. It is in this true search and efforts for spiritually integrated development that I see the real power and influence that must naturally be imparted in his teaching. For Ben, this mission to teach goes far beyond that of languages and the formal classroom. His concurrent teaching pursuits range from meditation to drama, yoga, creativity and as a facilitator with ‘The Alternatives to Violence’ programs.

As others have also found, the open honest sharing that Ben engaged in during this inquiry provided some significant insights for him into his own personal, spiritual development. Following our second meeting, he wrote to me as means to both reflect upon these insights as well as to contribute to my inquiry.
In April, 1993, he wrote:

My most important realisation out of our conversation is the fact that I'm a natural teacher. I have a strong instinct for the teaching process. That evolves from my own learning experience. I have learned things both formally and informally, but whereas my formal learning process was the one that was most validated in the eyes of society, it was my informal learning process that was most satisfying for me. So why should this be so?

The word [answer] that comes up is a lack of connectedness, a lack of relevance to my life right now - in the moment. Given that the present moment is the only moment, makes me think that this lack of connectedness to the present moment, also reflects a lack of spiritual connection. For the spirit is only ever present in the now. Thich Nhat Hanh's teaching takes on an ever deeper significance, the more I practice it. Being calm, being present - smile and relax, be present, be calm - relax body and mind!

"Every Situation is a Learning Experience" Eva Pascoe

Sydney, 1992-1994

I feel there is a yearning in the soul for something bigger than just the temporal and I do feel that the empowerment on the human level comes from tapping into the other which is hidden in us, which we often simply deny.

In beginning to answer the first question about the driving force behind her work using accelerative learning approaches, Eva immediately focussed on people's perceived desire for empowerment, and her role in facilitating this in others. From then on, due to the complexities that arose out of our various discussions, as well as elaborations from the questionnaire, answers from these have been merged into the following text. Upon reading how I had written our conversations and her responses into this section, Eva felt the need to clarify and elaborate upon some her original spoken language and so emphasis within her speeches are hers.

Eva had been a classical piano teacher for many years after having grown up in Poland, studied in Paris and lived in the USA before settling in Australia. After experiencing major effects of stresses in her life, she eventually discovered more about herself and her overall life purpose. She realised that what she really wanted to do was to focus on the energy aspects of learning, and now calls herself a learning specialist and natural healer, later elaborating: "I help people perceive their educational difficulties/challenges as energy blocks".

There are the two levels to it. One is the need to know, and the other is the need to experience, both the human level and the connection to the divine or spiritual. My aim is to demolish the barriers between the two. . . That is my personal driving force in the work in accelerative learning. . . The gap is in the inability to perceive that one can even learn, inability to be willing to change. There are many opinions, many barriers that we've created out of our thoughts, emotions and habits which make us feel unworthy of change. . . The bottom line in my experience is that people feel 'we can't change'. It's very strange. People come to me with educational difficulties, or wanting to learn the piano. Sooner or later we end up facing the inability or unwillingness to change.
At this point I immediately thought about the reasons why I went to Eva in the first place - for piano lessons! The deeply felt mutual interest in this inquiry shifted our energies from my piano lessons to exploring and perceiving possible energy blocks within my body. I was learning to play the piano in a very unusual manner! Eva had found that as A/L research has also shown, that ‘undoing’ ineffective and inhibiting habits of learning, usually involves a major shift of attitudes or beliefs about one’s own capacities. She begins to elaborate on the perceived “gap” within people, whilst emphasising the importance of personal change.

Dawn: Is it because sooner or later you feel that learning does involve change, so you’re relating and automatically linking the learner with change, and change with this need to go deeper and to look at what we can do or cannot do or are unwilling to do?

Eva: What I’ve mentioned first is obviously the biggest picture (the human/divine relationship), knowing that it has to do with finding the barriers in oneself and of reconnecting to one’s Higher Self which often needs to be defined. Because we don’t know what it is and often our attitudes make us frightened to look out of fear of not finding anything. We are frightened to look at our habits, which are in fact our shackles. These fears and habits, whether known or unknown, create self perpetuating limitations and rigidity. We call them our ‘personalities’ or our ‘characters’ but they are facades, disguises and defence structures we use to camouflage our inability to love, in the transpersonal sense, both ourselves and others. Therefore we find it difficult, frightening, challenging or simply unfeasible to change and ultimately to evolve.

We discussed Eva’s work in “attempting to mobilise often unknown resources” within her clients so that they can overcome their fears and “reach a higher gradient in their learning”.

Dawn: What about yourself and your own learning experience... has that, would you say been behind this linking learning with the change, and therefore the spiritual search?

Eva: Yes, absolutely!

Dawn: So how...?

Eva: I define learning as ‘the game of life’. My motto is ‘learn to live and live to learn’. But to reach this point I had to undergo several adventures and processes of adaptation. In Poland (being born during WW 11) I spoke Polish and German until the age of 10, then learned Russian at school, moved 23 times before we (the family) escaped from Poland when I was 16. Once in France and then in Belgium I felt like a perpetual foreigner. I had a certain number of challenges to face during my migrations: I have changed cultures, I would even say, civilisations several times: from Poland to France, to America and lastly to Australia. These were big changes: emotionally, financially, linguistically, geographically and culturally. In every context I did not have any reference points, because my old reference points were inapplicable in each new environment. I was forced to change, which I did by adapting and trying to fit in. I was putting on more ‘coping’ ways of behaviour. Inside there was a growing doubt about my ability to fit in as I felt more and more separate... It went beyond learning of the modes of behaviour, modes of perceptions, values... I was paying an increasing price by trying ‘too hard’. I thought that ‘being human’ was all about fitting in and that was and is very stressful for all of us.
Dawn: So you were putting a lot of pressure on yourself, to improve, to understand the new cultures?

Eva: Yes, enormous pressure. I was an enormous perfectionist as well, and having come from a different culture, I was always slightly different. I often felt that I was an outsider.

Dawn: How did you cope with learning so much, always trying to be better and trying to fit in?

Eva: I made a point of mastering each of the languages at the highest possible level. But, due to the levels of stress, I lost my photographic and to some extent, my auditory memory which I had in America and which I had in Poland. As I went through different degrees in different languages, my levels of stress were getting higher and higher, and I was becoming more and more scattered, ungrounded and superficially auditory. That is inefficient for learning.

Dawn: Did you realise you were stressed at the time?

Eva: Yes... but my exams went beyond the academic ones. Everything I did, every person I encountered, was an exam in terms of making myself understood. I married a very intelligent, articulate Australian who had the habit of pointing out my lack of logic, probably caused by the linguistic convolutions that came about due to stress. Work, family and constant stress led to a complete nervous breakdown about eight years ago. My nervous system simply disconnected, leaving me in complete darkness as to what I wanted and how I would get there.

Afterwards when I was 'mopping up', I found Accelerated Learning and met Eric Jensen. I finally found ways which were not so clumsy. That's what really freed me, because these effective ways of learning led to an expanded sense of feeling of choice and freedom, which is not what I ever experienced before. What is curious is that, intuitively, I was already using (for and with others), imaginative and experimental methodologies whilst teaching music. I was coming up with many solutions which I discovered later, were very much part of the accelerated learning concepts.

At a later meeting Eva makes the statement, "everything I do has potential for learning, giving me feedback". She is very definite in this assertion which is essentially the same as the A/L maxim, that "there is no such thing as a mistake - there is only feedback". Undoubtedly, the most powerful 'feedback' she ever received was in the form of her nervous breakdown. She described how she used to be, "very correct, very controlled and very efficient", coming to Australia speaking five languages, not really feeling accepted by her peers, and tending to make people feel uneasy with her.

Dawn: So where did you find those resources or the power to change. Was it partly knowing that there were systems and methods and a philosophy that fitted in or...?

Eva: Curiously not. When I was looking for solutions, accelerated learning came almost at the end of it. I was intuitively doing creative things with colour, African dancing, drumming and singing. I had to do anything which was directly related to the life force...
because I had lost my connection to it. I was desperate. I didn’t feel that looking for other ideas or intellectual answers was right at the time. I had a very good mind, sensitive, imaginative, lateral, but not anchored in the body. I simply did not know what to do with it. I was a talented pianist, but otherwise in my physical orientation, absolutely hopeless. Seemingly unco-ordinated and awkward … might have even been labelled dyslexic. … African dancing and drumming was phenomenal. … grounding, celebrating life, enjoying being in my body. That anchored me, and then I found courses in accelerated learning and concurrently doing plenty of personal growth courses too. They were an essential complement to accelerated learning, as without re-examining our emotional make-up, change is difficult to implement.

Both Eva and Ben experienced major events or situations in their lives which deeply challenged, angered or disillusioned them. Both of them eventually found the inner strength to make enormous changes and huge shifts of thinking and being in the process. In Eva’s case her “fight back” led her to the realisation she needed to become more “grounded” and hence the accelerated learning models became extremely useful for her recovery. They gave her choices and possibilities for change in the way she was approaching her own life’s learning, and also prompted her to totally refocus in her work with others. No doubt, much of the A/L theory about individual styles of thinking and learning helped to validate her own feelings and experiences. More significantly, her new professional direction appears to have helped her reaffirm her identity and her spiritual purpose.

Eva began to take many courses in accelerated learning with Eric Jensen and some of the other experts in the A/L or NLP fields. She says:

_Eva_: I suddenly discovered myself. … and that was the best way of challenging and learning and basically just seeing that changes are possible. It can be such fun. Suddenly this whole journey started making sense.

_Dawn_: So you were starting to see the changes within yourself by using some of those methods?

_Eva_: Oh yes, huge, huge changes. Also I felt that the conventional ways of teaching were so debilitating to the teacher and certainly not conducive to growth. It was tedious and in fact I stopped teaching for about five years. I just fizzled out. … I just felt like one big black hole.

_Dawn_: So did you take up teaching again when you got into accelerated learning?

_Eva_: Oh yes, yes, and I find that people respond to it. They are delighted to discover that there are ways of using their own abilities, just by discovering, by perceiving that they can learn … knowing that the models they use create good results. I also find that, as a result of doing all this training, my ability to invent things, has re-established itself, but it’s powered now by the models of change. So I use these models, but I use them as a stepping stone.

Eva uses “models of change” to mean the learning models and philosophy of A/L and NLP. Her frequent use of the term highlights her main interest and involvement with accelerated learning, that is for facilitating personal change and learning for others.
Sooner or later I find that people want to talk about their learning difficulties and to find the emotional blocks behind them. So after accelerated learning I went to study a lot of the psychological models with an organisation which used to be called ‘Self Transformation’ (now ‘People Know How’). I did about three years of extremely useful and challenging courses.

Eva is undoubtedly an enthusiastic user of A/L techniques to “accelerate personal development” although she also says that there are limits to their potential to stimulate deep change, especially at the emotional level. She says that “learning has huge implications”, meaning the way we perceive ourselves as learners, our beliefs, attitudes, our fears and our phobias will have an enormous effect on our entire psyche as well as our body. In her own case she eventually experienced a serious nervous breakdown.

Eva: I joined the Clairvision School which offers practical training in all aspects of esoteric knowledge based on both Western and Eastern streams. . . . we develop our perceptions of the higher vision of the self. . . . So now the mixture of accelerated learning, psychological personal growth models and perception give me many tools. . . . I can feel the blocks in people’s bodies, I perceive them and I know how to dissolve them. . . . [In the past] I’ve never known what to do with it [her capacity to tune into others’ energies]. . . . that was part of the reason why I had such a big nervous breakdown because I was always so tuned in but not yet grounded and thus vulnerable.

Eva feels she has the ability to create change for others because of the compassion, empathy and perceptions she can now enter their experience, not just at an intellectual level, but experientially. Although she kept up a little of her piano teaching for a while, it is now the work she does facilitating personal change and self-transformation, which stimulates and inspires her. She says it is essential that people realise that whatever challenges they meet, it affects their learning ability to absorb information.

Eva feels very strongly that in the learning process, everyone’s perception should be completely honoured. “That is really the essence behind all my teaching, validating the experience, validating the blocks, adding change and adding choices. It was absolutely extraordinary because the results, both scholastic and emotional, were staggering”. A/L has provided the philosophy, the research and “the models” which complement her own real learning as well as the regular meditation and work with perceptions.

In answering question four of the questionnaire, Eva feels that “the most significant elements of self development in A/L are focus and awareness. It also seems that, as a result of the efforts she has made toward her own self development, that these two ‘elements’ could be her own specialities for the facilitation she does. She says “the ability of abstracting to find the key or the ‘kernel’ of a problem requires moving through a lot of mental levels, using lateral and creative thinking and yet being very strong and focussed”. She adds, “Learning is like tapping into different levels of thinking”.

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Eva: Total alignment, and that's where the freedom comes from. Basically, freedom comes from peacefulness (where there's a glorious sense of expansion, and power), when something happens in the heart.

This experience of alignment for Eva is like my own sense of complete integration of all parts of the self as well as a sense of interconnectedness with everything in the universe, later also described by John Wade.

Dawn: How can we say what that does for you, what is the effect, the feeling? Why is it so significant to put it all together?

Eva: Because it's the ultimate right of every human being. Being human is about evolving here, now, through our own challenges, discoveries and actions. 'Putting it all together' is the supreme reward for being granted the gift of life. It's elegant, it's fun! It's colourful, it's creative. By doing this I am feeling part of a huge, beautiful universal picture. "Know thyself and Thou Shalt Know the Universe and All the Gods" is the adage engraved on the portal of Delphic's oracle of Apollo. It gives me immense impetus which drives my life. To create, to share, to honour... what a gift!

In discussing some of the most important and effective personal characteristics for A/L practitioners, Eva is very clear about the qualities she believes are necessary to develop within ourselves. They are a sense of curiosity, intellectual and emotional flexibility, empathy, compassion and responsibility. She also emphasises that of authenticity, describing it as being genuine "to yourself and your purpose and that leads to quality of certitude, perseverance and living your values". She adds:

My relationship with myself will affect my relationship with others, my profession and the quality of my teaching.

Eva's overall advice is to "seek and model excellence, expect the best from yourself and constantly challenge yourself (as well as your students)". She adds that we need to show people how we teach and that our body language reflects our (inner) states.

I am responsible for energy structures that I am producing through my words or behaviour. I also need to model an attitude of intense curiosity. It's important to have a sense of humour and be playful. The challenge is to bring my thinking into 'a melody' that people can tune into.

In discussing more about the role of the A/L practitioner, Eva explains what she means by the concept of 'fuelling'.

The techniques are very important, but the fuelling of them is my passion.

Dawn: What do you mean by 'fuelling'?

Eva: Passion for truth and light... passion for knowledge... and the educator's belief that she is making a difference by taking a stand, by contributing to people's awakening to themselves.

Dawn: So, in other words, the way I am as a teacher, fuels and motivates and therefore brings power to the techniques?

Eva: Yes and allows paradigm shifts.
I pursued this point to find out what it is that Eva believes “allows” these shifts.

_Eva:_ The techniques are elegant guidelines. I perceive that the most effective people have a passion for their vision. They relentlessly pursue it no matter what the obstacles may be. And through that process they define and awaken themselves and others . . . There are many levels of passion . . . there is not one way of defining it . . . who knows, everyone has their own vision. But somehow, sooner or later somehow we were all concerned about the bigger picture, about belonging, about sharing a vision . . . contributing, about taking responsibility for the globe and making a difference . . . We want to belong to it by participating, through our actions, searching for an expression of ‘love’.

Eva is referring specifically to one of the very first A/L courses for teachers, run by US trainer Eric Jensen, which we soon realised we had both attended. Eric had asked participants to write down their vision and mission which is now a common occurrence in many A/L training courses.

The AL techniques are basically a mental way of exploring such exploration. It’s a rational, elegant streamlined way of doing precisely that. It is a prescription for change . . . Some of us block change, block knowledge, block learning. If we do not learn every day of our life, we are living a death-like existence. That to me is life and I am passionate about it. I turn every situation into a learning experience.

As a result of her own considerable experiences with personal change as well as when facilitating others, Eva is very conscious of the range of possible fears, inhibiting habits and prejudices that people need to overcome. In discussing this inquiry, she says she believes that the reason why I devote so much time and energy to this research, and others to similar projects, is because:

Something in us is being called forth for a purpose which is greater than earning a living, running seminars, being successful . . . what would make us push ourselves through the difficult barriers of our habits, fears, prejudices? It is often a very painful process and yet the thirst towards growth, towards evolution is in every human being in a potentiality, wrapped in unawaresness and sleep . . . We are walking sleepers who, little by little, attempt to awaken that call . . .

Although we had never discussed how I viewed my own personal, spiritual development throughout this process, Eva was right. In many ways I do feel this exploration to be of an ultimately “higher purpose”. Eva’s comments on this shed some light on my need to highlight the spiritual aspects of our development. She is experienced enough to know that uncovering and confronting our inner discomforts is part of the ‘evolutionary process’. Eva often described learning as “an evolution, with layers which are like tapping different levels of thinking and where the big picture gets bigger”. I also relate her “big picture” to my constant need for a _global perspective_ in order to find my own meaning and purpose in life.

Most significantly for Eva, the connection to the idea of “flow” is at the heart of spiritual development and of course relates to much of my own experiences in this realm. Although she admits that “there’s tremendous courage and trust needed to engage in this evolutionary flow”, these “boxes and shackles” within oneself can be
broken. The exciting challenge for her then is of diving “deeper and deeper into the different levels of the mind, body and spirit”. Eva stresses that there is not just one technique or way of connecting with this idea of “flow”.

_Eva_: In the meditative state, I connect with a force which is the creative ‘logos’ force of the universe. I’m not attempting to sound arrogant, but that’s what it feels like and the experiences that I have are my link to the creative principle of life.

_Dawn_: So would that be the divine or spiritual aspect that you first talked about, that feeds and fuels you? Do you pursue this by meditating regularly?

_Eva_: Yes, yes, oh yes, twice a day. . . It’s a huge strength. . . Through the process of meditation, I found out exactly why I’m here. I found the purpose, beyond a job, beyond the pleasure of facilitating and so on. I found that yes, I am a born teacher of a certain specialised kind. There’s also another layer in me, an ability to heal, heal on a very deep level, subtle and deep. . . that’s why I connect to different ‘energy frequencies’ to remove people’s confusion.

Eva highlights the significance of aligning and connecting with our deeper levels of energy, ‘at different levels of frequencies’, or I might say in the realms of the para-conscious. In other words she is talking about the congruency between inner thoughts, ‘self-talk’ and outer language and behaviour. No matter how much we might embrace an ‘outer method’ such as A/L, if we don’t really believe we can learn faster or change, our thoughts, which are forms of energy, will not be congruent with our rhetoric.

This final quote of Eva’s highlights the theme of integration which has been emerging as a major one throughout the inquiry. In this case Eva is talking about the alignment of our thoughts, feelings and words. She believes this alignment within ourselves, along with enhanced and empowering learning techniques, such as A/L, can operate as a spiritual force and communicate a deep truth to others.

Accelerated learning is fantastic in a space where there is alignment, where there is clarity of thinking. When people are receiving you on a wave-length and you are in that clarity, you get through, because your word has a force behind it. There is a deep truth that is being projected and transferred.

_"Responsibility Toward Society" Christian Drapeau_

_Quebec, Canada 1992 -1994_

My profound desire is to humbly serve the society and try to contribute to human betterment. . . my whole life is virtually fused with my ideals of social and human development”

This declaration, much like a mission statement, exemplifies the ‘raison d’etre’ behind Christian’s work in accelerated learning. He holds a very strong conviction about the spiritual development of the A/L practitioner, and indeed, leaders in general, and as such has been a very encouraging participant in this inquiry. Our first meeting was quite serendipitous, occurring at the SALT conference in
Minneapolis, USA in 1992. Ever since this first (and only personal meeting, Christian and I have been collaborating through ‘deep and meaningful’
correspondence between French Canada and Australia.

At the age of fifteen, Christian discovered the book, ‘Superlearning’ (Ostrander and Schroeder, 1979) which introduced accelerated learning (then called ‘superlearning’) and Lozanov’s work to the West. He instinctively and
immediately began experimenting with the practical techniques described in the
book, initially for the specific purpose of developing confidence when interacting
with people. In May 1992 he responded to a request by the American authors,
Ostrander and Schroeder, to describe how he used superlearning techniques for his
own purposes, and how they helped him with regard to his personal growth. They
were collecting data on the use of Lozanov’s method around the world in
preparation for their second book, ‘Superlearning 2’ (1994), and by this time, along
with others around the world, Christian had become known to them as a
successful holistic educator specialising in A/L techniques.

As a means of responding to my questionnaire, Christian sent me a copy of the
letter he had sent in reply to the authors. In this letter, along with a description of
the way he used superlearning techniques, he also expressed his overall’s life
motivations and goals. Christian gets right to the heart of explaining the “driving
force” behind his A/L work, explaining how strongly he was first attracted to the
‘superlearning’ philosophy. After describing his strong belief in human potential
and “mind over matter”, he goes on to relate how he used autogenic training
techniques which took him immediately into very deep relaxed states of mind.

He added that after a few years of meditation and one year of teaching yoga, he was
never able to reach such profound states of meditation as he was during that
period. He frequently and automatically describes the state of deep relaxation as one
of ‘meditation’, and in doing so gives one the impression that he has an easy ability
and natural inclination to get in touch with his spirituality. He begins to describe
the techniques he used and the effects they had upon him.

In these states of relaxation/meditation, I used to review every event of the day, re-
enacting them mentally, behaving then the way I wished to behave in real life. That
is, I used to behave mentally with self-confidence, courage, talking to others with
assurance, etc. When I had nothing to review, I would imagine situations in which I
would behave with self confidence and courage.

Today I give conferences [seminars], I have been on the radio a few times and I am now
preparing a local TV series. Those who heard me on radio thought I was doing this job
for years. People know me - actually that is exactly what they tell me - for my
unwavering self-confidence and my good elocution.

He continues elaborating on the specific techniques he used to overcome his
shyness and insecurity when dealing with people.
In these profound states of relaxation [as described earlier], I also looked in [at] every
detail, mentally, at the relation between my own expression, behaviour and gestures,
and the corresponding mental or emotional inner state. Soon this allowed me, by a sort
of process of projection, to know the inner state of others by simply looking at their
gestures. It allowed me for instance, to feel others inner states and to see how any
behaviour of intolerance, anger or hatred was an expression of fear and lack of
assurance and self-confidence. It helped me to gain compassion. But the initial aim was
simply to feel secure facing others.

Christian used to spend at least an hour every day of “this introspection”, planning
in detail any situation that might arise. He goes on in the letter to say at the time of
writing, that “all this might seem a clear and simple solution” to his “problem”.
However, at the time it was happening for him at school and when dealing with
other people, it was “a real attitude of survival”. He said that it took him only
three to six months to get “a kind of self-mastery and control over others”.
However, he explains that, “today, the need to control others in order to feel secure
in any situation has vanished, leaving a profound sense of confidence in the
Divine”, and adds:

I was not simply pushed by the desire to deal with others, but by a desire of perfection.
I used to review any situation, behaviour, word or gesture with the profound intention
to behave as perfectly as possible. I used to review mentally my speech, my gestures,
my posture, etc, in order to show the greatest dignity, self-mastery, control and
compassion. All these changes took place in a summer or so. I went from a somewhat
hyperactive, talkative and emotionally insecure child - though successful at school, to
a calm, silent and introspective guy. This is actually what brought me at the edge of
true mysticism...

It is here that Christian was able to clearly identify that the driving force to develop
himself academically and professionally was a spiritually motivated one. The
techniques he used to make personal changes within himself include his previous
spiritual and meditation teachings as well as the newly discovered A/L techniques.
His use of the “mental gymnastics” as he is later to describe them is very detailed
and this in turn, has not only accelerated his learning, at the cognitive level but
also particularly in the area of his spiritual development.

He believes that his heightened awareness, acuity and sensitive readings of
people’s non-verbal signals, led to the stimulation of empathy and compassion
within him. Christian’s early inclinations toward spirituality, coupled with his
strong belief in human potential and discovery of the power of the mind through
A/L, have obviously proved to be a powerful motivating force for his everyday
professional and recreational practices.

Soon after reading the first ‘Superlearning’ book Christian included in his daily
session of relaxation/meditation, a program of intensive mental training, Tae
Kwon Do. This very successfully replaced for him the physical training in which he
had been engaged for some time. Christian’s practical application of different
superlearning techniques as well as in this case, Tae Kwon Do, brought him some
major worldly successes. These rewards in turn greatly increased his overall confidence in his own abilities to achieve in many different aspects of his life. Christian enjoys a very strong belief in himself which has undoubtedly been a driving force in his work as an A/L practitioner. This belief has also extended to work in related professional projects particularly in his subsequent writing achievements.

With his “ever-growing interest in the power of the mind”, Christian decided to study neuroscience gaining his Bachelor of Science Degree in Neurophysiology. In 1987 he started a doctorate in neurology and neurosurgery, but said “... I slowly realised that neuroscience was giving me few explanations and possibilities in the study of the human mind and potentials”. At this time he was doing research into memory and epilepsy, recording cellular neuronal activity in the brains of rats and humans. He explains further:

Deeply believing in reincarnation, it was clear to me that the memory could not reside in the brain, which is soon eaten by the worms. The brain is but a wonderful relay between an unknown dimension and the physical world. In March, 1990 I gathered all the data I had collected, wrote a Masters thesis and retired for several months in a monastery in the French Alps of Upper Provence. I then studied philosophy as well as all the great religions and few of their branches and sects. I wrote a book that expresses in the form of a novel, the thoughts of Pythagoras, Plato, Socrates, all the great religions, the philosophers of the 18th and 19th centuries and a few of the modern thinkers.

Following Christian’s earlier ‘mission statement’, he adds:

I believe that one of the biggest problems in our society is the general lack of responsibility toward society as a great family. Everyone is inclined to sacrifice the common wealth and ‘la cause commune’ for personal interest. But how can people be responsible for society and humanity as a great family if they never learned to be responsible for themselves?

This passion for encouraging responsibility for oneself soon led to the writing of a health guide book based on Gandhi’s life principles. The aim is to discourage people placing their own health care in the hands of a third party, eg doctors, therapists and so on. Christian’s hope is that “people might learn to develop their own unlimited potentials” which Christian feels is the key to their spiritual development. Christian sees his own personal/spiritual growth as being integral to his work in A/L which has expanded considerably since he first wrote this letter to Ms Schroeder in 1992. The work he does on/for himself appears to be completely integrated into his entire approach to his work with others. He has systematically tried out all of the A/L and “mind techniques” for his own academic learning and personal growth, and recorded the successful results. In turn he has applied these skills, personal experience, and more importantly the inner powers to help others realise their “unlimited potentials”. He shares some of the approaches he has taken for his own self change.
I realised, at least for myself, that one of the problems when one wants to change 
his/her behaviour in the path toward perfection - calmness, compassion, self-mastery, 
etc - is to remember our good resolutions when a critical situation happens. . . I realised 
that by learning a simple sentence, such as 'stay calm' in order to have it constantly in 
mind, helps staying calm in critical situations and consequently to develop the habit of 
calmness. So, I put onto cassette, on the four seconds pattern and with music, the Golden 
Verses of Pythagoras whom I hold in great veneration. This helped me a lot to behave 
according to Pythagoras' prescriptions . . . to awaken unconscious and non-humanly or 
non-spiritually appropriate behaviour [and to behave more spiritually].

Christian closed his letter to Schroeder by emphasising that, on reading 
Superlearning, he had not only improved his "straight learning", but "those 
techniques that I got from your book allowed me to do what I conceive as . . . great 
work on myself". He summarises these achievements:

It also helped me get a Masters in Neurology and Neurosurgery; a North American title 
in a Tae Kwon Do contest; to study philosophy and religion and to write a book on that; 
to have studied reincarnation and related therapy and to have a book in process on that 
topic; to have studied natural therapy and nutrition and to have almost written a book 
on that. I am now 27.

Since this time (May, 1992), Christian's mental discipline and practice continues "to 
fuel" his spiritual attitudes and experiences. He not only is a high academic 
achiever and a successful professional at the 'worldly' level but simultaneously is 
overly committed to both his own spiritual development as well as to 
contributing to society at large. His motivation and desire to 'humbly serve' society, 
along with his great capacity for constant efforts regarding his own personal 
change, I believe are spiritual powers in themselves. In particular, I see that 
Christian's extensive knowledge and belief in "unlimited human potential" has 
provided a strong, unwavering focus and direction for his overall life's work and 
purpose. This kind of belief is often very inspiring to others, particularly if it has 
been 'tried and tested' within the life of the educator or person of influence.

The above excerpts from Christians' letter to the authors of Superlearning more 
than adequately answered the most important questions I had asked in the 
questionnaire. However, in response to question number five regarding the most 
common problem people have in their approach and attitudes to their own 
learning, he answered this specifically in an accompanying letter to me. I had asked 
this question because I wanted to highlight the importance of attitude to learning 
and particularly to the effects they have on teachers. His response was that self-
confidence was:

. . . the main personal development element common to most learning situations. . . as I 
think that there is no other activity in the whole spectrum of human activity that is 
more gratifying than learning. I think that [successful] learning is the activity that 
brings the greatest feelings of accomplishment. . . On[from] the personal growth point 
of view. . . the best way to learn something and to reflect on something, is to teach it. To 
teach something requires to approach that thing from various points of view, for we 
have to think from the point of view of the learner, ie where he is, what is his 
background, what is his interest in that subject, what is his way of thinking etc and
this is a great gymnastic for abstract thinking. It forces one to get out of one’s egocentric conception, and as a subtle consequence this helps to develop tolerance and compassion, and it helps to expand consciousness. This is somewhat significant to me because in all my study, from elementary school to university, I used to teach my classmates and, although this was done spontaneously without any ‘spiritual aim’, I see now how this attitude positively contributed to my personal development.

Like Christian, I too experienced natural, intuitive tendencies to teach others from an early age, and also with no early conscious spiritual aim. My teaching, particularly of students from many different cultures and countries, has also greatly encouraged the capacity to think from a “different point of view”. However, this inquiring together to reveal our spiritually driven impulses to teach in the first place, I believe, has thrown more light on our selves as people as well as educators. It has encouraged us to develop spiritually with more conscious awareness of who and how we are and how we can influence others with insight and integrity.

Throughout this inquiry, I also realised that, in aiming to develop myself spiritually as part of a life-time process, I not only want to expand my consciousness and encourage others to do the same but I am concerned with the quality of this ‘expanded consciousness’. My aim is to ensure that it becomes ‘grounded’ and ‘real’ by the gradual transformation of our thinking, learning, teaching and being.

In responding to my question about how to promote the spiritual aspects of A/L, [or more accurately the spiritual aspects of ourselves], Christian in his next letter sent me details of an A/L teaching training program he designed. In sharing the principles upon which this program was based, he states the following as the first:

The most efficient way to promote/teach something is, as said Plato, to behave in front of people according to the principles we want to teach. The best way is to show how accelerated learning helped us in our personal growth. . . Actually, whenever I do accelerated learning I tell people how it helped me in my personal growth.

Once again in this inquiry, the concept of leading by example has emerged. Christian is particularly concerned with personally trying out and being convinced of the effectiveness and worth of specific techniques before he promotes and uses them with others. In terms of personal integrity, he goes on to acknowledge the possibility of ‘fear’ or inhibitions that can be part of being a model’ but emphasises the need to “behave accordingly” regardless. In similar ways, Eric Jensen, in discussing congruency as a “critical connection between our own development and the techniques we use, described it as a curse as well as a blessing.

For Christian, Mahatma Gandhi has obviously had a huge impression upon his life, and I realise how strongly his sense of responsibility in being an example guides him. He has undoubtedly settled for no less than an extraordinary spiritual
teacher as his mostly influential example. With his knowledge and faith in the unlimited potential of humans, Christian has no doubt that he has the capabilities to do whatever he sets his mind to do. This belief in turn lays the foundation for believing in others and then being able to facilitate their learning and personal growth accordingly. I believe that the power of beliefs is one of the most essential factors that an A/L educator must not only understand, but also makes one's own in order to effectively carry out his or her facilitation. In any case a strong belief in one's own potential goes a long way to dealing with our own personal, spiritual potential as educators and is a fundamental step toward our own integrity.

One of Christian's main goals in using A/L in schools, is "to give the kids a sense of fraternity and responsibility toward society". It is clear that his mission to contribute toward creating a better world involves the conscious as well as the unconscious passing on of many of his own deeply held values. He is unwavering in his view that people need to learn to take responsibility for themselves and indeed the world. From an ethical viewpoint, I believe that the regular and honest articulation of our own values are extremely important. This is particularly so in the field of A/L which has great potential power to deeply influence the lives of people in long-term ways.

The other relevant principles upon which Christian's program for teachers is based are encapsulated in these quotes.

... As said the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, 'How do you want me to teach to that child if he does not like me'. A profound discussion with the teachers will be initiated in order to integrate that reality. We are mentally and emotionally 'closed' to someone we dislike. That is simple psychology.

There is the knowledge, there is the know-how, there is the knowledge of the self and there is the sense of unity within the human family. ... The program is designed to develop other than the first aspects. ... the importance is not to get knowledge but to learn to become responsible, to know ourselves in the process of learning and on every level of our personality, to learn how to use creatively and efficiently the knowledge we have, and to become conscious of our place in the world not as a Canadian or as an Australian but as a human.

Here Christian is identifying specifically the emphasis that teachers should place on developing their own selves way beyond even knowledge or the subject matter involved. In this way, the principles on which his program is based are like those of Lozanov's development of the teacher’s personality and highlights my own interest and concern regarding teacher training programs. To the above, Christian adds all the technical aspects of accelerated learning to the program, like relaxation, mindmapping and writes that:

Actually, the emphasis is not on the techniques and the knowledge, but on the teacher-student relationship and of the human growth of the kids. The rest just follows, of that I am convinced.
Christian is a person who is undoubtedly deeply committed to serving society in many different capacities and roles. Within a very short time, he has become an influential educator who has had a widespread positive influence on students, teachers and also leaders in the medical profession using A/L techniques. His passions and interests have taken him onto the fringe of politics where he is involved in promoting non-violent action with influential leaders in the community.

Christian’s most recent numerous and energetic pursuits based on his background in neuroscience, A/L and his spiritual studies include the following: a series of regular radio programs in Canada and the United States, guest lecturing on achieving optimum health and learning, publishing several books on accelerated learning techniques, a book on health based on Gandhi’s vision of health and writing regular articles for journals. His most recent involvement is with a privately funded project that goes straight into the deepest interest he has had since his childhood; “scientific research to understand the spiritual dimension of human beings”. Christian is leading (or is part of) a team of scientists whose goal is to study the impact on healing the body through the power of forgiveness.

Christian has also chosen to work with an international commercial company which is committed to on-going humanitarian projects around the world. He believes that whilst it is important to be introspective, reflective and to regularly engage in individual spiritual pursuits, it is also crucial to link and team with people and organisations who have similar values and visions. In this way individual energies and resources can be pooled, thereby increasing their potential for serving society and contributing to a more aware, harmonious and effective world.

“Holding a Paradox” John Wade

Canberra, Australia, 1992 -1994

Until people get inner wisdom they are externally referenced

This statement by John indicates the basic premise from which he operates as a long time ‘Master’ teacher and acknowledged pioneer of accelerated learning in Australia. John believes that A/L teachers need to have insight into their own character if they are to help others. In October, 1992 he elaborates on the above quote in an in-depth interview, excerpts of which are reproduced after the following introduction and responses to the questionnaire.

Inquiring with John on the topic of this research has been on-going since we first met in 1989. It was immediately clear that we held very similar attitudes around the role of the A/L practitioner, both emphasising the facilitation of process rather than the teaching of content. As TESOL teachers we both had a strong common starting point, agreeing that our teaching to students from all over the world had prepared us well for the holistic and creative aspects of accelerated learning. John
had in fact been an ‘early starter’ using A/L in Australia, and is generally acknowledged as one of the pioneers in this country. His book “Superstudy - A New Age Study Guide” (1990) has been a big seller in Australia and is complemented by his practical workshops based on the book’s approaches. His natural, relaxed and deeply genuine approach to A/L immediately endeared me to him both as a friend as well as a trusted colleague.

John’s “formal” involvement with this inquiry began in July, 1992 with the questionnaire from which his written answers have been reproduced as follows, including the capitalisation for emphasis.

Q1) What is/has been the personal driving force behind your work in the field of integrated accelerated learning?

John: The driving force comes from a need to release a ‘mental pressure’ or build-up of ideas and concepts that I develop or acquire. These come to me out of the blue in creative moments. Or they are built on ideas I glean from other people (or their writings) who haven’t seen how much more a particular idea can be utilised. A frustration results in being unable to enlighten sufficient people about these ideas in the normal course of events (particularly those in educational institutions), so I have chosen the media of articles, books, workshops to propagate them. I feel this has been particularly successful and take credit for having played a foundation role in the development of A/L around Australia.

John’s deep creative impulse is quite different to the “driving force” of other participants, who have highlighted the more emotional aspects of our impulses.

Q2) What kind of connection do you make between the techniques and skills of accelerated learning and your own personal/spiritual growth?

John: By continually developing new methods and teaching them, I am reinforcing them for myself. Inheriting a family history of severe depression, my life is a continual struggle to stay balanced. It is easy for me to empathise with the worst and blackest feelings anyone has to face. By giving others hope, I give it to myself. By showing others I have already done the miraculous and I can do it again, I remind and reassure myself that it is so. A/L is all about this faith that when we have sufficient knowledge we need not be stuck in a resourceless state, - we have the choice to move on and maybe even move higher.

This conclusion of having choice of ways in which we can be, think and learn, is based on similar sentiments expressed in much the same way by Eva. Like her, John sees this choice for us A/L teachers, as being of crucial importance, firstly for the self and in turn for showing others how to access it within themselves.

Q3) Do you apply some of these techniques/skills to further your own personal growth? If so, how?
John: I apply to myself ALL the A/L skills I teach to others. I could not ask others to 'buy' a set of concepts that I have not successfully used myself. I regularly use EVERYTHING [his emphasis] in 'Superstudy', for example: I use 'mind-calming' daily, as soon as I get home after work. Under more extreme stress I also use it at lunch time and sometimes even mid morning. I use my exercises and kinesiology almost every day (with classes on weekdays and on 'superstudy jogs' at weekends) I use mind-mapping for creative planning and writing. I plan my activities daily, weekly, monthly, annually and generally up to seven years ahead. And so on.

As have all the participants strongly expressed in one way or another, John also feels this value of congruency or teaching by example is virtually a prerequisite for being a teacher of accelerated learning.

Q4) What do you see as the most significant elements of personal development within accelerative learning?

John: The most important concept is the learners becoming aware of the totality of CHOICE and RESPONSIBILITY [his emphasis] they have over their environments and their futures. Whether we decide to stay safe and secure in our little niche, or search for the golden chalice, happiness lies in us having learnt enough to know that we have made the choice to do it this particular way.

Like Christian here, John strongly emphasises that a sense of responsibility along with choice is crucial for all learners in which 'us'[educators] are clearly included.

Q5) What problems are common to most people/students in their approach and attitudes to their own learning?

John: For most students poor self-image is the problem. The pass or fail system of education fills them with anxiety and labels most of them stupid. They are not shown how to use methods of learning which might be more suitable for their own neural make-up - if they don't learn well through the methods used in the classroom they believe they are stupid. The solution is giving them alternative learning methods that they can use themselves and an incentive to utilise them by recognising their ability and achievements in any area.

John's answer here of 'poor self-image' is the same in effect as Christian's description of lack of self-confidence. These conclusions are a key reminder that we A/L practitioners in particular must continually maintain a strong and positive sense of self. In this way our own feelings about ourselves, as well as our expectations and hopes for others and are constantly impinging on our professional practices.

Q6) What personal characteristics do you see as common to successful learning among people?
John: Open minded and willing to do things a new way. Able to envisage something they would like to achieve. Ability to manage stress levels and time in order to achieve it. Knowing why they are doing each task they do.

Q7) How do you see the relationship between the personal development of the practitioner and his/her effectiveness in the group situation or classroom?

John: The prevailing belief is that content is all that matters in the classroom. If that were so people could learn all they need from books, cassettes and computers. The value of the classroom is that students learn more from the attitude of the teacher than the mere content of the work they cover during the lessons. It is axiomatic that the more enlightened and aware the teacher is, the more effective will the teaching be. The teacher who is able to get inside the head of each student and anticipate any learning problems is able to teach far more effectively than someone who just sees the job as dictating information to a mass of faces.

John relates this idea of ‘getting inside the head’ of our learner, sometimes referred to as ‘teaching from the inside out’, to that of being “internally referenced”, a concept on which John elaborates during the next interview.

Q8) How do you think aspects of personal development in accelerated learning (both for practitioners and learners) can be encouraged and promoted?

John: As far as possible I am a model of what I teach - alone at home or working or playing with others. Informal and formal modelling for others is the surest way I have been able to effect change. It is not an overt process - most of the people in whom I have affected change have no idea that I have done it deliberately. (Few people in TAFE, for example, who have changed their ways of thinking and teaching to a greater or smaller degree could recall how different they were before our lives intersected). A/L concepts that I initiated many years ago now come back to me from widespread sources by people talking to me or writing ‘their’ ideas in books and articles. For example Richard Bandler, Eric Jensen, Sandy McGregor, Michael Grinder all use some ideas I originated and discussed with them. Though not overt, this method of ‘prompting from the wings of the A/L theatre’ or ‘leading from the shadows’ allows others to get the ego stroking they need in order for them to grow into the A/L paradigm and proselytise its benefits in their own ways. This is the most effective method for me.

A widely held opinion of John’s character in relation to his A/L teaching is that he is ‘amazing’ as a teacher in terms of the results he achieves, but is also extremely “authentic and humble”. I believe part of the reason for this is his very preparedness to let go of much of the need for public acclaim and the ‘ego stroking’ to which he refers. Because of this ability, the subtle modelling that he talks about becomes a powerful means for facilitating learning and possibly even real transformation of the learner. It also make a wonderfully refreshing contrast to the not infrequent ‘ego-hungry’ practitioners who, whilst seemingly effective at one
level, makes one question how meaningful and lasting these effects are. No doubt that would be another story!

I was keen to talk to John at length as a follow on from his written responses to the questionnaire. At the end of this same year, 1992 we spent some valuable time together.

_Dawn_: What makes the difference between your approach and other A/L teaching approaches?

_John_: Unless the teacher owns and practises it themselves they're just practising.

_Dawn_: What do you mean?

_John_: They're not living it...I believe I'm integrating and I use my intuition a lot in my teaching.

John and I regularly discuss how our prevailing tendencies are toward intuitive teaching which we both see as being very natural and organic. With the added knowledge of A/L techniques as well as having done some personal development work on ourselves this 'forgotten intelligence' intuition can be used to great effect. It is I believe a necessary ability when connecting with the earlier mentioned 'flow state' and experiencing the 'pedagogic moment' that Ben talked about. I wanted to know how John connected with his intuition, and how he thought during this time.

I go into theta, not alpha (basic relaxation state used in A/L). I've been having a 'theta stop' daily for the past five years and on and off since 1970.

Since this period John now makes these relaxation "stops", (as measured by the brain waves), much more frequently, at least two or three times a day. In this way he is very rigorous about "living" the A/L techniques he promotes, and has developed the ability to regularly attain the theta state of deep relaxation. I also wanted to know what significant influences regarding relaxation and meditation he had had prior to embarking on the A/L journey. This first contact was through Ainslie Meares, and his book called 'The Way Up' followed by Transcendental Meditation (TM). As a result of his regular practices, John improved his concentration so much he "gained two hours each day" in terms of time. Although he experienced immediate practical benefits he soon found TM a bit too 'cultish'.

In 1974 he became involved in and learned a great deal from 'encounter group' techniques and altogether experienced about 1000 hours of participation, adding later:

... although groups of this kind are often used for therapy, they are also a means for rapid spiritual/personality development for those brave enough to venture into the 'marathon' format.
It was on one of these occasions that he had his first spiritual experience which on questioning, likened it to “the self being dissolved into a group”. He relates this spiritual experience which was undoubtedly a major event in his life. It appears to have had a lasting impact which has also been reflected in the way he teaches:

I felt I was part of everyone else, almost physical - very strong on life energy . . . Now I feel I am an individual as well as part of the whole because everything is interconnected - there is one energy spirit underlying the law of the universe, of life.

When I asked John how this affected him, he replied, “I understood it”. John’s understanding and experience of this concept of interconnectedness where his consciousness expanded and he became aware that “I was more than an individual inside some skin”, eventually became a real tool in his teaching. He adds: “I now use huge amounts of interconnectedness in the classroom”. The meaning of spirituality for him is based on this experience. In the classroom he uses the group energies a lot because “these are more powerful than the teacher/student energies”. He emphasises that everything we deal with comes from within and that a big problem with teaching today, even in A/L is “a lack of inner wisdom about the self”.

From the basis of these earlier experiences and thinking John first embraced accelerated learning in the early eighties. In contrast to Christian’s experience, in his initial introduction to A/L, John found that many of the very precise techniques of Lozanov’s method, as described in “Superlearning” did not work for him in the classroom. He simply was not getting the results he expected and his students did not respond as he had hoped. He initially thought that he must have been doing something wrong and started to feel inadequate.

Eventually he realised that it had to do with quite different factors. These included the cultural differences between Bulgaria and Australia and the emphasis still on a content rather than a process based approach. He felt that the most important aspect missing in traditional suggestopedic approaches were those aspects which would help learners know why and how they are doing something in the process of learning. Since this period, knowledge of the brain, aspects of NLP and other similar technologies have now been incorporated into many A/L programs which emphasise the ‘learning how to learn’ notion.

John’s special learner-based approach in the classroom, particularly since 1989 and his ‘second wave’ of A/L, is the use of ‘ Generative Teaching’. This stemmed from his classroom approach over a period of many years and was often referred to as ‘student generated learning’. This was much the same as the one I was using naturally as the most interesting and effective techniques for getting non native English speakers to speak the language. However, I had never labelled my technique, nor had I written a book on it for language learners, as John has done in his second book, “Teaching Without Textbooks” (1992). This approach is such a
contrast to even most other A/L teaching in as much as the entire content is ‘drawn forth’ from the students.

John goes on to express his disdain of teachers who still teach a content-based course rather than a learner based one. He calls this the “academic illusion” of feeling safe and secure in teaching content which ends up being at the expense of allowing learners to learn about themselves. John elaborates in more detail about his approach to Generative Teaching which involves eliciting all the content from the students and bringing “the unconscious to conscious”.

All I’m doing is raising awareness of what they already know... Once students have perceived these things they can bring them into consciousness and use them more appropriately whenever they choose... the teacher has to be aware of all that to direct the students to it... We need to be aware of the meta level in order to make others aware. It’s something like through a ‘freeze frame’ where things naturally happen.

John now elaborates on my first quoted statement in relation to the “internal referencing” that teachers need for real learning to happen.

Once they have done some personal development of themselves, solved some inner conflicts - they become internally referenced and you know what works and what doesn’t.

Dawn: At what point did you know you were internally referenced?

John: Once I got over being ridiculed for what I was doing and I started to get some products that people sat back and started taking notice of. People could always tell which students had been through my courses. They were highly motivated, high achievers and aggressive learners and other things that set them apart from other students. Even then it was at least two or three years before teachers would acknowledge that what I was doing was not ‘crackpot’ and that I gained some respect - that was in the mid eighties.

Here John refers on several occasions to a still prevalent attitude of great scepticism and disdain of anything different amongst educators today. The difference is that in the early days, he was virtually alone with only a small handful of people within Australia who were prepared to attempt this new approach to teaching. He explained how he needed to learn to trust his own judgement, despite what the experts said. He began developing his own practical and appropriate method, drawing not only from Suggestopedia but also from NLP, psychotherapy and the neurosciences, as is generally occurring today in the field. He describes this period of great personal growth for him.

Dawn: How do you think they [A/L practitioners] can accelerate their own personal development?

John: I think one of the best ways of doing it is with affirmations and being able to hold a paradox.
Dawn: What do you mean by that?

John: Well, for example a paradox could be something like ‘I’m a crackpot teacher and my results aren’t working I can hold that belief, because that’s true and at the same time it’s also true that (I’m going back to the early eighties now) I’m an excellent teacher who’s produced some fantastic results and those two don’t negate each other - they’re both valid they’re both OK and once I could hold the paradox it allowed me then to accept all the affirmations I was making, to counteract the negativity that was around me.

In February 1993, the year following the previous responses, John was a guest and part of a group of educators who attended an international dialogue and retreat at the BK Spiritual University in Mt Abu, India. This visit proved to be quite significant for John in terms of his own personal development - afterwards he claimed to have access to lots of positive energy for quite some time. Soon after our return, I wanted to check with him to see if any of his perspectives on his own spiritual development had changed, or his attitudes and approaches to his current teaching practises.

The following dialogue is taken from the last formal interview that we held on this topic. The informal inquiring will, I am certain, continue indefinitely.

John: I don’t know whether I’m doing anything technically differently. But I know now that every time something comes up in the classroom where I can draw out on a spiritual point such as re-inforcing what a person really believes -and drawing them a little bit further along the line toward advancing that belief in some way then I do that with much more awareness.

Dawn: So you’re more conscious about making conscious the spiritual elements?

John: Yeah, I’m more conscious of . . . it’s really hard to explain . . . I’m much more aware of the spirituality and the values of the students involved and how I can reflect their values to them so that they can see that they have got a lot more power than they thought they had - a lot more spirituality basically . . . Values, ethics morality, inner knowing . . . and it unfolds itself more and more each week. If something’s happening in the classroom I ‘snap-freeze’ them and say ‘stop, what’s happening?’ - and because my acuity in seeing this has improved then we can get a lot more mileage out of it so that’s happening a lot more frequently now.

I ask John if he records the kinds of questions that happen during this time when he ‘snap freezes’ his students.

It’s almost impossible for me to analyse just what I’m doing at the time because it just happens and I don’t know why and I don’t know what’s going to happen in the next instant. I just seem to know the right thing to do . . . it’s ‘channelling’ basically and it’s a big challenge to recall just what’s happening . . . It’s enormous growth.

John expressed his excitement about “the multi channelled observing” that his students had learned to do through some of these powerful awareness-raising techniques. We also discussed the elusive nature of this approach which we had both frequently experienced. We agreed that there is a difficulty in being able to
identify, analyse and articulate exactly what happens at times in the classroom. This is partly because of the usual spontaneity and rapidity of events as they occur and the difficulty in pinning them down to something that can be reproduced. Nevertheless we both agree that these moments do bring enormous growth for both students and teachers.

We began to discuss the challenge of training educators to approach their A/L teaching in the ways in which we had identified.

John: The challenge with training teachers is that you can teach them the [A/L] techniques and they’ll apply them but they don’t always get the same integrated result.

John then related how a student teacher came to his class and after just one day she suddenly realised how all the different subjects she’d been studying like phonology, reading and writing and so on were actually all aspects of the same thing. She had been seeing them all as totally different subjects, but finally could see how totally integrated everything was, commenting that “they don’t teach you those things at college”. John said “this is the difference between teaching content and teaching people”. I realised then that, all of John’s responses to my questions had emphasised the integrated nature of accelerated learning that I have been consciously aiming for in my own practices as well as aiming to highlight throughout the whole thesis.

At the end of my first in-depth interview with him, John felt moved to give me some feedback on the inquiry process for him:

I’ve been observing the process while we’ve been talking and you have remained non-judgemental and therefore completely open which helps me to express myself. It has helped further by your having the ability to take verbatim notes and to clarify my responses for approval and/or adjustment and as well as that to direct comments subtly into the area of your research. . . The process has been useful for me because I’ve never done this thing before. It’s revealing for me, particularly why I’m in the classroom. I’ve never pinned that down, analysed that and why I get the buzz - empowering others to develop their potential - fascinating.

I appreciated John’s feedback and felt reassured that my inquiry was mutually beneficial and still ‘valid’. Our in-depth discussions also demonstrated the elusiveness of different aspects of this integrated approach to accelerated learning. I believe that this inquiry is illustrating how very dependent the educator’s state of awareness is upon A/L and similar teaching methodologies. Not only is the task of analysing and articulating these states of awareness a difficult one, but finding ways to pass them on to others is even more of a challenge.

Fortunately I am observing and experiencing that the roots of A/L and experiential circles in Australia are travelling deeper and further. This could very well be a consequence of both a direct and indirect result of much of this inquiry and the establishment of the Spirit of Learning Forum. SOL is continuing to stimulate and
nourish many educator's awareness as well as prompting the need for regular and
deeploration of our own inner states and subtle spiritual powers. Already there
is more general emphasis on values based accelerated learning, as well as on the
more personally transformative aspects of A/L, which in turn inevitably highlight
the personal/spiritual development aspects of the practitioner.

John's contributions have raised again the need for developing the quality of
'response-ability' as an educator. It appears that the deeper one explores this
concept, the more subtle and exciting are the intricacies and implications around it.
I believe that by empowering the self, that is by enriching the inner self, one can
respond to others in a natural, easy and effective way. Other recurring and
commonly shared beliefs and experiences that John has raised include the gift of
insight, that is of 'getting inside the head' of students. This requires an ability to
empathise with possible inhibitions well as understanding the human psyche and
believing in 'unlimited' potential learning capacities.

In this way, students feel supported and encouraged and connected with
themselves, their learning as well as others. John also strongly raised this notion of
'interconnectedness' which has become an important overall theme for my whole
inquiry. He has also raised again the need for educators to personally experience
and then imbibe certain qualities in order to impact upon others in our teaching
and facilitating.

Continuing Growth: Spirit of Learning Forum (SOL)

We are also part in our psyche of an incredible complex of universal stories and patterns. Our psyche opens
up to a much larger story. . .

Jean Houston

During the one-to one interactions, the natural tendency was to relate one’s 'raison
d'etre' behind the kind of educating we do. This was particularly evident when
participants were given the on-going opportunity to do so, as in the case of John,
Christian, Eva and Ben. This apparent common need' to tell our life stories, whilst
exploring our own spiritual growth, has been at the root of our initiative for the
forum. The establishment of the Spirit of Learning forum (SOL) has helped to
satisfy my original desire to explore some aspects of these stories within a group
situation. It also provides a sense of continuation of the process.

The nature of SOL forum events and the original overall objective have
previously been described in Chapter 4. The title description on earlier advertising
material included 'Exploring the Link between Learning and Spirituality'. Since
September 1995, the core group decided that the term 'spirituality' was sometimes
confusing and even controversial to many people. After long discussions, we
agreed to re-word our flyers which now read as follows: "The Spirit of Learning: To
Confirm the Integration of Mind, Body and Spirit in all Learning and Teaching".
We believe this statement naturally implies our acknowledgment and desire to honour the spiritual aspects (however this might be interpreted) of ourselves.

During our forums, a rich variety of environments are provided where participants are encouraged to explore and experience essential spiritual aspects of themselves. These explorations may occur through the sharing of relevant experiences relating to learning, teaching and spiritual development. They may also occur through the participation in or facilitation of experiential and creative activities which integrate mind, body and spirit in the processes and activities we use.

At the present time of writing, Spirit of Learning publications convey the following Purpose and Vision statements:

*Our Purpose* . . . is to Experience the link between Learning and the Expression of Human Spirit.

*The Vision:* A world where education recognises the inherent potential in everyone whilst embracing the interconnectedness of all life, creating a world of Compassion, Joy and Unconditional Acceptance.

In order to come to a consensus and a sense of comfort with our purpose and vision statements, we regularly spend considerable time and energy exploring our common basic assumptions and aspirations. Since the nature of inquiring together is deeply personal and often sensitive and challenging, the core group have realised our strong commitment to regularly ‘checking in’ with each other regarding our values and assumptions. This sometimes leads to change of different kinds, such as those made to the language used in our sub-title. These changes may sometimes appear small and subtle, but they reflect some of the subtle shifting and evolving in which we are all engaged.

We constantly attempt to respect and honour each person’s contribution and individuality without anyone regularly assuming control of the whole group. Each person has the opportunity and is given the encouragement to lead or guide whenever they feel the inclination. I believe that our common values along with the processes of working together with honesty and collaboration, lay the basis for the Spirit of Learning forum and make a unique safe ‘haven’ for all those who participate.

*Responses from SOL Participants*

Following some early one-day events during 1993, participants were encouraged to contribute their responses. Many of the following comments echo smaller themes which have continued to emerge within the forum and throughout the whole inquiry:
the honouring of each individual..., conscious awareness of what we do..., the facilitation of 'being'..., the ideal role of a teacher for the future..., psychological nurturing and sustaining..., exploring different styles of facilitating..., learning through non-verbal communication such as music, movement and dance..., use of creativity and imagination..., sense of expansion and openness..., sense of oneness amongst diversity...

Following the first SOL 'Global Forum' held in May, 1993, I felt a strong need to reflect deeply on my experiences and assumed that many others also might. To offer the opportunity to share some of their reflections and as feedback for our future activities, I sent a letter and questionnaire I designed for this purpose, to 30 participants of the two day event. I received back 18 written responses and several others in a verbal form.

The first question asked participants to contribute some words or brief phrases that could express the quality or spirit they experienced at the forum. The following represents a sample of these contributions:

It was a validation of what I have been doing [this was repeated in four cases]
I reduced my feelings of isolation which I have experienced over years of doing this 'stuff' on own [also repeated on three occasions]
Making connections [repeated several times]
The spiritual network is potent
Spiritual awareness produced a light positive atmosphere of goodwill
I had some insights and realisations about myself
I felt a sense of communion, of belonging. [repeated many times]
I now feel I don't have to oppose the unexplainable/intangible/spiritual any longer.
I also had an amazing experience of my hidden potential.
Conspiracy of change agents
It was the non-verbal elements that had the most powerful effect
A breaking of the isolation.
My need to accept [the spiritual] is a sigh of relief
Feeling the power of my own journey
These are the times, and we are the people

These comments can be grouped into themes of valuing of community and belonging, spiritual awareness and knowing and a sense of acceptance and inner power.
The second question asked for some practical techniques or new approaches that people might have taken back into their professional life as a result of new learnings or insights. The responses included many of the techniques that are used in accelerative learning. Some expressed the need to ‘trust the process’ in their role as educators, others expressed new found confidence to speak out more personally within a group. Developing and maintaining a positive self-image was also seen as an important attitude in both learning and teaching.

The following are some direct phrases contributed:

Creative meditation... visualisation... role-play... small group games... relaxation techniques and whole brain physical exercises... acceptance of the spirit within... sharing of personal experiences all increase spiritual awareness - will apply in my work.

Once again the values of awareness and acceptance, promoted through a range of various techniques, have emerged.

Question three asked “what kind of connection do you make between the personal experiences you had and your professional application?”

Many participants indicated that these are completely intertwined. Other responses were as follows:

- Profound responsibility we have as global educators
- My whole aim is for personal and professional congruency
- Reminder that we teach human (spiritual) beings not just a subject
- Became more aware of the futility of current educational approaches
- I see the need to develop spirituality in all the work I do. The struggle is in trying to incorporate ‘spirit’ into a conservative university structure
- Total connection. You must ‘walk the talk’
- Need to consider states of awareness of others
- Now is the time to express ‘personal knowing’ in my professional work
- Developing the ability to nurture each student in a spiritual way as well as an academic way
- Feeling less ‘schizophrenic’ - more confident of bridging the gap
- Better understanding of the spiritual will be (I hope) reflected in my personal practice
- Strong sense of aliveness and energy to take into the classroom
In general, SOL participants, including myself have often found it difficult to express in words the real flavour and ‘spirit’ of our experiences. However, from the beginning, I became aware of two major qualities that soon emerged and that have been highlighted throughout various SOL events since. These are spontaneity and flexibility which appear to be directly related to opportunities for spiritual and creative expression. I see a strong link between opportunity for self-expression, creativity, spirituality and (life-long) learning. Throughout the course of the programs, participants have demonstrated the desire for and a positive response to these qualities of spontaneity and flexibility.

Further SOL activities have highlighted the experiences of feeling more aware of the spiritual, feeling validated as individuals and very connected with others and the environment. In turn this seems to have led to increased confidence, a sense of responsibility and inspiration to acknowledge spiritual elements in their work. These responses parallel my experiences of exploring on a one-to one basis. They have demonstrated the value in sharing personal development issues with others, as a means for stimulating spiritual growth.

The activities within the forum also provide a lot of opportunity for silent meditation, reflection and the sharing with others in a range of ways, other than the usual verbal linguistic domain. Many SOL participants have expressed their appreciation for and love of circle or ‘sacred dancing’ which is regularly used as a bonding or closing activity. Participants’ responses also confirm the value of much of the research that has been done with multiple intelligences and the research behind accelerative learning. Those aspects which place high importance on the non-verbal forms of learning and communication also help promote ‘spirit’ in the learning/teaching process. The major themes that have emerged throughout my inquiry; awareness, potential, integration and interconnectedness are commonly experienced, valued and/or valued in different ways by participants within the SOL forum group.

**Linking Spirit of Learning with Social Ecology**

Because I felt my experience after the first event to be quite profound, I took the opportunity to do some post event reflection with one other participant and friend who is a ‘holistic’ facilitator. Mike is also engaged in research in social ecology and we found ourselves discussing the relevance of our experiences at the first forum in philosophical terms within the context of the social ecological environment as well as the world at large.

*Mike:* It occurred to me that what happened at SOL, is ‘social ecology’. Social ecology is a complex process that happens when the spiritual is involved in social activities. I believe that you’re not a social ecologist unless you have defined and described it for yourself. The notion or concept of social ecology becomes important only when you are conscious of it.
Dawn: It seems to me that this making conscious by reflecting and debriefing is important in proportion to the dimension, power or depth of the experience. In turn this process increases one’s clarity and understanding of why we do what we do and that is very much what social ecology is.

As we talked, we both agreed on the deep value of reflection as an important step in our own learning, particularly about ourselves. At this point I asked the question of “why do we (people in general) avoid real reflection or the making the unconscious conscious, also the non-verbal, verbal and articulating feelings and so on?”

Mike: Because of effort and fear of the sub-conscious, because it is a safe storage place for potential pain and discomfort. Making things conscious requires changing because it stands in front of us. Change is a ‘pain in the neck’. This fear of change is a driving principle because of an inherent desire for stability and so we create crutches like the illusion that we have stability, but if we do have it, it is only ever temporary. Change is only useful as a dichotomy to stability knowing these two things are on the periphery of the spiritual centre. Stability is externalised because we have lost our inner stability - spiritual centre - therefore stability becomes an illusionary concept. It’s external and as such is attributed with all those constructs of the mind we fear or desire, eg. we fear change if we desire stability, we despise stability if we desire change.

We agreed that the question of stability and change was a useless debate but the key to personal growth was to continue exploring and expressing the experience of what Mike called ‘the periphery’ or ‘playground’, which is outside the spiritual centre. He continues:

This process enhances our conscious understanding of what we do and why we do it and can often lead us to turning inward toward our centre. This in turn leads to the integration of our total experience, that is the holistic and spiritual, the external and the internal. These experiences usually transcend the linguistic domain but give us a taste of this spiritual centre, our heart and our essence.

Mike believes that social ecology requires describing the experience of the periphery and this is a benefit as a process to understand our spiritual essence. This means he believes that we become more and more attracted toward it like a magnet. We have an experience, we understand it and then we know (from within), and in turn we desire to know more. If this notion of the magnetism of self inquiry is true, then the SOL forum can offer an unique opportunity for people to accelerate some of their personal growth whilst tasting a sense of their spiritual essence along the way.

If SOL forums also emphasise the same kind of rigorous reflection, demanded by the social ecological context, the process is one of bringing about an integrated social consciousness. Mike concludes:

The effect of enhanced social consciousness is greater connectedness with other environments/contexts. Consciousness is the amalgam that integrates different environments and forces.
I found this conversation useful as a means to understand how and why our first Spirit of Learning forum had such a powerful effect on many educators and facilitators of learning. The natural and spontaneous reflection and debriefing we had engaged in, also provided the opportunity to set the forum within a broader context for us both, that of social ecology as well as within the wider world. Eventually I came back to a driving question for me: *When we see the patterns of our lives (through detaching and exploring) what do we do about it, and how are we to deal with our (new) insights?*

Throughout the branches of my tree of learning, it is clear that there have often been many commonly shared experiences and insights with others. However, it was also becoming clear that the way in which we respond to these inner discoveries is as variable as there are individuals. Although I could see great significance in our inquiring together, the complexities of human beings was becoming more and more highlighted. I wondered if I would ever find any real conclusions, other than we need to become *more conscious* and *reflective* about engaging in the process of spiritual development, as individuals as well as with each other.

**Summary Reflections on Responses from Others**

Exploring the topic of personal/spiritual development with others has proved to be of great benefit to each one of us in different ways. My inquiring has involved encouraging them to ask provocative and challenging questions of themselves, just as I feel I have been and am continuing to do of myself. I have felt the need to take care to give respect and provide opportunities for participants to uncover hidden or different parts of themselves. We have not only learned more about ourselves in a deeper sense through our ‘inter-beings’, but can also trigger ideas and inspire each other to achieve ‘greater’ or more significant things.

In summary, I found that all individual participants involved in this inquiry are *very different from each other*, in the way they engage in their own personal development. However, perhaps not so surprisingly, they all demonstrate some *similar patterns* and reach some *similar conclusions* about their spiritual growth in relation to their roles as A/L practitioners. In general I found that *conscious awareness of our own states* whilst educating became a common thread linking all of our individual approaches. One of the perceived patterns relating to awareness is that of a ‘shift’ having occurred for many of us. This shift has in turn, often led to a new awareness and a fresh, creative approach to teaching and learning in general.

The acknowledgment and facilitation of ‘optimum states’ is not only a basis for effective accelerated learning but has been shown to be a powerful consideration for our own inner learning. *On-going reflection* and awareness of our own consciousness, particularly regards to, and whilst teaching, has become a great tool

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for facilitating others' personal development as well as our own. Attention and focus on state, energy and the more subtle aspects of teaching and learning frequently brings about a harmonious sense of flow within both the self and during the learning process.

As a result of her working with energy states, Eva feels she is able to empathise and respond to others 'accurately'. The "choiceless awareness" and "pedagogic moment" described by Ben also refer to a combination of awareness and intuition that enables him to respond spontaneously to the energy of his class. Christian found from an early age that by the actual teaching of something to others, one's awareness is raised about the self as a human being. The emphasis for him when educating others is about expanding consciousness in general. He is particularly concerned in promoting a sense of responsibility for 'a common global cause'. John describes his method of raising awareness in learners by 'drawing forth' their inner wisdom, providing choice and encouraging responsibility for their own learning progress. His own personal experiences with awareness-raising activities, coupled with an extensive knowledge of human psychology have provided the intuitive awareness and power to respond to the energy of a group in ways he describes almost like 'channelling'.

All four participants strongly link 'awareness' with both personal growth as well as with the ability to enhance and 'accelerate' learning for others. Closely linked to the theme of awareness is that of 'human potential', which provides the 'fuel' for our self-awareness in terms of knowledge, research findings and self confidence about our innate capacities. This new knowledge, along with our own self-discoveries and personal experiences have, in the case of all participants, led to a commitment in facilitating others through learning processes which maximise their whole potential.

In all cases a knowledge and belief in expanded human potential has been fundamental for each participants' own personal growth as well as for their work in A/L. This belief provides an inner power from which to operate in this often challenging and 'threatening' field of learning. In John's case there is an unwavering faith in his students' potential. He has a natural ability for transferring this belief to others through his generative teaching methods. Christian's scientific knowledge of and fascination with brain capacities has provided a strong platform firstly for the increasing confidence in himself and his abilities, and then for his work with others.

Eva's discovery of alternative ways of learning and the power and choice which knowledge of human potential provides, was not only a great tool for her work as both an educator and healer, but also a lifeline of sorts for her own personal spiritual growth. Ben's personal and professional 'turning point' led him to reconnecting with his natural creative abilities and in turn his spiritual self. In this way it provided a basis for understanding human potential more fully. This
increased self-awareness and knowledge, along with his hospital experience helped lead him to seeing his own talent and potential for teaching others. The section on ‘Potential’ in the last chapter will include a discussion of how this belief in and understanding of expanded human potential for ourselves is crucial as well as for those people we teach.

Each individual participant, when dealing with their own personal growth, strongly expressed the importance of the concept of *congruency or integration* in one form or another. Essential for each one is a need to align and match the inner self with the outer educating role and each one has experienced and described this drive in various ways. My personal search for integration, particularly of the personal, spiritual and professional aspects of my life has already been explored and shown to be the impetus for the whole inquiry. Certainly this major theme is fundamental to the philosophy behind the SOL forum as well as to the holistic learning contexts in which we all tend to be involved. Integration is also naturally fundamental to my own spiritual journey which I am consciously pursuing.

Accelerated learning educators in particular, tend to hold a holistic and integrative view of the world in general, whilst employing a congruent approach to their teaching. This approach lays the foundation for a commitment to developing ourselves in this way as well as encouraging the same within our students. Certainly one of the main overall intentions of this research has been to highlight the need to integrate spiritual development, along with body and mind, into all teaching and learning. This is now the stated purpose of Spirit of Learning Inc and an agreed commitment by SOL forum members.

As all participants, including SOL forum members have articulated in some way or another, there is great power and benefit in sharing with others, the deep motivations and values around the work we do in innovative learning domains. Insights have been gained along the way by each one of us, which in turn provide further means to understanding the self. The more time and space allowed for this sharing and reflecting process, and the more conducive, relaxed and supportive the environment, the more likely the insights are to be profound and of a spiritual nature, for those involved.

As part of the inquiry process, Eva, John and Ben were all recorded on tape during our interviews and during subsequent discussions were also given transcripts to read and comment on. All three shared that they experienced great personal benefit in this process, often gaining further insights into why they do what they do. I have felt the same way when I am able to articulate my own deep perceptions, experiences and insights, in the gathering of SOL events or on an ‘one to one’ basis and eventually more significantly through the documentation of this thesis.

After Ben had finished reading the complete thirty-one page transcript of this first exchange, he wrote in a letter to me; “It has put an overall perspective on the
whole thing - it has given me a sense of direction”. As he expressed in this letter, the sense of detachment of reading his own words provided further insights into his spiritual development. Since this time, Ben has frequently commented that being involved in this inquiry and the SOL forum has definitely planted some seeds to embark on particular creative, spiritual projects, such as the writing of his latest book. In John’s case, after reading back his own spoken words, he made the comment “now I know, that’s why I do what I do”. Christian expressed on many occasions that the communicating we did through regular correspondence was of immense value, since he rarely had the opportunity for communication of this nature.

Chapter 6 will now explore, through discussion, different aspects of the three major themes that have been recurring throughout the inquiry: awareness, potential and integration. It will include some of the smaller patterns in the form of themes, that have emerged and been highlighted throughout the thesis in various ways. These patterns have been drawn from the three main sources of research, that is, through global sources of literature and authorities, sharing with inquiry participants and from my own experiences, observations and reflections.
CHAPTER 6
The Essence: Major Themes

AWARENESS

Shifting Awareness

If you notice closely enough the little things, you will soon also perceive the forces which move through and shape our lives

Win Wenger

In reflecting upon this fundamental theme of awareness, I recall the story of the Zen master which I related in Chapter 1 (‘Awakening Spiritual Consciousness’). In response to the many questions about his identity, the master replies with a simple answer, “I am just awake”. This story continues to have more impact as I gather together the many different aspects of this theme that have emerged and flowed throughout my inquiry. Awakening to my life’s learning patterns, habits of thought and behaviour, as well as attempting to awaken the same in others has involved a significant shift in my awareness.

This inquiry has shown how A/L learning approaches in particular emphasise different states of awareness as an important element for effective learning and personal growth. It demands a shift in the way we view learning in general. Awareness of how people communicate and learn is constantly being stimulated and extended amongst both teachers and learners within this domain. As teachers, we not only learn how to facilitate different learning states within our learners, but also become aware of the small, subtle shifts of consciousness that occur within ourselves. The subject of ‘metacognition’ as it is sometimes called, including different styles and dimensions of thinking, becomes important for ourselves as well as for our students. The use of the relaxed, alert state, ideal for enhancing and ‘accelerating’ learning, requires a willingness by both students and the teachers to do things differently.

William James reminds us that, “our normal waking consciousness . . . is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it . . . there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different” (1929:378). The experience of accessing some of this different ‘potential consciousness’ becomes a fascinating discovery for those involved in the experience.

Although great insights into human consciousness have emerged during the last fifty years or so, there is an increasing interest in the need for further research into awareness of different states of mind. I believe that research to date is still only the ‘tip of the iceberg’ on what there is yet to discover about the nature of consciousness. More particularly for this thesis, it is only over the past ten years or
so, that major discoveries about the brain/mind have been applied directly to the fields of education and training.

Even so, those people who have practically applied this knowledge to further their own learning and personal development, are still in the minority. This phenomenon exists despite an increasing awareness that current Western education is sadly lacking at its very core, that is at the basic level of consciousness, attitudes and values. In his article entitled “Mind and Matter” (1987), David Bohm talks about a “disease of consciousness”, which affects all human beings in general and compares it to “an infectious cancer” (p.19).

In his biting article called “A Palliative for Wandering Attention” (1984), Devon Edrington contends that research findings from studies of human consciousness over the past 50 years have yielded “remarkable insights which both confirm and amplify much traditional wisdom”\(^2^4\)(p.1). Edrington expresses his dismay that educators have largely ignored the pedagogical significance of these recent advances in consciousness and brain research, believing it to be a “scandalous” state of affairs. “Sages from all of humanity’s major traditions have for millennia agreed that the typical, well-adjusted, sane member of any society lives in a trance”(ibid p.2). Arthur Deikman continues in the same vein.

So habitual is the trance of ordinary life that one could say that human beings are a race that sleeps and awakens, but does not awaken fully. Because half-awake is sufficient for the tasks we customarily do, few of us are aware of the dysfunction of our condition (1982:129).

Edrington adds that people only seem to “awaken fully” after they have experienced a great trauma of some kind (1984)\(^2^5\). This often occurs as a result of a personal crisis or ill health as in the case of Eva when she experienced a severe breakdown and with Ben after his industrial work accident. It is not an uncommon phenomenon for a trauma of this kind, or even a deeply moving mystical experience, as in John’s case, to instigate a major shift in consciousness and subsequent life direction.

For others, the shift may not have occurred as a result of one incident, but may be a long-held drive to make a positive difference and contribution to the world. Whilst discussing the effect of participating in various personal growth workshops, thinking about consciousness in general and reading “people like Buckminster Fuller”, Eric described his experience as being like “an internal shift, like a vision, a mission”. In other words, it was a gradual process of realisation, a shifting awareness over time.

\(^2^4\) For some examples of these, see 800 articles and books cited in the bibliography of Norman Dixon’s Preconscious Processing. John Wiley & Sons, 1981.

\(^2^5\) “Stopping the world” is Don Juan’s expression for the trauma that wakens us from the ‘traum’ (‘dream’ in German) of ‘consensus reality’. See Carlos Castaneda, A Separate Reality.
As I have described in relating my life’s learning experiences, my own ‘awakening’ has also been a gradual process over time. This first began with my father’s death and subsequent questing for meaning, my global interests and influences, my inner questioning and spiritual experiences. Nonetheless, I am not sure that I am yet ‘fully awake’, just as I doubt that very few individuals are. There are times when it seems so, when my ‘third eye’ is completely open and I can spin the concept of past, present and future before me. I am aware of where I have come from, whilst still being totally ‘in the moment’, and I awake to the vision of what I can be and attain spiritually in the future. These special moments are like precious jewels, requiring conscious effort to obtain and attention to maintain. Like many others on a spiritual path, I also sometimes suffer from sleepiness, forgetfulness and laziness. My life’s aim however, includes increasing my ‘wakefulness’ on a daily level and to eventually become and remain fully awake (and spiritually alert).

I liken this awakening, fully or partly, to experiencing a powerful personal shift in perception in the way one views the self and the world in general. This same concept of perceiving differently, is fundamental to the theories of many current thinkers. Fritjof Capra stated that “only if we perceive the world differently will we be able to act differently” (1991:15). In discussing the concept of perceiving differently and as I have done throughout this thesis, it is currently common to talk of a ‘paradigm shift’ in the way that the original term26 was broadened and used by Capra. He describes what he means by a paradigm.

A paradigm, for me would mean the totality of thoughts, perceptions, and values that forms a particular vision of reality, a vision that is the basis of the way a society organises itself (1989:22).

The problem, as Steinem describes it, is that this paradigm or pattern is so ingrained within our beings that we may think it is totally natural and be unaware of its very existence (1992:187). Fortunately, I have learned and experienced something of great and eternal value through my spiritual studies, which is also confirmed by mind/brain research and new paradigm learning technologies. That is, it is definitely possible to overcome and transform one’s limiting or negative habits of thoughts. This is not always easily done, nor does it happen without regular and on-going conscious awareness and effort. Nevertheless it can be done. The ‘good news’, the empowering reminder, is, that since a paradigm is just a cognitive construct and “there is nothing biological or immutable about it, it can indeed be changed” (ibid).

An individual’s paradigm shift then, can be triggered through a variety of stimuli, some more abruptly induced than in others. It can also be supported and encouraged by particular environments and company, such as with the A/L context and those provided by the SOL forums. Following a personal paradigm

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26 ‘Paradigm’ comes from the Greek, ‘paradigma’ to mean ‘pattern’. Used by Thomas Kuhn (1970) to denote a conceptual framework commonly shared by a community of scientists.
shift, there seem to be many commonalities in the way in which the individual views life from then on. Cherie Sutherland’s study of people who have had a ‘near-death experience’ found that the subsequent changes in life-direction were found to be well established in general. In terms of attitudes to themselves, there was a definite shift toward a “more positive view of the self, a firm commitment of an inner life, and a strong sense of purpose” (1992:231).

Interesting and relevant questions for my inquiry here are; how can we firstly learn to awaken ourselves and secondly how do we awaken others to their own positive and true natures? David Bohm proposes an answer to a similar question of his own, “can we realise our potential to rise to a higher destiny?”:

What is needed is perception to awaken deeper levels of the mind that can perceive how the ego operates. We need a kind of self-perception whereby the concept of thought would be aware of its own activity (1987:18).

In discussing how this may be possible, Bohm says that one way is to “observe what is going on inside you”. He adds that one must not suppress it or carry it out and that “there is a state in between where it is being suspended” (ibid). This reminds me of a similar notion described by Deepak Chopra in dialogue with Wayne Dyer, as ‘the gap between our thoughts’, the mental and spiritual space where we connect with our essence and have the power to transform ourselves.

My inquiry has provided many opportunities to observe what is going on inside of me. It has brought me great personal benefit through my digging deep and tracing through the roots of my life’s learning, uncovering the points at which the major forces and shifts in my thinking, have occurred. Although I know now that this need not be a traumatic experience, I have found that the occasional ‘dramatic’ shift serves to nudge my personal growth along a little faster! In any case, it has become clear that by engaging in processes of self observation and regular reflection on our experiences, we can learn to shift and expand our awareness virtually at will.

In tracing my roots and exploring my learning tree and the surrounding forest, I have learned to frequently notice ‘the little things’, experiencing small and gentle shifts in my awareness along the way. Consequently, I feel that I have become more a ‘metaphysician’ rather than a traditional scientist. A traditional approach to science tends to encourage the scientist to highlight and examine what he or she is already looking for. This provides justification for maintaining one’s existing world view and particular theories, and therefore does not encourage real change and transformation.

In contrast, an exploratory and integrative approach to science provides opportunities for expanding one’s perspectives and vision and for experiencing significant shifts in awareness and perception. The process is more like an
unfolding one of self discovery and enlightenment, and one which provides opportunities for inner development and change along the way.

Every [wo]man takes the limits of [her] own field of vision for the limits of the world
Schopenhauer

Each one of the participants in this inquiry, including myself and other new paradigm educators, are aware of the significance of either small or major shifts in one’s perception. Our experiences have increased awareness of ourselves in a more positive and expanded way, affecting our view of the world in general. Despite the power of this initial shift, although often a major event in one’s inner life, it is still only the first step towards actual behaviour change. For this to occur, there needs to be a commitment to action such as exploring our life purpose and developing a commitment to further our own personal, spiritual growth. In a world of ever increasing complexities and time constraints, it is clear that developing one’s inner life does not happen without a certain amount of time, energy and effort devoted towards the ‘task’.

Major shifts in awareness and the personal life changes that usually follow, correspond with much current global thinking. This includes the development of a holistic, interdependent and sustainable world view which validates and honours the spiritual perspective. For example, after viewing the earth from space several Apollo astronauts enjoyed some radically different perspectives which in turn altered their whole lives. After his experiences in space, Russell Schweickart said “you can’t imagine how many borders and boundaries you cross again and again and again, and you don’t even see them” (in Peck, 1986:10). Edgar Mitchell is well-known for his radically altered perception after his trip to the moon. He later made a remark to the effect, “we went to the moon as technicians; we returned as humanitarians”. Mitchell’s changed perception came from seeing the earth from the moon as a tiny, beautiful and fragile place and one that should be treasured. His sense of interconnectedness and belonging intensified, an experience which he described as “heady” and one which gave him joy and excitement.

Unexpectedly I experienced an exhilarating sense that I and the universe were one - that is but an extension of myself, that each of us is an integral part of the same existence (in Shepherd, 1993:227).

In his discussion of humankind’s crises, Henryk Skolimowski believes like Fritjov Capra and others, that the root cause of our problems lies in the very foundations of our scientific world view and in the perceptions that this view engenders (1992:1-2). He argues for a new ‘eco-philosophy’ which should be ‘spiritually alive in order to understand the human being, a spiritual agent (ibid p.60). Skolimowski’s view is essentially positive as he attempts to inspire readers and provide new purpose and hope for humankind. In other words, our view of ourselves and the world in which we live, is fundamental to our actions, and lays the basis for our relationships with others. I agree with Skolimowski when he says that the road to liberation is through the liberation of our minds and says that:
Out of the lethargic trance of technological inertia, we are emerging with a heightened awareness of our destiny, which is to build a responsible world by assuming our own responsibility, to infuse the world with meaning. . . (1992:41).

Much evidence now indicates, and as Willis Harman (1992: Profile) also contends:

It is no less than an extraordinarily deep shift in the way we view the world. It’s really something very basic. A whole changing world view that’s not being led by the great scientists or the scientific establishment. It’s emerging out of people - currents in our consciousness, not an organised movement. . . It doesn’t have anything to do with technology or economic concepts. . . It’s our own experience.

Since A/L educators are generally committed to making a positive difference in the world in general, it is appropriate to explore our different world views, our life philosophy and our value systems. We can then make significant connections with the wider world through a network of ‘fellow conspirators’ as Ferguson (1982) would say. I have discovered for myself when exploring through ‘connecting patterns’ along my ‘personal and professional roots’, the great importance of understanding where I was coming from in terms of my values and my aspirations.

It has been central to my personal development to examine and understand the totality of my thoughts and feelings and the history of my psychological tendencies. From this position I can then relate better to the psychology and consciousness of those whom I facilitate. Consequently I feel that my awareness has been heightener, not only in terms of my spiritual self and my teaching work, but in terms of humanity as a whole. I have realised the necessity and power in examining and understanding our own world views as a means to understand the very core of ourselves. I see it as possibly the only way to become creators in our destiny and engage in “metaphysical reconstruction” as Schumacher describes it (in Hill, 1987:60).

The following quote from an article entitled, “‘De-Conditioning’ the Psyche: Focus on Primary Values”, sums up the argument about the need for developing a new world view.

We definitely need to revise our world view. There is no point in developing ‘universal policies, values or laws’, if the individual suffers. A return to the basic, primary values of human life is necessary. Along with that, respect for the individual is paramount. There is also very little point in pursuing any policies or belief system if that belief system harms any other living being or the natural environment upon which we are all dependent for our survival. The need of this crucial time in our spiritual, moral and community evolution, is to rigorously examine our conditioning that we blindly and unquestionably act out on a day - to- day basis (Mohan 1995:4).
Self Awareness

We don’t see things as they are, we see them as we are

Anais Nin

In examining and ‘revising’ or rather expanding and enhancing my world view, I have become much more aware of my past conditioning as well as how I currently see myself in the world. Since tracking back and travelling up from the roots of my learning tree through the various branches, I have realised how relating my life’s learning and teaching journey has provided a valuable means for self illumination and growth. The writing process in particular has provided a different perspective for observation and on-going inner exploration. I feel that I have gained a ‘new prism’ in the form of fresh insights into myself and expanded my consciousness in general. As I begin to see and understand more about myself, I also learn more of others and the world in general.

I have realised that the roots of my search for meaning and inter-relatedness guide the direction in which I branch out throughout my whole life. I recognise some of my life patterns and how I have frequently sought physical distance to gain different perspectives for observing my own development and growth. I understand better now my intuitive and frequent desire for detachment from familiar comforts and supports on regular occasions. From an early age on I have been attracted toward experiencing different environments and have thrived on the newness and the relative anonymity involved. I have felt that my experiences provided relief from others’ expectations and therefore freedom and opportunities to discover more about myself. I also realise how important it has always been for me to feel and stay connected with the wider world. My recent explorations involved on this research journey, have served to highlight how my desire for freedom and connection through external travelling, has been a metaphor for my subsequent and conscious inner travelling.

This realisation is similar to the one that Ben expressed when he was working with theatre lighting and eventually discovered in retrospect, that it was an “internal light” he was looking for. This one significant realisation ended up changing Ben’s whole life’s direction, sharpening his general self-awareness and led him to a more conscious pursuit of spirituality from then on. Over time Ben has continued to develop and enhance awareness of himself and of others through the many and varied ‘awareness-raising’ activities in which he is engaged. These relate to both the teaching of others as well as to the practise of meditation and yoga for himself.

Ben’s realisation could only occur because of the curiosity and interest he personally had in his own reasons for doing things, prompted by his willingness to talk things out with others. Many of my own significant self discoveries have occurred later in life as I have learned to balance my extroverted communicative tendencies with periods of quiet introspection, mental space and at times, physical solitude. In any case, this inquiry has highlighted the great benefit for many of us, in reflecting upon significant life events as an effective means to further our
personal, spiritual development. These reflections have included interactive, communicative forms as has been demonstrated by individual participants' contributions and those within the SOL group forum.

Since our inner processes lay the basis for our work in facilitating others, there is a responsibility for us to become more aware of the essential self behind the approaches we take. Since it is generally accepted that self-awareness is a 'good thing', then as educators, it seems like a good thing to begin and start with the self. As life's external pressures increase, I believe it is important that all educators find regular opportunities to reflect upon the connection between our personal and professional lives in one way or another. The more likely we are then, to obtain insights of lasting value to ourselves and in turn to those whom we educate. From this basis we can regularly explore ways to help raise and develop self awareness in others, a fascinating subject and task in itself.

In reflecting upon my own self-awareness I can trace the beginnings of an increasing awareness of my own consciousness to the year of 1984. I was living in the south of France and for the first time in thirteen years, away from my then teenage son. I began to realise that for so long I had been relating very strongly to the roles of mother, student and more recently to teacher. At first it seemed strange and disorienting not to have these roles with which to identify and as the means to define myself in the world. Very soon I began to enjoy my daily adventures, my challenges and freedom from my usual responsibilities. I realised later how I was once again hoping to discover something different or significant about myself and my psyche.

During this period in Provence, I became friends with an English brother and sister, both members of Mensa, and residents of the town for ten years. With them, I was given grand tours around the countryside. This was accompanied by expert running commentaries and detailed statistics on every fact conceivable about the history of the area, works of art or artists and even detailed analysis of the French themselves. They also used to play constant games of 'who knows the most' en route, competing against each other to try and catch the other one out. The subjects used to range far beyond the area of Provence and indeed Europe - they covered an enormous range of subjects. I was quite impressed and felt very intellectually inadequate at the same time.

For a while I was in awe of their knowledge and their ability to retain information, and it was clear to them that I was a fairly 'ignorant Aussie'. As time went on and I spent more time with J. in particular, I began to deeply question the concept of knowledge. I soon discovered that both he and his sister were emotionally erratic and often seemed very confused people who tended to cover up their psychological lacks with intellectual superiority and knowingness. I began to wonder what was the point in learning and knowing lots of facts and information, if one did not
know anything of truth about oneself and human behaviour beyond the stereotypes.

It was not too long before I realised that I could never hope to fill the gaps in certain areas of my knowledge. I feared there would always be too much information in the world for me to learn and absorb in one lifetime. Since I was hungering for knowledge, this became a great existential dilemma for me. This period was particularly memorable because I had often felt afraid, throughout my life, that I did not or would never ‘know enough’ or of appearing ignorant in the eyes of others. From then on I started to gradually and consciously shift my yearning for external knowledge to a desire for significant self-learning and understanding. Later I discovered that Carl Rogers expresses the same notion: “A person learns significantly only those things which he perceives as being involved in the maintenance of, or enhancement of, the structure of the self” (1969:5).

My observations and experiences in France made me deeply question the notion of knowledge for its own sake as opposed to knowledge for understanding and inner wisdom. I felt lacking in both domains. From then on though, my real self-questioning began in earnest and I felt I had to get to the heart of why I was doing what I was doing. What did it mean to my life as a whole? In particular, why did I so often feel it necessary to be at great distances from my normal surroundings, in order to learn and grow? I had already become aware of my sense of being able to easily adjust to new circumstances and lifestyles. I often felt comfortable enough to live in any place in which I had visited for a while, although I did not know what that meant in terms of my overall development.

If any one would understand the evolution of a soul [s]he must be willing to face the questions which the soul faces in its growth

Annie Besant

I was now beginning to consciously seek more self awareness and in doing so, also to consciously seek answers to some of the ‘bigger’ questions about life. What a paradox this was beginning to be! It seemed that as soon as I began to turn my awareness within, I would find something of significance about the external world as a whole. Whilst living in France without all my usual activity, responsibilities and accompanying expectations, I was able to ask those questions of myself. There was time, space and freedom to at least ‘hear’ the questions if not the answers themselves.

As I had experienced in my inquiring with others, the unspoken but conscious formulations of questions often paved the way for answers and deeper understandings to emerge. During this period, one answer which I found significant came to me in relation to making life more simple in a general sense. It was about providing more time and space for just being, for regular observation and reflection of the self as well as for giving and sharing ‘unpolluted’ time with others who were close to me.
My realisations about knowledge during that period have since had a large bearing on the way in which I approach my teaching. I had discovered how my very identity and ‘raison d’etre’ was tied up with my ability to feel comfortable with my own mind and its capacity for learning in general. I now have a clearer understanding of the potential fears that others may have around their own learning and personal growth.

The emphasis on student awareness and personal development in A/L naturally highlights the same aspects within myself as a practitioner. Like other participants, I make constant efforts to increase my self awareness, drawing strongly on my past and present self-discoveries as an important means to understand and teach others empathically and effectively. As individual participants in the inquiry have shared their personal challenges and particular idiosyncrasies along this journey of developing themselves, the sense of empathy and connectedness between us has increased.

In exploring with Eva, I asked her what she saw as the most personally challenging issue in her role as an accelerated learning specialist.

\textit{Eva}: The challenge for me is to be more cohesive, less poetic, less floaty... to find the right words, concepts, metaphors.

\textit{Dawn}: How do you go about dealing with these challenges? How effective are you with your strategy or approach?

\textit{Eva}: I bring myself down energetically, into my belly. I stay in the ‘third eye’ (a meditation technique) constantly. I breathe deeper, I feel my feet on the ground. When I am effective, that is ‘grounded and present’ I know I reach people because I ‘feel’ the changes in their energy field and I receive positive feedback from them. They change by acting on their discoveries and that is the greatest reward for me. It is a privilege.

In a later written contribution, she says that she finally determines what it is that she has “brought into this world”. In other words she has become acutely aware of her life purpose which is partly to attempt to live the Delphic motto: “Know Thyself and you shall know...”. Eva has undoubtedly gained many insights into her own way of being and working with others and sees both awareness and focus as being crucial aspects of one’s self development. John also relates a way of being aware and of knowing himself, particularly when it comes to having to make a difficult decision. I asked him what is involved for him.

It’s the ability to hold more than one paradigm at the same time... well actually to be quite precise it’s what my solar plexus, my ‘little button’ shows. If there’s something I don’t know or I have an uncertainty, then the certainty principle is how do I feel about it here [he points to his solar plexus] and instantly my body gives me a ‘readout’. It seems to me to be a readout similar to Chavell’s pendulum or the kinesiology ‘strong/weak trigger’. But it is just how my body feels... So I don’t have to go into any mental exercises and look at all the pros and cons. The way I operate is I usually wait until the last moment...
Ever since John shared this tendency of regularly tuning into his body as the means to be aware of the deeper self, I have found that I often now do the same. Like Eva, I have also found the need to be more grounded at times. This technique helps me check out how I really feel about something, to make an important decision or to relax about not making one! Consequently I now know that I never have to worry about making decisions. I can either use the ‘tune into’ my body method or I connect with my soul conscious state of awareness.

John and I frequently discuss some of our important experiences in the TESOL classroom. Following his first visit to India in 1994, he explained that his teaching experiences since then had been “quite powerful”, and that he had progressed much deeper and further since the time of writing his last book. John was talking about his own development here and referring to some “concentrated periods” in his classroom. I attempt to get him to summarise what happens for him during these periods.

*John:* One of the main things is that I’m aware of what’s happening. If I didn’t have a fair amount of inner awareness I wouldn’t be able to see this happening in other people. What awareness does is it gives you the option of acting a different way because you’ve got more choice. But it doesn’t mean to say that awareness means the deeper your awareness the more inevitable is your behaviour change. It doesn’t mean that at all.

*Dawn:* People are equating... [*John finishes in his way]*

*John:* ... techniques with values.

Although I believe I understood what he meant, I asked why the ability to ‘hold different paradigms’ is so enlightening and so remarkable.

*John:* Because it makes everything controllable. Life’s a game and there are many games happening at the same time. It’s just a matter of whether you want to play one game or several games... It also allows with each game there’s a huge arena of resources that you can take from each game. So if you’ve only got one game, it becomes really strict and that’s why people lead such narrow lives. If you can hold lots of different paradoxes instantly the richness of life is never-ending. For every extra paradox you can hold, it is like running several computer programs at the same time.

*Dawn:* You’re really aware of this and you are very content with this. None of this appears to give you any distress...

*John:* It’s also connected with detachment and it’s also connected to values... It means also that I don’t have to tell anybody that they’re wrong, because if I can get into their paradigm then they’re right.

John sees the ability to hold different paradigms as a great attribute for an A/L practitioner. He finds it very useful in order to understand where each and every individual is coming from, allowing him to enter their world. As he frequently philosophises, one is sometimes “right” whilst simultaneously being “not right”. We both agreed that this kind of awareness, although not quite orthodox and easily embraced by many people, is very empowering. Certainly I believe that it makes
one very unlimited and broad-minded in his thinking, and probably more relaxed about life in general.

_The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands, but in seeing with new eyes._

Marcel Proust

I reflect upon the depth of what I have been learning throughout this inquiry, from so many different sources, as well as from within myself. I reflect upon the beginnings of developing an awareness of myself beyond my usual daily roles and activities. I realise that my sojourn in France was significant in many ways. Whilst there I thought a great deal about what I wanted to do differently in my life upon my return home. Since I greatly valued the relationship with my then teenage son and I also wanted to develop more of my own learning and creative potential along the way, I knew I would probably have to make some significant personal changes.

Part of my on-going challenge I felt, was to learn to relinquish my strong maternal attachment. I also knew I wanted to enjoy each moment of being a parent and above all, to maintain a strong sense of humour in the process. I eventually realised that the major driving force toward developing further self-awareness within myself, was my commitment to maintaining a productive and positive relationship with my son whilst also attending to my own needs. This realisation was no doubt the ‘invisible beginning, the inward movement and revolution in my consciousness’ to which I referred in Chapter 1, and which Ferguson describes in “The Aquarian Conspiracy” (1982). My inner journeying led me naturally and consciously to embark on a spiritual path soon after my return home to Australia.

I have since come to learn that the freedom and adventures I was regularly seeking through external travels come from the power within myself. I realised that I can experience ‘inner space travel’ with all its challenges as well as the liberation I enjoy. Although I think I will always be somewhat of a ‘gipsy’, and I still love travelling, I know now that I don’t have to go anywhere different or new externally in order to learn or grow. Change will happen in any case and daily life will naturally present plenty of adventures and newness. I have realised then, that the learning I used to seek externally was ultimately and ‘simply’ about me as both a human and a spiritual being. I am also aware that this learning involves how I think, how I learn to have gentle control over my own life, and how to take responsibility for my own consciousness, living my heartfelt values and knowing my place in the world.
Learning Awareness

The only thing that can be educated in [hu]man is his [her] awareness

Caleb Gattegno

Awareness of Personal Growth in Learning

Before my sojourn in France, I had entered my new profession, the teaching of English to people of other languages, that is TESOL. The idea of developing skills which would enable me to earn a living whilst ‘tasting’ a range of very different cultures was extremely exciting. I felt quite privileged to be paid for doing something which contributed so much toward my own personal fulfilment. My undergraduate studies of the French language with a very inspiring teacher using creative and innovative methods, also contributed to my decision to become a language teacher.

Since this period I have experienced much enthusiasm and enjoyment as I learn with and teach people from all over the world. My long-held desire to feel globally connected is constantly being fulfilled through this work. Furthermore, I have been able to continue exploring the human psyche, universal attitudes and fundamental values that people everywhere have in common. Through my non-verbal and paraconscious communications, as well as the deliberate and conscious influence that I impart as a teacher, I feel I have also stimulated some of this same awareness and interest in others.

Having taken up university studies as a mature age student, I was very well aware of the power of life experience as a means to propel and motivate people toward academic learning many years after leaving school. I wanted my students to realise that they could tap into and draw upon their own full life experiences, skills and special talents as a means to learn the English language. This has often been in contrast to the expectations that many learners themselves have had about their own capacities. This includes the perception that the teacher is the ultimate expert and knower of everything, and that in order to learn well they simply must passively listen, memorise information and study very, very hard.

Naturally these perceptions vary according to the cultural background and experience the students have had. Attempting to change thinking styles and general perceptions amongst adult learners, particularly from Asian countries, has often been a challenge. Fortunately, the techniques and the philosophy I have learned through integrated accelerative learning have enabled some ‘shifting awareness’ to occur, in ways that are non-threatening, empowering and stimulating. Undoubtedly, the more my own learning and teaching awareness increases, the more ‘in tune’ I can become in the classroom. I also agree with Russell when he says, “The effectiveness of my communication [in the classroom] is largely dependent on my ability to get onto the other’s wave length. It has much
less to do with me getting my message ‘across’ in a clear and unambiguous manner.” (1989:29).
Learning a language is essentially process-oriented where the language is the medium through which each individual can express her/himself, even in a limited verbal way. TESOL teaching, therefore lends itself more easily to a facilitative approach which encourages maximum participation by the students. Nevertheless, there is still a danger when the teacher becomes more concerned with the actual words spoken, at the expense of hearing and relating to the person behind them. It is even worse when she indulges in too much talk herself (a not uncommon occurrence), so that the students feel inhibited in expressing themselves at any level.

The use of creative and dynamic techniques such as music, song and mime which some TESOL teachers regularly use in their teaching can also help realise similar aspects within the teacher. I found that because of my having regularly employed these kinds of techniques for many years, I was well equipped to embrace the alternative A/L approach when I came across it.

In discussing the personal benefits in adopting a range of creative techniques in our teaching practices, I asked Ben why not many ‘mainstream’ teachers incorporate some of these same holistic, creative techniques into their teaching approaches. His response related to the particular development and experience of the TESOL teacher:

I think it is because of multiculturalism. When one is involved with different cultures one has to open up, to change, and that means confronting the self and so on. They have to deal with their own sh... that is to resolve their own [inner] conflicts... The teacher needs to learn to be caring and compassionate and really be able to feel the anguish of the migrants and respond to their needs [accordingly].

Ben is implying here that in doing something different, that is dealing with many different cultures, the teacher requires a different awareness. In the case of dealing with migrants this also includes heightened compassion and an empathy and love for the students themselves. I agree with Ben that this often requires letting go of one’s traditional role and developing an attitude of openness and willingness to look at and change oneself as necessary. Perhaps this factor also explains why many language teachers, especially those in the TESOL field, are often more receptive to adopting A/L techniques than are mainstream teachers. Following his industrial accident, Ben became receptive and willing to make radical changes within himself in furthering his growth. His “re-education” had made him acutely aware that something was wrong with his life in general. This led him to the realisation that he was a “natural teacher” which eventually led him to the teaching of English to adult migrants.

Early in my teaching career, I was to learn that ‘humanistic’ was the most suitable term to describe the approach I naturally took in the classroom. My intuitive and creative approach to my teaching seemed in many ways an extension of my natural
way of being, rather than my following a prescribed methodology. As time passed, my conscious desire to engage more of the self in the learning process, laid a strong basis for my embracing the theory, principles and practice of accelerative learning. It was becoming clear that there should be no separation between one's real learning and inner personal growth.

Both Ben and I had had many life experiences and a certain amount of maturity behind us before we embarked on this path of teaching English to adults. As well, neither of us had ever felt tied to an 'inescapable' education system which can often restrict individual creative and professional freedom. This factor can have a large bearing on a teacher's decision on whether to go against the status quo and try something new, such as A/L. In order to further stick with innovation, particularly in the face of opposition, a teacher must have a strong resolve and commitment, and usually a fair amount of courage as well.

As I related in Chapter 2, my post-graduate studies for my Diploma in Education were a great disappointment in general. I was either very bored or unnecessarily confused a lot of the time. I soon discovered that there are some great ironies within the field of education, where those people who are meant to teach others to teach are often very lacking in basic communication skills themselves, let alone artistic teaching skills. I was even more frustrated at the frequent adherence to antiquated teaching formulas, and a pedagogy where the current methodologies were devoid of the affective aspects of learning. More significantly, and probably like many others, I held the assumption that a university lecturer was someone who not only knew a lot, but who also had the gift or skills to convey their knowledge to others and bring out the best in each student.

As Ben had painfully discovered, there seemed to often be an "absurd internal contradiction" within the education system. I would describe this as a general unawareness of and reticence to perceive personal development as an important and integral part of education, particularly for the educators themselves. Naturally, this in turn leads to an unawareness of the individual needs and personalities of their students. Like Ben, my son was also often frustrated with these kinds of attitudes within formal education, including many educators' refusal to see below the surface of an individual or learning situation.

I have found that one of the great advantages of being involved in A/L, is the attention it places on the paraconscious. I value the opportunities it offers for a gentle but exciting 'unfolding of the self' for both teachers and students. I realise that my interest and involvement with these approaches came about as a result of an already raised awareness in terms of myself and my own consciousness. As I continue to increase my knowledge of more effective and joyous ways to learn and as I continue using innovative learning approaches, my self-awareness also continues to expand. Along the way I can not help but learn more about myself, my potential and how I think, learn and develop spiritually.
Awareness of the Stress Factor in Learning and Teaching

As I discussed in ‘Beneath the Surface’ in Chapter 2, as a newly practising teacher I had become very aware of the stress factor that both teachers and students frequently experience. For example, new teachers of all methods and subject areas are often overly concerned with strictly following the rules and are often too absorbed in their lesson plans as their crutch. During these times they have either little or no awareness or control of their own state, let alone those of their students or the subtleties of the learning process. Neither are they able to think for themselves, feel the mood of their students and tend to miss opportunities to connect with the flow to experience each ‘teachable moment’.

Furthermore, teachers’ own stressful states usually rub off on their students and the whole learning and teaching experience becomes associated with difficulties or unpleasantness. I noticed that a lack of questioning, a belief that they were only novices and knew little, tended to inhibit new teachers’ own natural awareness and intuition of themselves as well as their students. I used to reassure trainee teachers that their students knew less and were bound to be much more nervous than they were as a way to help reduce some of their own fears.

Fortunately, A/L educators are not only extremely aware of the stress factor in learning and teaching, but they are also familiar with techniques for overcoming some of it. Although training relates to techniques for their students, most practitioners, and in particular the participants in this inquiry, seem to use some form of regular relaxation for their own purposes. It may be a meditation practice, a particular exercise, or the regular use of positive affirmations and visualisations. It appears that at least in this domain of accelerative learning, most teachers are practising what they preach. I agree with Ben that accelerated learning techniques, along with a creative approach to TESOL teaching help:

... make their contribution toward helping prevent stress amongst teachers. ... Stress management becomes one very important way into the system. Being able to relax, to make learning more fun and to develop learning abilities in more integrated ways all help to make this process effective and of interest to the more ‘straight’ [conventional] teachers - when they get round to realising that things aren’t always what they seem.

It was mainly the result of my awareness of and interest in the stress factor in learning, that I perceived many parallels between spiritual learning and development, and many aspects of A/L techniques. The fundamental principle to all accelerative learning approaches, is the necessity to attain and maintain a positive alert state of mind throughout the process. From this basis, one can tap into the creative and intuitive aspects of oneself, and begin to fulfil more of one’s potential.
Raising Awareness within the Learner

Problems are solved not by giving new information but by arranging what we have always known

Wittgenstein

When I first began teaching, I participated in a range of professional development or in-service courses. Most of these course were conducted within the traditional teacher-dominated model. An exception to this were some courses which used innovative approaches to language learning, similar to the French course I had enjoyed in my undergraduate studies. The first, most memorable and useful one was a course in communicative language learning which emphasised awareness-raising techniques for teaching TESOL. This course also helped lay the foundation for my inclinations toward a humanistic approach to teaching. From then on, raising awareness as a practical teaching tool became a natural and compelling approach. I very soon felt as though I had shifted into the right groove and found my niche as a teacher. I was later to understand and deeply resonate with Caleb Gattegno’s contention that ‘only awareness is educable’ (1972).

Using awareness-raising activities in the classroom acts as a trigger for students to perceive and express their particular learning needs whilst also encouraging the teacher’s intuitive and spontaneous responses and decision-making. Language is learned and practised through the development of interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, with holistic and emotional involvement becoming the key to recalling new language items. Eight years after I first began teaching, I discovered the whole-brain theory behind much of what I had been intuitively doing in the classroom. Together with this new knowledge, and an increased self awareness through meditation and spiritual studies, I also became more aware of the subtleties and the paraconscious elements within the learning process in general. After meeting John Wade, I realised that my approach was in essence the same as his ‘generative teaching’ which involves deliberate facilitation by the teacher and a drawing out and communication of students’ existing knowledge and life experiences.

In the language classroom the teacher also ‘upgrades’ the students’ language and provides models for them to see patterns within it. The inner wisdom of the students can become the content material for the lesson and in this way one can teach without a textbook or even a lesson plan, and of course students become deeply and emotionally engaged in the learning process. Using this method, the teacher’s role is also to create a conducive environment for their students, help them motivate themselves and build confidence to take initiative and responsibility for their own learning. This generative approach to A/L for me has been a natural and highly effective one in raising awareness within the learner of how to learn. John has developed and refined this method in his book for TESOL teachers, “Teaching Without a Textbook” (1992).

During the interview with John in March ’93, we discussed the subject of the power of learning awareness regarding students. As described previously in Chapter 5,
one of his special skills is the ability to draw forth and facilitate an enhanced awareness of the learning process in others. No doubt he could not do this unless he was operating at a higher level of awareness himself. John describes the technique that students learn to achieve in his classes:

It used to happen three or more times in a lesson or session. Now it could happen twenty times in a ten minute segment. They draw out, they extrapolate, they see what's happening, and they work out why it's happening that way and what they are doing to contribute to it happening that way and if there's a better way for that to happen and if there's a better way, then what's stopping them from not doing that so it's hugely self-empowering.

I then contributed 'detachment' 'metacognition' as possible terms for this approach. However, John emphasised that it is not totally detaching, and finally came up with a different term.

What it is, is splitting - that's the word. So you're splitting your attention. You're not only going through the whole thing yourself with not only all the faculties that requires to do the process I'm talking about students here. Each student is going through the process themselves with all the faculties they'd normally use to go through that process. And at the same time they've learned to throw themselves into an observer state simultaneously. They're not detached - they're totally attached, but they've just grown this extra arm and they're doing two things simultaneously. They're watching themselves as they're totally involved in the situation and that's the difference between detachment... It's a split state.

In discussing awareness of the learner, I expressed that I like and use the term, 'real learning' because it is not something that people have to be taught or told that it is good for them. It is simply about becoming free to imagine, learn and grow as a human being. It is about the shifting of one's awareness to see and feel beyond the surface. John agreed that with his students, they just observe what they've done during a learning session, how they've just done it and then they analyse why they've done it. Then they look at the different choices they have because then their experiences have been brought up into their conscious awareness. He explains:

They can see there are different ways of doing something they've always done habitually, things that can be used with all activities in the classroom. You can 'freeze frame' anything that's happening. It's easiest to see when there's some kind of interactive activity going on such as oral communication or presentations, but even with writing it's a great way of getting over writing blocks... Team teaching also provides opportunities for passing this on to other teachers.

**Awareness of the Teacher as Learner**

Generative teaching and the facilitation mode of teaching can be used for all subject areas and for all ages of students. However, I believe it is only successful when it stems from a different awareness about our own roles as educators as well as about the nature of learning and teaching in general. This changing paradigm places the
learner at the heart of the process, takes a ‘learning to learn’ approach and values
the contribution of each student. The teacher becomes a learner/facilitator whose
role is to help students to learn the subject experientially and holistically and to
discover more of themselves in the process. In this way they become learners
alongside their students.

It is obvious that not all educators desire, or are prepared to let go of their
traditional roles. Within the new learning paradigm however, practitioners are
couraged and even expected to experiment with different modes of facilitation.
This encourages them to unfold, uncover and explore more of the person behind
the methods they use, that is their inner selves. As Gloria articulated in her
response to my questionnaire, one of the most important benefits in being
involved in A/L has been to become a learner again. This means a learner of the
self, and in Gloria’s case, included developing more of her creativity and most
significantly, the preparedness to take more risks in both her own learning as well
as in her teaching approach.

This risk factor may well be the reason why some academics and teachers in
general are often reticent about becoming learners or even to use a more
facilitative style to educate others. The need to remain the expert at all costs, to
want to simply impart knowledge without engaging students in the learning
process, no doubt keeps the ‘empty vessel’ metaphor alive and thriving.
Nevertheless, it takes a certain amount of courage and letting go of ego to make
this shift to a more learner-centred approach. Unfortunately, in many cases
educators are just not ready to do this as it may prove too personally challenging
and uncomfortable for them.

I don’t believe that innovative teaching approaches of any kind should be imposed
upon teachers. Rather, they need to be made aware of the personal and professional
benefits of adopting them, thereby becoming naturally attracted toward making
shifts and changes within themselves. In discussing ‘processes in humanistic
education, in which he includes Suggestopedia and ‘The Silent Way’, Adrian
Underhill believes that:

> These approaches have been widely misunderstood, partly because of
> the ways in which they have been presented, and partly because to
> understand them requires an openness and a shift in attitude (1989b
> :250).

I agree with Underhill about the widespread misunderstandings regarding
accelerative learning and humanistic approaches that are still prevalent in
traditional educational contexts. I believe that for the A/L practitioner, a shift from
a teacher awareness to one of a co-learner and facilitator with an open attitude is
essential. I also agree with him in his discussion of the role of the facilitator and
the subtle responsibilities involved:
All this makes a great demand on the teacher/facilitator’s resources and personal development, since I think that we can only facilitate processes in others that are already going on in ourselves (ibid p.256).

Shifting to a facilitating/learning consciousness, in my view, is finally a more liberating consciousness for both teachers and learners, and encourages the fulfilment of individual potential towards becoming the ‘fully functioning person’ that Carl Rogers frequently describes.

Eric also points out that within the field of A/L, it is difficult to remain a good teacher without continually learning and growing. He described some of the personal benefits and excitement for an A/L practitioner as ‘turning on’ students to their own brains, which for me, is like a contribution to a ‘world-wide awakening’. Christian’s essential interest as an educator is of having to perceive differently, that is as a learner and then to teach from this new perspective. For him a change of perception has led to an expanded consciousness, an intuitive ability to respond appropriately, and an increased sense of global responsibility.

Once I had started to think deeply about my own individual style of learning and therefore the same within my students, I became even more aware of the link between learning, teaching and personal growth. Whilst participating in my first Superteaching workshop in Australia with Eric Jensen in 1989, I was asked to write a ‘learning profile’. I stated:

My learning is mostly intuitive, I like being independent but enjoy sharing the learning experience. I like variety in presentation and strategies and am very much in the now. I am fascinated with process and love experimentation and creativity. I like freedom in learning and am committed to fun, variety and co-operation.

Since this time, I realised that nothing much has changed except to add that this would also be an appropriate teaching profile. In other words, I, like most teachers, tend to teach how I would learn myself. One of the most valuable tools which I regularly use for myself as well as with my students, is the learning styles analysis that is based on Kolb’s learning cycle (1984) and further developed in a very accessible form by Bernice McCarthy (1990). This model, along with many other practical learning techniques and activities for self understanding, have helped me develop more of my learning potential and to promote further ‘learning awareness’ within myself and my students.

Each educator in the inquiry has developed a strong understanding of themselves as learners which provides insight about our own teaching and facilitating styles and preferences. It also better equips us to understand the need for developing this awareness in our learners. For learning to be effective and long-lasting, it is fundamental for A/L educators to understand the implications of the different ways in which all people learn.
Developing Subtle Awareness

Subtle forces are at work, factors you are not likely to see in banner headlines

Marilyn Ferguson

Within some current A/L training courses in Australia there are some attempts to develop a more subtle awareness within practitioners. I have found that these efforts are still quite limited, partly because of the lack of attention to the trainer's own deep awareness and spiritual development and the unwillingness for many to even raise the subject in the first place. The Spirit of Learning forum plays an important role in this way as it places a strong emphasis on developing and enhancing a subtle and spiritual awareness within both teachers and students.

It is obvious that even the best teacher training in the world, including that of A/L, with a focus on professional skill development alone, is not the way to develop one's subtle awareness. There firstly needs to be a strong interest to develop this dimension for and within themselves. This should be followed by a commitment and willingness to stay 'psychically alert' throughout the learning/teaching process. Maintaining a heightened self-awareness and noticing each and every aspect of the teaching, learning process, is a good way to begin.

The "split state" that John facilitates within his students is one which the A/L educator needs to develop and refine within herself in order to manage some of these subtleties of learning. As has become clear in this research, the more aware an educator is, the more awareness she can facilitate in others. The generative, A/L teaching approach, in contrast to a teacher dominated process, represents a dimension of educating that is more congruent with the values I hold. Throughout my self inquiring, I have learned that if I truly want my learners to take responsibility for their own learning, and to feel fully functioning and empowered, I need to regularly examine my own deeply ingrained attitudes around the concepts of power and control within the process.

My interest in these factors, along with a facilitative approach to teaching was generated by a range of different influences. These include my teaching experience in prison, the nature of second language teaching for adults, humanistic language teaching and the influence of educators such as Carl Rogers and John Heron, author and founder of the Human Research Project in the United Kingdom. Heron's analysis and model for facilitation of learning (1989:13), particularly as it relates to personal development, has been of considerable practical use for my more recent practices in the classroom. His identification of the 'politics' of learning, into three modes, hierarchal, co-operative and autonomous, has greatly increased my awareness as a facilitator, a learner and as an observer (ibid p.46).

Although I have found that the question of power that the educator holds and uses in the learning process is rarely touched on, I have found that it has emerged as a fundamental element in this inquiry. As a result of my thinking and experiences
on this question I have become even more aware of how I and other educators, on occasions use, misuse or even abuse our own power with our learners. Although this may well be unconscious much of the time, I believe that the holding on to power within a group situation ultimately demonstrates a sense of limitation within the self. Overcoming this implies the need to firstly identify this lack, or in some circumstances an abundance of ego, and then to access and refine our own inner powers. I believe that only in this way can we move from simply engaging in rhetoric to truly helping empower our learners and providing actual opportunities for their growth.

I have found that for those of us who are serious about achieving this, we definitely need to develop a subtle awareness. We need to change our own habits to facilitate learning rather than constantly being the teacher as an ‘authority’. This awareness places the person before the subject that is being taught or even before the method being used, particularly in the case of teaching languages. Earl Stevick humanistic educator, who has been influenced by Dostoyevsky in this regard, states that “... in a psychological sense, what goes on in a language class is often a matter of life and death”(1981:202). I agree, and I also believe that ultimately the psychological processes involved in formal learning situations are extremely relevant to one’s whole life. It was this increasing awareness of the multitude of human issues trying to emerge out of an often over-emphasis on pedagogy, that encouraged my quest for balance and integration both within myself and in my approach to teaching.

In Ben’s case, since taking up teaching, his musical and creative skills and “strong concern for rhythmic structures”, stimulated an awareness of these same aspects within his English language students. In discussing the importance of building rapport in general but particularly for effective and empowering language teaching, Ben elaborated on a concept called ‘synchrony’. This refers to a discovery made by Ogden and Ogston (1966) which in essence means that we literally embody language, speech and body movements which are precisely and rhythmically co-ordinated, so language becomes like a dance. During interactive communication, each person’s body subtly responds to the other, such as a slight nod of the head and synchronised breathing. In some ways it is similar to the NLP concept of building rapport by matching breathing rates. I prefer however, the term of ‘synchrony’ and that of ‘conversational dance’, the latter attributed to William Condon (see ‘Integrating Subtle Skills’, this chapter). In her article on the notion of synchrony, June Gassin says that:

Body motions such as gesture, posture, eye contact and facial expression can no longer be viewed as separate expressive systems existing apart from the verbal system, but rather as rhythmically integrated, co-occurring components of total speech behaviour. ... Rhythm, then, can be a means of attaining and maintaining control in interaction (1989 b:5-6).
The use of the body in learning a language is crucial, as accelerated learning research has shown and all good language teachers well know. The awareness and ability to facilitate the more subtle but empowering levels of communication through the body in language teaching, is a true art, as recognised within A/L language teaching circles. In the specialised Lozanov’s method of Suggestopedia training for language teachers, highly developed skills in drama, music and movement is considered essential. In any case, as John demonstrated, when one is dealing with the subtle aspects of learning within any subject area, practitioners need to have some of the same subtle aspects developed within their own awareness. They need to also embrace a view which strongly acknowledges the non-verbal interactions such as synchrony and in particular the effect of one’s own consciousness upon others.

The practice of integrating personal development with professional training is common in A/L training courses for educators. Becoming aware of and identifying one’s personal vision and life purpose occurs frequently within these training courses but rarely in traditional ones. As an example, an essential element of Eric Jensen’s ‘Superlearning’ training and some of the current ‘Advanced Learning’ training courses in Australia, pay attention to uncovering and articulating each individual’s life vision, fundamental values and higher purpose.

These kind of activities greatly contribute to raising educators’ awareness way beyond the reaches of the formal learning environment. I have found that clarifying our life purpose and developing a vision and mission for ourselves is essential for the integration of our spiritual development. This helps us understand the practical purpose and transformative potential of facilitating the same for those we are teaching and training. It also lays the basis for us to become more attuned and subtle in our awareness and therefore the manner in which we deal with others.

Attention on the educator’s basic values and motivations can help us be more ‘in tune’ with our students or clients and their needs. Eva, in particular has always felt very connected with people’s energies which have been both a blessing and a curse for her until she learned to become more “grounded”. Her continuing passion about “turning every situation into a learning experience” and her description of learning as being like “tapping into different levels of thinking”, has fine-tuned her own total self awareness of learning deeply from life’s each experience. This, in turn has laid the foundation for raising others’ awareness as the means to overcome their learning blocks through her professional work as an ‘Educational Change Specialist’.

Each participant in the inquiry has become very aware that there is a power in both the knowledge and the personal experiencing of our own potential. Beliefs about our own capacities and the power to choose our inner states are fundamental to teaching within this paradigm. In discussing “the modern spiritual predicament”
and the need to develop a strong belief in the possibility of society's radical transformation, Andrew Cohen says that this involves the need to find our "innocence", free from cynicism and fear (1995:23). He adds: "For the quantum leap to occur, the individual must believe without any doubt that radical transformation is an actual possibility" (ibid). It is this kind of 'uncorrupted' belief in one's learning potential that educators in general, also need to develop. This belief enables them to genuinely encourage the development of the same within their students and ultimately influence society at large.

Participants have all described being aware of their own consciousness during the process of using accelerative learning approaches. Certain concepts within the A/L paradigm, such as 'optimum states', 'relaxed alertness' and the 'paraconscious' are familiar and well understood by practitioners. If not applied appropriately and with maturity, the accessing and use of these states for the learning process can sometimes be confusing or even threatening to both learners and teachers. For these reasons alone, A/L practitioners need to pay attention to how they use these techniques with others. In making choices about the particular techniques they use, I believe that each individual requires specialist skills and a great deal of sensitivity, empathy, and the power to discern and discriminate.

The extent the A/L practitioner has raised his or her own 'learning awareness', is reflected in the manner of their teaching or facilitating. We have had to become very finely tuned to our own states whilst teaching others, becoming comfortable with and accustomed to observing the process, as well as moving students forward to understand their own learning processes. This fine tuning requires on-going attention and effort and most importantly, passion for learning and teaching as well as the process of personal, spiritual development.

In summarising the essence of Caleb Gattegno's, 'The Silent Way', a language teaching method which has some similarities with Suggestopedia, Earl Stevick states simply: "Watch. Give only what is needed. Wait" (1981:201). For any practising educator, I believe this is some task. Since the average TESOL teacher is usually an out-going, dynamic and talkative personality, this is even more of a challenge. In my early days of teaching, beginning with my experiences inside the walls of a prison, this was not bad advice. In this situation, we learned quickly to adapt and respond creatively to each new moment. Responding accurately, creatively and responsibly allows teachers and encourages students to connect with the subtle, often silent flow of the learning process.

Maslow stated that "When the artist is truly creating there is no time to think" (1977:11-25). In other words, when the whole person is being engaged, in this case in the learning process, there is an experience of being totally aware, completely present or in the pedagogic moment. This is like the sense of flow which I, John, Ben and Eva have all experienced in our various learning environments. It is an ideal and congruent merging of energies, awareness and opportunities. It appears
that although there is no time for conscious choice, the deeper levels of one's being takes over. It is this special quality of communicating, of 'inter-being' that is a feature of the *spirit of learning*, as well as perhaps being encapsulated in the terms 'choiceless awareness' and 'pedagogic moments'.

My contention is that there is in fact a choice which comes with the *original intention* and general awareness of the practitioner, the totality of which is transmitted both verbally and non-verbally. This intention, or in other words, our consciousness, is based on our strongly held values and developed attitudes. It is the guiding force for our *ability to respond*, which is in stark contrast to simply 're-acting'. If we are truly interested in effective facilitation and want to effect a significant change in our intervention in the classroom, we do need to examine and sometimes change our intention or consciousness. In other words, we must often effect a deep change within deeper selves.

My exploration has demonstrated the on-going need for deep reflection on our practices as an effective means to facilitate change. This can be through feedback sessions with a colleague, journal writing, private introspection or within small groups and forums such as Spirit of Learning. As Ben says:

> We need *reflection* on what's not working because this feedback is valuable for us. . . .
> A key is the recognition that things aren't working. . . . It is important to have on-going appraisal and openness. . . . the more I respond, the more I reflect on my practice. . . . it is important to be aware of any discomfort in order to increase our awareness. . . .
> Whenever things don't go right in the classroom it is inevitable that I had been emotionally upset or there is an awareness of blocked energy.

As John and I had previously discussed and I had experienced with Ahtee (See 'Early Inquiring', Chapter 4'), reflection is also greatly aided by a team-teaching or co-facilitation situation where each practitioner is being calibrated by the other. Since important moments and events often occur spontaneously, there is a great advantage in this observance by a supportive colleague. In any case, it is clear that a deeper understanding and real appreciation of 'teachable moments', usually occurs after the actual event. Furthermore, I believe that although these moments do not happen all the time, there are ways and means of increasing them in the classroom.

Throughout my inquiry the need to develop and refine one's 'subtle awareness' within the process of teaching and learning has been highlighted and encouraged. This need emerged in my early inquiring and co-facilitating, during interactions with each individual participant as well as through various group experiences within the SOL forum. My thesis includes an argument for increasing each aspect of our subtle awareness in order to expand our overall perception and consciousness. I have found that developing our subtle awareness encourages the emergence of our spirituality which in turn effects a gentle but positive and lasting influence upon others.
Spiritual Awareness

The most beautiful emotion we can experience is the mystical. It is the source of all true art and science
Albert Einstein

Shortly after my return to Australia from France, I was given a book by Andrew Weil called “The Natural Mind: A new way of looking at drugs and the higher consciousness” (1972), a title which particularly attracted me. I also felt attracted to the central idea of the book, that is to experience an altered or ‘higher’ state of consciousness without the support of artificial aids such as drugs and alcohol. Weil introduces the notion that there has always been an innate drive within humans to attain and “...experience periodic episodes of non ordinary consciousness...” (p.13). He emphasizes that in itself, this was a completely natural and important phenomenon. However, the real issue and discussion of the book was the means by which we attain these states.

At the time I felt strongly pulled toward the ideal, intuitively desiring the experience of a ‘natural mind’. However, I immediately tended to dismiss the concept as being impossible for me at the time. I too was probably comfortably ‘numb’ in my average state of ‘trance’, even though this state was occasionally enhanced by some artificial stimulant or unusual activity!

Whilst living in France, I had become aware of and interested in esoteric, mystical subjects without knowing why, intuitively picking up the occasional book or meeting the odd person who seemed to communicate a sense of spirituality. My questioning of the real meaning of knowledge and reasons for my passion for travelling, added to this gradually developing new awareness. For the first time ever I also became strongly attracted toward visiting India although I felt it would have to be for purposeful reasons. As it happened during that year, I frequently and spontaneously came into contact with people who had visited India or were planning to visit, and I suddenly experienced a strong feeling I would go there in the near future. At the time, whenever I vaguely considered the idea of visiting, I instinctively felt that my experiences would not be ordinary and perhaps even a bit ‘weird’, albeit exciting.

It was not until I was back home that I realised this self-questioning during my year in France had led me to a much enhanced sense of self-awareness. This in turn led to my consciously and enthusiastically embarking on a journey to explore my spiritual awareness. This journey has since involved developing and practising new consciousness through regular meditation practices, as well as exploring ways to integrate the different aspects within myself. It has involved embracing a ‘universal’ philosophy, regular visits to the BK World Spiritual University in India and participation in co-operative, collaborative global projects.

On reflection, my intuition was right - my frequent experiences in India in the normal sense have been ‘weird’, although in a wonderful way. There I experience
feelings of being deeply connected to my higher self, enjoy a strong sense of
timelessness, inner peace and harmony and connection with a united, global
family. I can recharge the batteries of my soul, bathe and indulge in spiritual ‘food’,
interact with like-minded souls for a few weeks, and continue my growth toward
integration within myself. Although these spiritual experiences are intensified
during my stays in Mt Abu, I have discovered there is a lasting reality in them no
matter where I may be. I know that ‘mystical’ experiences usually tend to be denied
or are seen as extraordinary by most of Western society. I also well know however,
that anyone and everyone has access to these wonderful and magical corners of
their own mind and being, if only they have enough curiosity and desire to do so.

Within the new learning paradigm there is a general awareness that most of our
brain reserves are non-conscious, inherited and latent. Although the cognitive,
psychological and sensory faculties involved in A/L for example have been well
acknowledged, the spiritual aspect of our innate potential has hardly even been
recognised. On the other hand there is a general acceptance that for learning to
become more effective and ‘accelerated’, it is essential to examine our beliefs about
learning potential in general. In exploring these beliefs. I have found there is an
inevitability about tapping into the deeper levels of learning, which tends to
provoke questions about personal values and life’s meaning for the individual.
These kinds of explorations open up the heart and subtle aspects of the mind and
being which help us develop our ‘spiritual awareness’.

Before I came across A/L and its associates, my meditation experiences over four
years had prepared me well for learning more of the latest developments in brain
research. Through my experiences of developing my spiritual awareness I began to
feel a deep connection with the human potential movement in general. I have
since found that increasing my awareness and knowledge about my own
brain/mind has been a great power in itself. In addition, the more I deeply
understand about my own self the more I feel a sense of responsibility to pass on,
in some way or another, some of this awareness to others. I knew I wanted to attain
ture inner contentment at a daily level but I have learned that peace of mind is
not acquired through listening to or speaking rhetoric but comes through inner
knowledge, silent reflection, meditation and positive action. I was initially attracted
to A/L because of the theories about non-verbal communication and the power of
suggestion. I felt that some of the attention I placed on developing my own inner
contentment would ‘rub off’ on my students.

I began to wonder how much of our own spiritual essence is conveyed to others in
a way that is healing as well as educational. As the stress level amongst my
students continued to increase, I became fascinated with the synchronicity and
serendipity of having discovered snippets and understanding more about
Suggestopedia, ‘the silent way’ and the paraconscious dimensions of A/L.
Lozanov’s theories, in particular, along with the previous mentioned educators,
like Gattegno, include research into the concept of silence as well as the power of

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the sub-conscious in the educational context. The use of silence has since become an extremely important element in both my own spiritual development and the learning/teaching processes in which I am engaged. I have found that the conscious use of non-verbal activities in the classroom can create a powerful, subtle and spiritual atmosphere.

On the basis of the spiritual self-awareness that I had been accessing through my regular meditation practices, I had come to realise that this awareness is not so much 'new' as 'different'. Furthermore, there is also a deep resonating and familiar feeling associated with this yearning to experience oneself as a spiritual being or a soul. I described this experience in 'New Awareness', Chapter 1 when I wrote of my notion of a 'born-again paradigm' and is also encapsulated in the words of Marilyn Ferguson when she wrote that we suffer from "a kind of cosmic homesickness" (1982:83). When finally one does make the inner 'soul connection', it is as if one has come home to oneself after a very long time away.

As a result of these connections that I first began perceiving between my own learning and teaching, my creative impulses and my spiritual development, I began to desire and experience more integration within myself and my life. Consequently, I became more passionate about promoting a sense of spiritual awareness during the learning and teaching processes. I felt that if my education, and my educating was to be truly holistic and integrative I could no longer consider ignoring the spiritual aspects of the process.

Christian expressed similar feelings when we first met in the United States. He felt that it was his spiritual awareness and inclinations as well as his scientific interest in human potential, that attracted him to the world of A/L. Whilst discussing the subject of teachers' spiritual development with Ben he said, "Personal/spiritual development is also about changing and that is very threatening". In exploring this topic in depth with individual participants, Ben, John, Eva and Christian, we all discussed on different occasions the great personal benefits that the practice of meditation can bring us. I have found that meditation is the fundamental method for raising our spiritual awareness, for gaining courage and for developing a resolve to change and transform ourselves from within.

The meditation method which I have been practising since 1985 also promotes a philosophy and course towards personal transformation and contribution to creating a better world. The B.K. Raja Yoga path is based on an understanding and experience of human beings' inherent spiritual essence. For the individual, this means focussing one's awareness on the being aspects of oneself and is called 'soul consciousness'. This consciousness is in contrast to the concept of having a soul or a spirit, since the basic assumption of soul consciousness is that we are souls in essence. I feel that over a long period of history, humans have lost touch completely with this true soul essence, becoming more and more oriented toward seeing each
other’s external appearance. This has inevitably resulted in our judging and discriminating each other on the basis of the consciousness of the outer body, that is our colour, sex, age and so on. In order for soul consciousness to be embraced, there is a need to understand the basic qualities and form of the soul or spirit, and then to experience this spiritual self through regular meditation and practice. The big challenge is in remembering that this awareness exists and that it is possible for each one of us to access it. If practiced regularly and often enough, soul consciousness becomes natural and attractive, and eventually essential for our entire lives.

The rigorous practice of soul consciousness over time can lead to extraordinary personal transformation. This can be in the form of changing negative habits of thoughts, attaining inner contentment and developing spiritual ‘powers’ and qualities. Spiritual awareness or soul consciousness, when integrated can radically change our vision of ourselves and others. The notion is very much like seeing and experiencing ourselves as souls with totally positive, peaceful and creative qualities. We can then see others in the same way, as members of the one global family. Although this idea is not an unusual one, the emphasis on accessing and practising soul consciousness quite rigorously and as the basis for integrating spirituality into one’s practical daily life, makes it quite unique.

My meditation practices have had a major influence upon my daily awareness of myself and others. In turn, this awareness has deeply impacted on the vision and hope I hold for the future of the world in general. The worldwide spiritual community with whom I am connected provides an extremely supportive and inspiring influence. I naturally and easily embraced this spiritual path from my first encounter with it, although my external life did not radically change in many ways. Some activities fell away due to a change of interest and priorities, but in general, it was an inner change or shift which had occurred. From then I began to see my whole life, including my past and my future, differently.

As years have since passed, I realise that my spiritual awareness requires more and more refining. I have found that if one is serious about continuing to develop and grow spiritually, then the challenges and the efforts continue to increase in a more subtle sense. I realise the need for daily attention on my own self-awareness as well as remembering others are also of the same spiritual form as I am. Although, it is a powerful awareness, which has real practical benefits and implications, I am constantly amazed at how deep and persistent some of the more subtle and ‘undesirable’ habits of thought and being are. Nevertheless, I now know that I do not ever need to feel completely powerless in the face of my negativity or weaknesses. I can not close my eyes and my heart to a generally more positive and empowering way of being and living.

It is clear that my initial experience of a deep shift in awareness, when I first realised my own essence, has changed my whole life. It has pointed me in the
direction in which I feel I am destined and desire to lead. Although it is also clear that it is just the first step (albeit a powerful one), I realise I need to maintain a constant commitment to continue with my own personal transformation. I also need to maintain a spiritual community around me as well as keeping a strong faith in my capacities to change and evolve. Most importantly, I believe I need to regularly link my mind with a ‘higher’ source of spiritual power.

My spiritual practices have involved both direct experiencing and philosophical knowledge for the intellect. Over time, I have been developing a deepening and increasing sense of trust and faith in the process of personal transformation through soul consciousness. Since this includes direct experience of transcendent states, I find the experience of writing or even speaking about my spiritual awareness and practices extremely challenging and generally limited. I certainly agree with William James (1929) when he says that:

Mystical states seem to those who experience them to be states of knowledge. They are insights into depth of truth unplumbed by the discursive intellect. . . [they] can never be properly communicated, only experienced (quoted in Ferguson, 1982:407).

I have also sometimes felt that the spiritual drive could be likened to sexuality in its urgency and attraction. After reading Ferguson’s chapter on the “Spiritual Adventure” (ibid pp.397-423), I discover that Jung has often made the same comparison. On the other hand I also agree with Harman “that we humans are well known to be ambivalent with respect to our desire to know ourselves. We will resist that knowledge which we most deeply desire”(1987:87).

Individual participants in the inquiry said they gained great benefit from articulating and sharing meaningful personal experiences and thoughts on their own spiritual development. Most said that they rarely had the opportunities to do this in the normal course of their lives. They also added that our discussions or correspondence gave them some distance or detachment to see much of their lives from other perspectives. For others who participate in SOL gatherings which include ‘depth dialogue’ and non-verbal activities, similar opportunities have been and are being provided within the group situation. SOL encourages both the exploration and the expression of our inner selves in a variety of natural, stimulating and enjoyable ways.

John for example found the detachment he gained from involvement in the inquiry, was revealing of himself, “pinning down” why he does what he does. Christian also expressed the usefulness gained from articulating much of his ‘raison d’etre’ in his correspondence to me. For Ben, it was only ‘awareness in retrospect’ that eventually made him realise that it was a “spiritually integrated process” he was looking for. Ben has frequently expressed that his involvement in this inquiry, both as an individual participant and within the SOL forum, has helped him emerge and remember some of these earlier realisations. For these
reasons alone, since gaining detachment from oneself is of great personal benefit, then meditation is undoubtedly an important practice for one’s personal, spiritual development.

Meditation provides opportunities to gain detachment from one’s emotional involvements in an empowering and practical way. It can also help to transform situations as well as ourselves. When I first came across the concept of detachment on my spiritual journey, I had considerable difficulty relating to it. Initially, I thought that it implied being removed from feeling and care but soon realised that I had often attempted to obtain this state through my frequent travelling and exploring other perspectives. I have learned however, that detachment is a mental state, which can provide great clarity and insight into the self, and is advocated by many spiritual paths. I have also experienced that in the spiritual sense, it involves developing deep eternal and all-embracing love, for the self, as well as for others. The great benefit of meditation is that, although it is helpful to meditate in a group situation, the practice is not dependent on others or even particular environments.

Since first considering the question of ‘spiritual influence’, I have been very engaged in the SOL forum with all its activities. Along the way I have also become convinced that on many occasions, when it comes to increasing spiritual awareness, the less spoken the better. Naturally this is easier said than done, especially for those of us who are used to using our voice to direct, instruct, convince, motivate and facilitate others.

My motivations for establishing the SOL forum from its conception, was based on my knowledge and experience of the potential spiritual, healing influence that we educators tend to hold. I felt that the first step to developing and enhancing this influence was to increase our own spiritual awareness whilst enjoying the support of a small group of like-minded people. The next step I felt, was to encourage the exploration and sharing of some of our insights and experiences with each other as a means to encourage and support further spiritual growth. However, along the way I have become very aware of the easiness in which we educators tend to ‘rush’ into showing others how to become more spiritually aware. On this note, I am forced to ponder the words of Tagore when he says (emphasis mine):

When I turned back from the struggle to achieve results, from the ambition of doing benefit to others, and came to my own innermost need, when I felt that living one's own life in truth is living the life of all the worlds, then the unquiet atmosphere of the outward struggle cleared up and the power of spontaneous creation found its way through the centre of all things. . . . From my experience I know that where the eagerness to teach others is too strong, especially in the matter of spiritual life, the result becomes meagre and mixed with untruth. . . . in our spiritual attainment gaining and giving are the same thing: as in a lamp, to light itself is the same as to impart light to others (1951:7-8).
These words have had a strong impact on my most innermost thoughts and deepest churnings on experience in the SOL forum as well as within the Brahma Kumaris spiritual organisation. Consequently, I have become alerted and cautious when I feel a deep attraction to 'impart light to others'. I ponder my own tendencies when I feel this way, and like to remember Tagore's great words of wisdom. Certainly since the early days of the SOL forum gatherings, I have discovered how prevalent the tendency is to want to place emphasis on how to facilitate others. I like to return to my original intention and hopes for this group inquiry; that is to provide on-going opportunities for us to explore and learn to express our authentic, spiritual selves. From this basis we can explore how we might affect and inspire others through our essence, in particular those we educate or lead in some way.

I have found that words, no matter how spiritual they may sound, are very easy to speak, but that the real task of transforming ourselves remains an on-going, challenging, rigorous but rewarding venture. Maintaining a spiritual awareness requires practising being in this state as often as possible so as to be able to see others in the same way. I feel strongly that in conveying the true spirit of learning, we must remain constantly aware of the processes in which we engage, for ourselves as well as for others. Exploring in a group has reminded me of this need to concern ourselves much more with the way in which we do things in contrast to what we do. The SOL forum provides a means of finding and remaining true to our spiritual consciences and essence in relation to our learning and teaching. It provides opportunities to share our personal insights with others as a means to develop our empathy for encouraging similar processes in others.

Since the heart of my learning is in this concept of the spiritual, personal and inner growth, I often find that experience transcends language and I struggle with the form to fit the need. However, from the perspective of a new (different) awareness and understanding I have experienced and am experiencing a different reality for myself. I believe that a commitment to awakening, that is placing attention on our own self-awareness, will bring us closer to an awareness of our innate spirituality. I recall here the souful and dramatic voice of Jean Houston who recited the following excerpt from a poem called “A Sleep of Prisoners” (1959), during one of her workshops in Sydney in 1990. I was spiritually stirred and 'alerted' then, as I also remain now.

But will you wake for pity’s sake? affairs are now soul size
The enterprise
Is exploration into God.
Where are you making for? It takes
So many years to wake.

Christopher Fry
CHAPTER 6: The Essence
The Essence: Major Themes

POTENTIAL

Brain Potential

What a piece of work is man, how noble in reason, how infinite in faculties, in form and moving how express and admirable, in action how like an angel, the paragon of animals

William Shakespeare

Hamlet’s famous speech reminds us of the innate and wonderful potential of a human being. The meaning of potential in the Oxford Dictionary (1974) is “capable of coming into being or action, latent, possibility of reaching its highest, most powerful resources, to potentiate, to endow with power; to make possible” Since this inquiry is set within a context of learning approaches which are based on an expanded notion of human potential, it becomes essential to explore the subject of what is ‘possible and powerful’ for our own personal development.

My explorations have highlighted different aspects of human potential, which together demonstrate ‘what a piece of work’ is a human being. The exploration and expression of one’s potential in the fullest sense has been expressed in many different ways. These include Jean Houston’s ‘the possible human’, used as a title for her book (1982) and Kurt Goldstein and Abraham Maslow’s use of the term ‘self-actualisation’. Goldstein, who first used the term of self-actualisation, believed that each individual has an innate unconscious drive to fulfil his or her particular biological nature. Abraham Maslow later used the term ‘fully-functioning person’ to mean the fulfilment of our potentialities, having synthesised his own theory of motivation and personality (in Hoffman, 1990). Maslow stressed that:

If you deliberately plan to be less than you are capable of becoming, then I warn you that you’ll be deeply unhappy for the rest of your life, you will be evading your own capacities, your own possibilities... We’ve got brains... and that’s part of spontaneity... If you don’t use your brain, you’re not fulfilling your potential (ibid pp.12-15).

It was William James who originally stated that human beings utilise about 10% of their brain power (in Neville, 1989:37). Since then, many neuro-scientists and educators have thought a more realistic figure to be between 3% and 5%. Whatever the difference, it is obvious that people use only a minute amount of their actual potential, far less than previously imagined and so all of society is being limited. The problem has been that up until recently there has not been enough knowledge readily available which can empower and help us to access more of our latent brain potential.

Today however, there is no excuse not to explore and use more of our own brain power, as hundreds of practical techniques become available to facilitate ‘learning to learn’ processes for every area of society. I was reminded of and excited by this at
the SALT (1989) conference in the USA when Peter Kline, author of "The Everyday Genius" (1988), spoke: "We do know that every human being's potential goes far beyond anything we have ever realised". Jean Houston believes that the possibilities for human development today are extraordinary. She also warns however, of the danger of not fulfilling our potential:

When so little of the physical and mental as well as the innate spiritual vitality of person and culture is being tapped, when too great a reliance is being placed on the rational, the immediate and the functional, then consciousness is caught in a tunnel vision, inadequate to deal with the complexities and challenges of our time (1982: xv).

Many more psychologists and educators all over the world are now consciously and enthusiastically working with learning technologies which stimulate the untapped reserve capacities of the mind. It is with knowledge of our unlimited brain capacities, the power of the sub-conscious in the learning process and the need to create a new paradigm for learning, that approaches such as accelerative learning are having a powerful effect on those who are involved with them. I see that an integrated approach to A/L as essentially being a vehicle for awakening and stimulating latent potentialities within both learners and the educators who use the methodology. As Lozanov first became aware and identified, the use of whole brain learning approaches can have much more widespread implications than the formal learning environment.

Accessing and utilising more than the average percentage of brain power, undoubtedly has powerful implications for all of society. Gordon Dryden, co-author of "The Learning Revolution" (1993) which pulls together many of the significant interconnecting branches of learning research, states:

The Learning Revolution has come not a moment too soon... At last we are also learning to make use of the most brilliant human resource of all: the almost limitless power of the trillion cells and billions of connections that make up the average human brain (1993:25).

There is much evidence now to indicate that we have an enormous inherent capacity to solve most of the world’s current problems and to turn around present trends by the transformation of thinking and being through education. Many erudite thinkers and educators who have systematically used whole-brain learning approaches within education and business have strong beliefs about its more far-reaching potential. I have found that a strong belief, rather than just an interest in our own brain potential is a great force in itself for further development and expansion.

Christian’s early interest and long-held belief in the power of the mind over the physical world, provided the motivating force for his whole life. In the first letter he sent me, he writes:
Since an early age, I have always been interested by the fantastic faculties of the brain. I have always had, as far as I can remember, the certitude that man has the potential to do whatever he wants and that his limits are those he decided to set for himself. I was convinced that the mind totally dominates the physical world - though I didn’t think of it in these terms at the time.

I was convinced that I could do with success whatever I wished to do, ie sports, music, school etc as I had a very strong self confidence. The only problem is that I was terribly insecure when I was to speak to others, or in front of the class, and I was very easily intimidated by anyone. So this turned out to be the first application of the SLT [superlearning training] to gain self confidence facing others.

After experiencing great personal benefits of extending his potential as much as possible, Christian became committed to helping others do the same. This interest and conviction laid the basis for developing a strong sense of communal and global responsibility. Lonny Gold, as an experienced practitioner aware of the holistic and creative capacities of the brain, is dedicated to increasing his perception and developing his intuition “at every moment of the day”. His life’s commitment is to furthering the thinking, perceptual and learning capacities of others, through the A/L method of Suggestopedia. Lonny’s faith, enthusiasm and energy for this task is contagious and becomes an inner guiding ‘force’ for his teaching. Participants and students in his workshops and classes find themselves also becoming ‘believers’ about their own learning and creative abilities in the process.

A strong belief in the unlimited capacities of the mind/brain is an essential quality for the A/L educator. This is no less important regarding our own capacities, which is part of the reason for the excitement frequently experienced in learning and teaching in this context. We can not help but to personally put into practice some of the techniques for developing more of our own potential. Both Eva and Ben discovered that stimulating their natural and inherent brain capacities also brought them closer to more of their spiritual capacities and essential selves. In other words this awareness and belief in human potential is a transformative power in itself. It lays a firm basis for learning and working effectively and connecting deeply with the self as well as with others. It becomes crucial when considering the world in general.

In considering the world in general Fritjov Capra believes that humankind’s crisis is an interconnected one. It is the same crisis for us all - that is one of “a crisis of perception”, or subscribing to an outdated world view (1991:15). Willis Harman in the foreword to his book, “Global Mind Change” (1987) makes much the same point, when he says that his conviction continues to strengthen that “the real action today is changing fundamental assumptions”. In achieving this we must begin with our own brain/minds and learn how to expand our perceptions and our thinking. Any practical approach to learning should be embraced by all educators. It should also be handled with awareness, skill and sensitivity.
Lyelle Palmer, Professor of Education and Director of the Office of Accelerative Learning at Winona State University, Minnesota, summarises his view about ‘whole-brain’ learning approaches:

The many benefits of the accelerative learning approach of consistently positive learning experiences may be more than just a nice idea. Just possibly, these positive benefits may be an absolute necessity for the kind of world we want to build, and into which we want our children and grandchildren to be born. Choosing a positive, accelerative, *natural high* produces a high level of productivity and caring, independence, and extraordinary creativity. Students see that they can take personal responsibility for positive choices in life and that, they have abundant opportunities to choose heroism (1990:51).

A/L teachers and trainers are constantly encouraged by their learners and trainees whom they frequently observe receiving a natural, even “ecstatic high” from successful learning. If teenage students can experience these kinds of regular ‘highs’ in a fun, socially comfortable and caring environment, the need for chemical highs in the form of drugs will have much less allure (ibid).

For me this ‘natural high’ relates to the previously discussed ‘natural mind’, including an expanded consciousness, to which I had been gravitating for so long. I first experienced some of these natural highs, in the form of meditation, based on soul-conscious awareness of my spiritual self. Subsequent knowledge of brain and learning theories, the concept of unlimited potential and multiple intelligences in learning was fantastic stimulation for me as an educator. It also furthered my recognition of myself as a life-long learner and has inspired enthusiasm for on-going studies and developing both personally and professionally. Certainly, I was able to immediately perceive the far-reaching global implications of adopting a whole-brain approach to education and also to training in the corporate world.

My earlier search for meaning laid the groundwork for a direction toward wanting to understand the human psyche in its totality. I have continued to learn more about human potential in general and the wonder of my own brain and whole being. In turn, I am better equipped not only to understand others, but to help them better understand themselves. I have become excited about being able to choose heroism in a world where “... we have lost genuine heroes: the very concept of heroism has become suspect, old-fashioned, and seemingly obsolete.” (Maslow in Hoffman, 1990:12)

Lozanov, in support of his holistic, humanistic approach to learning which aims to maximise human potential, stated:

Education is the most important thing in the world. The whole of life is learning - not only in school. I believe that developing this high motivation - which comes through the techniques - can be of the greatest importance to humanity (in Ostrander & Schroeder, 1979:23).
Included in my “high motivation” for this inquiry is my conviction that it is not only the potential of our students which needs to be explored and actualised, but also that of educators. Most participants in this inquiry have also experienced, that expanding our own potential in many different spheres leads us to an expansion of our consciousness. I believe these views have evolved out of a strong disillusionment with traditional approaches, a new-found source of inspiration and motivation for learning through experiencing more of one’s potential, and the striking of a chord within the common spirit of humanity. This sense of connectedness is an important and essential one that also provides a basic assumption as well as a major theme for this thesis. Like Maslow, I believe that “the similarity between humans of different cultures to be deep; the differences superficial” (in Hoffman, 1990:33).

Since Lozanov’s early research, there have been more recent radical shifts in understanding the human brain/mind and intelligence. These shifts lie at the centre of the ‘learning revolution’ which, I believe, is committed to the transformation of education and society in general. Related fields such as Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) which involves ‘modelling excellence’, and bringing about changes in human behaviour, dovetail well with accelerated learning programs and is sometimes included under its umbrella approach.

For me an important question remains; How can we ensure that this change lasting and truly transformative? In any case, just as accelerative learning and related methodologies are further being developed and enjoying more widespread acceptance, Dryden and Vos also write with enthusiasm and faith that:

Not only do we need a parallel revolution in lifelong learning to match the information revolution, and for all to share the fruits of an age of ‘potential plenty’, but fortunately, that revolution - a revolution that can help each of us learn anything much faster and better, is also gathering speed (1993:23).

Upon reading some of Dryden & Vos, it may appear that the emphasis of this revolution in learning is about speeding up the learning process. I can sometimes relate strongly to the sense of ‘urgency’ the authors convey because I believe that they are very concerned about the need to revolutionise education and society in general.

The following quote by Ortega Y Gassets summarises my own overall reflections about brain potential:

So many things fail to interest us, simply because they don’t find in us enough surfaces on which to live, and what we have to do is to increase the number of planes in our mind, so that a much larger number of themes can find a plane in it at the same time”(in Houston, 1982: 59).
Dealing with our Own Potential

Some women see things as they are and say, 'Why'. I dream of things that never were, and say, 'Why not?'

George Bernard Shaw

Although at best we can only imagine the unlimited nature of human potential, what we currently do know about the mind’s capacities leaves me in great awe. Whilst feeling excited that there are no apparent limits to the human mind, I simultaneously often feel frustrated that I did not have this awareness much earlier in my life. Before I learned about the unlimited nature of human potential, I always felt that there were areas of creative self-expression which would be denied me. When I was growing up, although I learned and loved to play the piano, my lessons focussed on the intellectual and technical aspects. My teachers gave me little or no encouragement to feel the music with my whole self or to develop the potential I may have had for true creative expression or improvisation.

At school I was average in most subjects, possessed good sporting abilities and energy, and was in general an “all rounder”. Not much has changed since, except that I am now totally aware of and have personal experience with many different facets of my own natural innate potential. I know and believe that I could have become excellent in any chosen area or areas, and that I can still develop much more of my creative potential. Nevertheless, I find myself at times becoming very angry and sad at the ‘wasted’ opportunities most of us have had during our schooldays, when we could have and should have known about our own potential possibilities.

At this point I feel I need to take care of how I deal with the past. I feel I must use to great benefit what I do know and am aware of at this point in my overall development. I have realised that I must use my ‘frustration’ as motivation to continue my efforts toward facilitating awareness and self knowledge in others. I must not use it as an excuse for doing nothing or being negative about myself or ‘the system’. More importantly I feel, is that I need to learn to accept my realisations with grace. Everything is as it should be, and as Ben expressed, “when the student is ready the teacher comes”. I have learned that we only discover the magic and mysteries of ourselves when we are curious and ready and willing to do so.

In general, I feel the need and the desire to fulfil my potential in a range of different areas. In essence, this means I want to become more congruent, artfully skilful in my work, and to develop more of my whole self, particularly the creative, intuitive and spiritual aspects. On the other hand, I have personally experienced as well as observed in others, that to fulfil our own potential is easier said than done. It seems that at times one can much more easily encourage and facilitate others to develop and fulfil their potential in different areas rather than taking specific steps toward fulfilling one’s own.
Maslow expresses the paradoxical nature of dealing with our own potential:

We fear our highest possibilities. We are generally afraid to become that which we can glimpse in our most perfect moments, under conditions of great courage. We enjoy and even thrill to the godlike possibilities we see in ourselves in such peak moments. And yet we simultaneously shiver with weakness, awe, and fear before these very same possibilities. (in Hoffman, 1990:12)

Although Maslow is particularly referring to peak experiences when one has a “glimpse” of one’s perfection, or I would say the divine, spiritual self, this fear nevertheless, is prevalent in other than peak moments. As a result of my having awakened to my own spiritual essence, I have experienced a corresponding awareness of a potentially expanded and fulfilled self. This has the quality of an infiniteness and a sense of unlimitedness, which can seem frightening and quite unfamiliar at times. I believe that the possibility of unhappiness to which Maslow referred is particularly relevant and true for those people who have awakened to their own “godlike possibilities”, and sometimes feel paralysed to move forward. Being awake implies either an awareness and knowledge of either mind/brain learning theories, intuitive or spiritual experiences of their own innate potential and driving motivations and values.

In an informal lecture in 1965, Maslow had proposed the existence of a previously unrecognised inner disturbance he called the ‘Jonah Complex’. He described this syndrome as “an escape from greatness” a refusal to face up to our capacities for wonderful achievements, for changing the world in fact (ibid. One may wonder then, what are the factors that hold us back? What are the limitations to our self-actualisation? I believe that they include a general avoidance of facing our fears and undertaking a responsibility to change ourselves. Perhaps it may be partly due to some of the enormous efforts that are involved in trying to extend, challenge and improve oneself. These efforts at times seem just that, and at other times, they involve simply remembering to stay aware, alert, focused and positive.

Whilst participating in the ‘Pathways to Potential’ (SEAL) conference in the UK (1991) in her plenary speech, Diana Whitmore described potential in terms of an “agony and ecstasy”. Because there will always be further steps to take in fulfilling our personal potential, we need to come to terms with “the irreconcilable polarity between what we could be and what we are now”. I see that this view is the acknowledgment of both the shadow and the light within our lives. The ability to reconcile both aspects is integral to any discussion on fully actualising the self. In particular, as a facilitator of other’s learning potential, I feel the necessity to explore all that is entailed in discovering and expanding both sides of my own potential.

I felt comforted when Whitmore expressed the frustration she often personally experiences regarding her own potential; that there was always a sense that one would never reach ‘there’. I totally resonated with her sentiments whilst also
seeing that once we had awakened to our brain/mind capacities, then we could do no less than to continue on the ‘pathway to potential’, despite fears either of success, failure or even a sense of possibly never arriving.

In her speech Whitmore elaborated on her concept of “the tyranny of potential”, by asking the same question that often comes up for me: that is, why do we long for and also resist our potential? In attempting to answer this, she identified four forms of resistance. The first of these is the fear of responsibility, expressed through different ways, such as “it’s too big, too expensive, too much work” and so on. Furthermore, it can be frightening to be powerful or “potent”, especially as Whitmore said, if we have identified strongly with being a loving person. The second reason she identified was that of resistance to surrender, meaning the surrender of the identity we have worked hard to attain up until now which essentially involves the common and recurring pattern of a fear of change.

This fear, I believe, seems to invade the positive attitudes and serious attempts of most people to implement change at any level, at least some time or another. The third, and quite an insidious one I believe, is the fear of failure. This commonly experienced resistance to potential triggers some basic emotional insecurities, such as impoverished self esteem and as Whitmore says “not daring to dream”. The fourth form of resistance is that of fear of letting go and trusting our potential. Whitmore gave the example of how children instinctively trust unconditionally until they feel betrayed. I am certain that most adults at one point or another have experienced this same sense of betrayal in their lives, which in turn can result in a fear of trusting our real selves, our own intuition and our full potential.

Whitmore’s answer to all this resistance to one’s potential is to synthesise both concepts of transcendence and imminence, which leads us to her statement that “our potential is right here now”. Like Victor Frankl, she believes that we have continual and conscious opportunities to develop our potential at every moment. The expression *Cape Diem!* which was popularised by the film, “The Dead Poet’s Society”, has became a powerful reminder to seize and appreciate each moment of our lives.

Another comforting reminder, and one that I have experienced through my spiritual studies and practice of meditation, is that in order to actualise our potential we are not ultimately dependent on external situations. It is inspiring to meet and know good personal examples of this principle. These people have an unwavering belief in the principle that every moment is an opportunity to make a positive difference within themselves as well as to others.

As several SOL participants, after an event expressed it, “don’t be afraid to dream and be the dream” and “dare to do and be it”. Marilyn King, an A/L trainer in the United States runs a highly successful program for street kids called ‘Dare to Imagine’, which uses the power of passion, purpose and visualisation to help
people push past theirs fears and self doubts. Although there are plenty of deep-rooted 'bogies' to face and overcome within the self, there are also now many great strategies for up-rooting them. It has become clear that developing one's potential in any area can be greatly encouraged and supported by a positive environment in the form of networks such as the A/L one throughout the world.

Essentially however, although one can use others' techniques and be inspired by others, the efforts are up to each individual and the 'buck stops with me'. Theodore Roosevelt expressed this same principle: "Not once in a thousand times is it possible to achieve anything worth achieving except by labour, by effort, by serious purpose and by willingness to take risks" (in Tonsing 1989:125). I well know now that I have to take responsibility for my own consciousness and all that is involved in developing my own potential. This personal sense of responsibility has been strongly stressed by both Christian and Ben, the latter explaining it as our ability to respond to other's needs at any given moment.

As discussed in 'Awareness', the high level of stress from which teachers in general suffer is an inhibiting factor for both students and teachers. Since both fear and stress can effectively 'downshift' part of the brain, then on those occasions, one is not using even the already acknowledged and developed part of one's potential, let alone accessing more of it. Fortunately educators who consciously use A/L methods fully and accurately, are decidedly more aware and more knowledgeable about how the learning brain works. They also know how to calm and develop the mind further, although this does not necessarily mean they always deal effectively with their own mind at every moment.

Nevertheless, most people who use A/L successfully with others, regularly experience 'mind power' exercises and programs in one way or another for themselves. Practitioners like Christian, John and Eric systematically and regularly use the techniques on themselves. Gloria has found that by using A/L techniques for her own personal study needs she has tapped into her creative potential, a phenomenon many other teachers have also experienced. The meditation technique I practice, as well as the entire natural, integrated processes involved in this inquiry has helped me deal with my own limited or negative thinking. Having experienced integrated, unlimited and peaceful states of consciousness on different occasions I have developed great internal confidence that I can ultimately deal with much of my own potential and destiny. This is not to say that I never suffer from self-doubts on occasions when I have needed considerable self-determination and discipline. At other times I have had a more 'ad hoc' approach which really implies a deep trust in the process, and which is also effective.

Experience has taught me that at the very least there is a need to clarify the meaning of potential for ourselves. This should include the identification of individual talents, personal qualities, beliefs, values and essentially our life purpose and vision. This kind of exploration is a rare occurrence within traditional
educational contexts, where much of one’s learning is irrelevant to ‘real’ life. It is usually much later that one considers the full meaning and implications of developing more of one’s own potential.

I was interested to read that despite holding double honours degrees from university, Tony Buzan, author of many books on the brain, and originator of ‘mind-mapping’ techniques, said that he was amazed at what he wasn’t taught. He realised that out of all the thousands of hours of learning of his various subjects, he was not taught how to learn. A complete lack of practical books on learning how to use one’s brain, prompted Buzan to write eight books on the subject. One of them, “Use Your Head” (1980) has sold over a million copies all over the world. It appears there is no shortage of people throughout the world who wish to fulfil their potential by understanding their own brains.

Like Carl Rogers who was concerned with this concept of maximising potential within education, I believe that there should be a shift in focus from teaching to learning and, as has often been articulated from other participants throughout this thesis, from teacher to facilitator. Because much of what has been called education and learning involves little meaning, feeling or relevance to the learner, the result is of a lack interest of even fear of learning for many people. Rogers says that this in turn;

leads at best to a lowering of sights of what is possible in education, if not throughout one’s life, and at worst to failure, and a consequent sense of being a limited person (in Underhill, 1989 b: 251).

Certainly in most cases throughout this inquiry, past conditioning has been greatly influential in perceiving our drawbacks rather than our talents and virtues. This phenomenon is by no means restricted to one sector of society. I would conclude that there are very few individuals anywhere, who not only knew all about their full capacity for learning and developing their potential when growing up, but were given unlimited encouragement, support and stimulation to do so. I believe that fortunately, a learning revolution has begun. However, it will only gather force and long term persuasion as each individual deals positively and fully with their own potential.

_The mind is its own place, and in it self_  
_Can make a Heav’n of Hell, a Hell, a Hell of Heav’n_  

John Milton

Part of dealing with our own potential is the ability to hold the paradox that both Maslow and Whitmore described and that John believes is a significant stage of one’s personal growth. Furthermore, since I also believe that moving toward self-actualisation and fulfilment of our potential is an on-going process, then one should not create a concept of the end or a final goal in relation to its development.
Many participants in my inquiry are not only engaged in facilitating others’ learning processes, but also in exploring their own potential through on-going intensive learning experiences for themselves. Not the least of these is in the realm of writing, both as a means for self expression and development as well as for influencing others. The documentation of this inquiry process is my own first attempt at writing a major work. I have certainly experienced both the ‘heaven and hell’ involved in the experience as well as learning much about my own potential. Despite the considerable personal challenges I have experienced and efforts involved, I know I have also greatly increased my confidence and my willingness to push past resistance to developing more of my own potential.

When interviewing Eric, he expressed his great love for accelerated learning approaches because of the opportunities they provide for his own continued learning. He was also referring to the expanding body of knowledge, understanding and I hope, wisdom that is continuing to accumulate within this approach to teaching and learning. Eric has not only been able to continue his love of learning, through his teaching and training of others, but to further his own potential whilst also extending his influence through writing. His most recently published book, “The Learning Brain” (1994) is packed with information and techniques for understanding and expanding one’s brain. Rather than seeing a final end to my own goals, my own potential or even this inquiry, I like to view efforts toward actualising myself in terms of growing and extending new branches of my tree, as well as planting seeds for new trees and forests.

I have found in my inquiry that all participants have eagerly embraced many of the techniques of A/L, having discovered that they can and indeed should be applied to ourselves and our own learning potential. In discovering more of her creative potential Gloria enjoyed the expression of aspects of it whilst simultaneously becoming more adventurous within herself. She links the development of learning potential with an enhanced sense of self-esteem, and the ability to ‘take risks’ as both a teacher and a learner. In her book on self esteem, Steinem learned “. . . that self esteem isn’t everything; it’s just that there’s nothing without it” (1992:26). Similarly, I believe we currently manifest ourselves minimally, compared to what we may be, that is to achieve more that what is considered the norm.

It is well acknowledged within education at large that the development of self-esteem is linked with successful learning. However, I see the approach that is often taken in schools as being a reactive one of constantly perceiving and describing all kinds of ‘failures’ and trying to solve the associated problems. Rather, schools in general should take a creative approach like that held passionately by Eva; that is everything one does should be seen as a potential for further learning. If all educators adopted this view, we could go a long way toward encouraging potential to be expressed and fulfilled, within ourselves as well as our learners.
As other humanistic educators like Rogers and Underhill, I do not believe that teachers can facilitate processes in their students that are not being experienced or at least attempted within the self. This does not mean an A/L educator has to have personally achieved, greatness or mastery in a particular skill. However, she or he needs to have examined the concept in relation to themselves, and to be making at least parallel efforts to their learners. I have become convinced that holding an unwavering belief in one’s learning potential, is an absolute fundamental basis for enhancing and ‘accelerating’ learning and personal growth. This must certainly include the practitioners’ belief in themselves as well as in our students.

The phrase, “every student is a genius waiting to be discovered”, is used as a popular peripheral quotation in many A/L environments as a powerful reminder for our students. I also find it a reminder for our sub-conscious that we are all potential geniuses. Stimulating personal growth environments such as the SOL forums provide time and space to explore our values and beliefs about our own potential as well as for those we might teach. Only then, I believe can we be totally authentic and congruent with the values we hold about others’ potentialities. Along with the knowledge that we can ‘re-frame’ our assumptions and our language, we discover that we can radically change our thinking and limited beliefs about human nature in general. This in turn, supports our efforts toward our own and others’ self actualisation.

My experience throughout my early and later education, has demonstrated the powerful influence that an educator can have upon their students’ beliefs in themselves, my capacities and therefore my self esteem. Since learning is all about life, a poor self-image about our capacity to learn in school has huge and far-reaching consequences throughout our whole lives. I have also never understood why it is that only ‘the gifted and talented’ in schools who receive a whole range of extra opportunities for developing their talents and potential. It is clear that there are many others who should not be categorised as ‘slow learners’ or even as having one or more of a range of assorted ‘learning difficulties.’ A/L research, including the theory of multiple intelligences and practice, has demonstrated that each individual student has the potential to be a gifted genius in her or his individual way. It does take however, a special attitude on the behalf of the teacher to believe and understand this.

The ‘problems’ are frequently and usually found to be simply in the different ways of learning, rather than a problem of not being able to learn. Undoubtedly the beliefs, attitudes and knowledge of ‘how to learn’ theories of individual teachers can make an enormous difference to their students, as the ‘placebo effect’ has been well demonstrated in many cases. The widespread implications of practising learning approaches, which are based on the fundamental assumption that everyone can be a genius, are enormous.
There is no doubt that awareness of our inner motivations and knowledge about our own brains provide a very powerful basis for expanding our potential. I believe this is fundamental to our work as facilitators of other's potential. Since practitioners of A/L must have at least knowledge and utilisation of the whole brain in learning, they must also have a strong belief in and resonance with the fundamental assumptions and values involved. These include a strong belief in being able to overcome limited or negative thinking in regards to learning potential. Current leading edge thinkers and authors, such as Peter Senge, Stephen Covey, and the authors of “Education for the 21st Century” (Hedley Beare & Richard Slaughter, 1993), have also identified the strong need for education and ‘learning organisations’ to recognise and honour their most valuable resource, human potential.

This increased acknowledgment of human potential as a resource has led to the proliferation of many people-based training programs, some of a dubious nature and others which are getting to the heart and soul of real learning and growth for the individual. There is a gradually increasing number of effective programs which are providing opportunities, encouragement and skills for people to maximise their learning potential. The danger is that in our enthusiasm to facilitate others’ potential, we can easily leave behind the exploration of the values and motivations which drive our potential. There needs to be more than a small number of individuals and organisations who recognise; that in order to make a long-term difference in our world, there has to be a return to exploring basic and universal values.

This is not to say that this kind of exploration is without its ‘dangers’. Often an A/L practitioner is the only one engaging in new paradigm thinking within a particular organisation and can often feel isolated, unsupported and even thwarted at times. In some cases she may even represent a threat to the organisation because of the potential of these kinds of learning technologies to facilitate major changes within individuals. An uncovering of fears and resistances, as well as the potential within learners, must also raise awareness of these same aspects within the facilitator. This in turn can present major personal challenges for him or her. I have discovered throughout the inquiry that these kinds of challenges inevitably bring about some deep self questioning relating to, firstly one’s belief in the self, and then to one’s longer-term commitment to this radically different approach to educating.

I have found that a genuine love and enthusiasm for both the process of learning and facilitating others, is a key factor in helping overcome our own fears and limitations, as well as helping others to do the same. Like Eric, I am excited about the thought of “turning others on to learning”. As John also expressed, I feel a great “buzz” from providing opportunities for others to empower themselves through the discovery and expression of some of their own potential. I despair at the very thought that one is limited by a lack of faith in their basic ability to learn, despite
the fact that I have also suffered from the same ‘disease’, and occasionally still have apprehensions about my own capacity in certain areas.

As a solo mother who dubiously undertook tertiary learning for the first time at the age of thirty, and twenty years later still engaged in university learning through this particular inquiry, I am more enthusiastic about my future learning potential than ever. I have a multitude of ideas for a range of different projects, all of which will involve challenging and extending myself, and continuing the everlasting journey of this ‘spirit of learning’. Like all of the other A/L educators in this inquiry, I am constantly being excited about helping others break down limiting beliefs about themselves to discover and believe in their full innate potential, and seeing them blossom into ‘what they may be’.

To summarise the power of beliefs, Denis Postle makes the following statement; “Beliefs lie at the root of your life. A belief that you can’t . . . limits. A belief that you can . . . expands your possibilities” (1989:102). To summarise my own view, I believe that a committed path toward personal growth and self-actualisation for an educator of innovative methods requires a strong belief in the self, commitment, courage, self-discipline and the ability to perceive and seize opportunities for ourselves as well as for our learners. Over the period of six years of my involvement with these techniques, I have observed a real transformation within the hearts and minds of various A/L practitioners who, in earlier stages of practice, did not always appear as congruent as what one would expect or hope. Given time, and the powerful influence of educating within this paradigm, I have experienced that an individual educator can change from within.

From this basis of believing in and experiencing new aspects of our own potential, we can develop positive and high expectations of others, that they can change, expand and grow spiritually. As Bernie Neville points out, teachers must develop “a ritual” they believe in, and “their words must be supported by their paraconscious communication. If they want the system to be magic they must act as though it is” (1989:41). The whole process often appears complex and not always easy. In many cases, it is even ‘painful’, but “magic happens”. I have seen it and experienced it!

Are you in earnest? Then seize this very minute.
What you can do, or dream you can, begin it;
Boldness has genius in it;
Only engage and then the mind grows heated;
Begin, and then the work will be completed

Goethe
Facilitating Others’ Potential

The purpose of teaching is to provide for students an experience of their own greatness

Eric Jensen

I love this quote. It inspires and moves me to make efforts toward my own “greatness” so that I may be an example, and to inspire and help facilitate this quality in others. The more I move along this branch of the new paradigm learning, the more I reconnect with my original motivations to ‘get my own act together’, and remind myself of the natural influence we have on those we teach. This is no more evident than within the integrated A/L context, where the awareness of both teachers and students has been heightened all around, and there is a constant focus on encouraging the individual’s potential. Within this context, this focus is very much on non-verbal communication as well as a gradually increasing recognition of the influence of our thought processes and subtle energies beyond the obvious.

As one of the first A/L trainers of teachers on a large scale within the NSW school system, Eric Jensen has contributed much in terms of inspiring teachers who have taken his course. He often refers to greatness in terms of the brain, each individual learner, and the potential of each one of us has as teachers to make a difference within education at large. Gloria sees all learners as possessing great potential for uniqueness, without feeling the need to compare themselves with others. Within the A/L context, terms such as greatness, mastery, excellence and genius are all well acknowledged not only as concepts but as potential reality for each individual.

This heightened awareness automatically puts the spotlight on personal development, which is widely acknowledged as a side-benefit for students using A/L techniques. It has become increasingly clear that along the way, we educators, as well as experiencing many challenges, are also receiving many side benefits, in terms of our personal development. A/L theories have emphasised the notion that we teach mainly by emulation, through the powerful influence of the paraconscious elements. Diane Whitmore expressed it as “we teach what we are”, Adrian Underhill described it as the “totality” of our intentions and as I might say, we teach through our “essential selves”.

Participants in this inquiry have all shown us that we are an integral part of the overall suggestions for our learning environment. We demonstrate by example, through our mood and demeanour, by dealing with both content and process simultaneously, and by attention to ‘room ecology’, that enjoyable and effective learning can occur and indeed is the right of each individual in our society.

Although I fall into the trap at times, by focusing much of my attention on the personal development of others, I know that I will not heal myself and fulfil my own potential simply through encouraging others. The teaching or facilitation of others will undoubtedly spur me on, but I know that I must become a learner as
well. The more I become enmeshed in 'learning to learn' processes with my students, the more I am reminded of the responsibility I have to develop my own potential as well facilitating others. As already emphasised throughout this thesis, I am very aware that whether I consciously choose to or not, that I have a strong influence, in more ways that are immediately obvious, upon those I teach. As Denis Postle reminded us in a 1991 SEAL workshop on 'Emotional Competence' in the UK, "So far as I am within range of your imagination, or you of mine, our psychological fields are involved with each other".

By placing emphasis on the learning process and remaining constantly aware of influence through the power of suggestion, many aspects of our own essence are brought into play. These include the question of belief in ourselves, how we use our power in our role as facilitator and our inner states as well as those of our students. A/L processes help us as well as our students, to understand specific learning/teaching styles and to explore possible obstacles to our learning and our overall development. Lonny Gold, long-time practitioner of Suggestopedia, has learned to be a master in the art of suggestion, since this is at the heart of his approach to teaching others. For Lonny, A/L helps learners redefine what is possible in terms of their life's fulfilment. Since the autonomy of each individual learner is extremely important in his approach, he says that the teacher must be "practically grounded and not self-interested". In other words, I believe he means that the teacher must get out of the way of the students.

Certainly I have observed John to be a master at allowing the students more and more control over the learning process, so that eventually they become autonomous for much of the time and the teacher takes 'a back seat'. As John Heron has described in detail, there will always be a fluctuating sense of teacher/facilitator control in each learning situation. What is important is not the amount of power we hold, because this depends on many factors. Rather, the point is our awareness of what we are doing and of the dynamics within each group situation. Furthermore, since the notion of power and control with others is directly related to the same within the self, I find the subject fascinating. I am essentially interested, as I have long been, in how each individual's potential power can be tapped, released and expressed.

When I reflect on some of the special qualities of each participant A/L teacher in this inquiry, I see that although there are several common specialities as well as developed individual ones. Undoubtedly, these personal qualities will continue to have a great influence on each of their learners, either consciously or most likely at an unconscious level. Gloria's heightened sensitivity to each of her student's potential for taking "great strides" is a powerful and positive suggestive message to convey to her students. Her strong beliefs may not ever be verbally or directly articulated, but each one of her students will get the message nevertheless. As I have observed and experienced, John's humility and relaxed style must convey an atmosphere of trust and relaxation within his classrooms. I also know that he does
not always feel this way, but by practising what he preaches, he continues to ‘trick’ his imagination or sub-conscious mind into believing what he wants it to. I have had the same experience at times.

As a result of Eva’s harsh personal experiences around her own learning, she has developed a deep understanding of learners’ energy blocks, along with a great deal of caring energy and empathy for others’ learning processes. Eva views all situations as opportunities for learning and conveys this attitude to those with whom she works. Christian expresses a remarkable ability for sustained self-discipline which is an important aspect for on-going sustained learning and for developing spiritually. Lonny’s acknowledged personal qualities are his wonderful enthusiasm and ability to create high and positive energy states. Eric also has this same quality of enthusiasm and a great love of knowledge about the learning process. Ben has a unique and very creative quality in his approach to his teaching his spiritual development and to his life in general.

There is a close correspondence between the personal qualities of inquiry participants and Carl Rogers’ ideal characteristics of a good facilitator. The three main ones he describes are genuineness, unconditional acceptance and empathy (in Underhill, 1989 b:258). Underhill observed a similar correlation with the personal qualities that are often displayed by teachers. As Maslow found and with which I agree, there seem to be more fundamental similarities between people, than there are differences (1990:33). I have found that this is particularly evident when comparing the qualities of a good teacher or even a leader no matter which culture or historical period being looked at. I do not think it is difficult to come up with some universally accepted and respected personal qualities and values for a good educator. My interest is concerned with how we develop and maintain these latent potentialities within us.

The SOL forum provides some good opportunities for doing this. Most participants in events tend to be facilitators of others’ learning in some way or another. Although not all use A/L techniques regularly, people often discover there is a body of knowledge and research behind what they tend to do intuitively. This is a common occurrence amongst aware and holistic educators working within many learning different learning environments. One of the characteristics of AL practitioners is their awareness of the power of suggestion and the paraconscious to enhance learning and their commitment to developing it to facilitate others full potential. This kind of awareness is gradually being increased as a result of the vision upon which Spirit of Learning forum rests and through the kind of activities we hold.

A common quality that has recently emerged amongst many of the participants within these forums is that of a strong sense of benevolence and care for others’ welfare. A heightened awareness of this for some, led them to the realisation that to avoid ‘burn-out’, they also needed to take more care of themselves. As most
individual participants as well as SOL participants have discovered for themselves, some form of meditation and creative visualisation exercises help develop more of their mental capacities and stimulate creative and spiritual tendencies. They also help increase alertness, memory power and the ability to handle stress and enhance sensitivity to others and their needs. Experimenting and becoming comfortable and familiar with various techniques for ourselves has shown to be the only real effective and congruent way for using them with others.

Although A/L techniques and NLP are potentially very powerful learning tools, one should not emphasise innovative techniques at the expense of “innovative processes” (Underhill 1989 b:259). In any case despite the faith that most participants have in A/L and its focus on developing life-long learning strategies, I am certain that we all recognise the limits to these techniques as a means to bring about deep and lasting change in our learners. What has become clear is that it is the underlying attitudes and beliefs which are the powerful driving forces behind personal growth and deep change. I have found that the honouring by facilitators of the spiritual aspects of learning, along with an exploration of meaningful values is a potent basis for authentic and effective facilitation of human potential. I might add here that the validation of values and spiritual aspects necessarily need to be verbalised within the learning process, rather the key is within the awareness of the facilitator herself.

From my early prison teaching experiences, I have learned to appreciate and value the use of my intuition as a means to guide me in many and varied teaching situations. Fortunately I developed some early confidence to teach without a lesson plan, relying instead on my inner knowing and ability to respond to the moment. In the process of developing this quality as a teacher, I found that one can become subtly attuned to the ‘rhythm and flow’ that frequently occur in meaningful human interactions. Naturally the teacher needs to be aware of and learn how to ‘instrument’ these kinds of experiences, through her own ‘harmonious being’. This awareness provides a great opportunity for spontaneous and deep learning for herself and her students.

Carl Jung spoke about ‘intuitive knowledge’ and described it as possessing “an intrinsic certainty and conviction” (in Shepherd, 1993:207). He says that “the certainty of intuition rests equally on a definite state of psychic ‘alertness’ of whose origin the subject is unconscious” (ibid). This kind of knowledge or ‘intelligence’ as Howard Gardner (1983) would describe it, is not something that is taught in the usual teacher training courses, or even in experiential learning courses. It is a different way of knowing, a subtle quality of being that involves being in touch with the whole self. Linda Shepherd adds:
Acceptance of intuition gives us greater access to information, augments the limited perspective of our five familiar senses, and prompts us to transcend our linear view of time and space. Intuition can help bridge the boundaries that seem to separate us from others and from nature (1993:223).

As I continue to develop and refine my intuition, keep up with the many new research findings in the human potential movement and attempt to expand my consciousness and my professional horizons, I realise how much I have to learn. I discover new challenges, questions, doubts and dilemmas within this ‘risky’ domain of new paradigm learning. I reflect back to my gradual and tentative beginnings to a period when there was little external support or encouragement. This was mainly due to the fact that A/L was not well known in general and was even ‘feared’ in some cases. As Ben expressed that “the problem is that A/L is about changing and that is very threatening”. One of his suggestions is to just “be there”, in other words be very present, not on the techniques but in the moment as is expressed in the term, “choiceless awareness”.

One of the many skills we need to develop as aware and effective facilitators is that of the art of discerning. This is extremely important in terms of the language we use. It is sometimes common practice for people new to either A/L or NLP to use the technical or explanatory language in a way that is exclusive and even threatening to others. We also need to feel the pulse of each group of learners which means assessing the particular psychological needs as well as the technical needs. Only then can we make accurate decisions about the use or otherwise of certain techniques. This skill to discern or discriminate, is a subtle one which I feel I have developed quite well. On the other hand, although I think I have learned to be relatively sensitive in this area and discriminating in the classroom, I may not always have been described as a subtle person in general.

This is only one example which could demonstrate that we do teach best what we need to know. I like this notion, and I think about it frequently, as a reminder and a means to help me focus on developing particular skills, qualities and inner powers within myself. Certainly in a general sense, I have become aware that I am ‘since I am teaching techniques which are about expanding both learning and psychological potential, I know I have to expand my own as well.

It is not uncommon for new A/L practitioners, as with beginning teachers in general, to suffer occasionally from feelings of tentativeness and uncertainty, if not a sense of inadequacy and lack of confidence. They are enthusiastic with new knowledge and techniques, eager to implement them as soon as possible. However, since the reality is that this is a paradigm which does aim to bring about transformation of the whole education system, as well as within students, undoubtedly apprehensions or even fears begin to arise. As Rogers stresses; “To communicate one’s full awareness of the relevant experience is a risk in interpersonal relationships” (1961:5). For me, overcoming some of my own fears,
hesitations or past inexperience in various areas has taken considerable time, attention and effort to overcome.

I have found that facilitating accurately and keeping up with new research findings within the A/L field takes an enormous amount of skill development, dedication, commitment and mostly passion. It is a fast expanding field and like any other area, there is now a plethora of books and material to read and absorb. I am in absolute agreement with Anita Roddick famous for her remarkable creation and highly successful world-wide expansion of ‘The Body Shop’, when she says that, “If I had to name a driving force in my life I’d plump for passion every time” (in Dryden & Vos, 1994:66).

Although my original interest in A/L emerged out of my desire to integrate important aspects of my life, I soon realised the task of facilitating others’ potential through innovative learning methods required some on-going professional support. In the early days in NSW, there were few experienced and available practitioners who could help provide some kind of mentoring support. Initially I received personal encouragement from John Wade, and then from overseas, through occasional articles, meetings and correspondence with established and respected practitioners in the field.

This unfulfilled need for an on-going support network of practitioners inspired me to initiate the establishment of the NSW branch of the Accelerative Learning Society (ALSA -NSW). My position as president for two years presented me with a very powerful learning curve. It provided countless opportunities to grow professionally and to teach me some fundamentals about how one can effect personal change within the self whilst also positively influencing others. Dealing with a wonderful pot-pourri of people in different capacities also challenged me in many areas of human psychology. From the very beginning, this A/L branch has provided me with many learning opportunities as well as teaching me skills to help others realise their potential.

Furthering Our Spiritual Potential

The original awakening of our impulse to educate is very closely related to our own sense of potential

These words were spoken by Diane Whitmore, in her presentation at the international SEAL conference in the United Kingdom in 1991. During an exercise she asked participants to close their eyes and to reconnect with the vision we first had when we decided to be educators or to work with people. For the following few minutes, as she guided us through a visualisation, I found myself in a similar state to that of the soul conscious one which I regularly practice. I was able to easily access some very positive and unlimited spiritual qualities within myself. These included a general sense of benevolence, a belief in everyone’s essential goodness and a belief in my own ability to make a positive difference in the world.
I found this simple exercise very powerful and memorable and since this occasion and within different contexts, I have guided others in similar activities. The notion that our impulse to educate others is essentially a ‘spiritual impulse’, could seem a quite challenging or alien idea for many educators. However, at the heart of this original choice to teach or train usually lie the highest intentions. We care and are deeply concerned about others’ welfare. We want the best for them and we want or facilitate learning processes which enable them to achieve more of their potential. The drive is “our own sense of what’s possible for us to do and be for others through education” (Whitmore, 1991).

Since I have already described how I perceive the strong connection between learning and spiritual development, then my view, like Whitmore’s, is that education is essentially a spiritual process. The encouragement to reconnect with our original motivations to educate or work with people highlights our fundamental spiritual motivations, including a sense of global interconnectedness. However, it also usually highlights the fact that we have strayed far from even acknowledging our spirituality within, let alone consciously furthering it. Unfortunately this is particularly so within a professional educational context.

I include the following quote by Albert Einstein for consideration to stimulate our wonder about our own nature, our prime motivations for why we do what we do, and for understanding some of the values that either ‘push or pull’ us:

"The important thing is not to stop questioning. Curiosity has its own reason for existing. One cannot help but be in awe when he contemplates the mysteries of eternity, of life, of the marvellous structure of reality. It is enough if one tries merely to comprehend a little of this mystery every day. Never lose a holy curiosity" (in Beveridge, 1974:61)

Over recent years, I have perceived that whilst there is disillusionment and despair on one hand, there is also more “curiosity” around our own nature, including awareness of a need to return to moral and spiritual values, within both business and education. However, I see that despite particular motivations, philosophies and policy, the task of implementing, effecting and really influencing has to lie very firmly at a grass roots level. All the policy statements in the world can not force people to adopt life-enhancing attitudes, values and congruent behaviour.

Whilst working as a co-ordinator of “anti racist” events for a government school region, I found that the most telling comments came from students who attended special forums on the subject. Although these events were innovative, creative and very encouraging of student expression, their most common comments came in the form of ‘nothing much will change if the teachers don’t change’.

I see this as a reminder that specific policy statements and the most innovative, student-centred approaches to ‘re-education’ will not make a significant difference
while ever students perceive teachers and authority figures to be incongruent. While ever they are demonstrating cynical and discriminatory behaviour or a lack of personal control or integrity., students are influenced accordingly. The same situations exist within society at large, involving leaders in all domains of public life in particular. It is little wonder at times that youth in modern society frequently feel a sense of cynicism and disillusionment about the possibility for their own positive change, let alone for the development of their full learning and spiritual potential.

Maslow came to the conclusion that “a chief psychological plague of modern civilisation” was what Mircea Eliade called a ‘de-sacralization’ (1990:12). He believed the problem to be the disappearance in our lives of a sense of the sacred, which he came to call ‘self-actualisation’, characterised by frequent ‘peak experiences’. Maslow went on to explore what moved people to act or change themselves, and eventually came to see that people are motivated by their values. If this is so, then an exploration of our values must be central to our whole learning and spiritual potential. I believe that emphasising and honouring values within the realm of education and business will provide the quantum leap in our thinking and learning potential that we know is possible. Educators need to realign their personal purpose, vision and values with the educational context in which they are working.

Throughout the course of this inquiry, I have observed that as well as a proliferation of commercially run A/L courses, some of which have doubtful merit, there is considerable development in thinking, awareness and exploration into the assumptions underlying the approach. The most relevant of some of the changes that I perceive within A/L in Australia are those of an increasing recognition and incorporation of values into training programs for practitioners. These include regular, intensive and practical professional development courses for teachers and trainers. These acknowledge and honour both the direct and the indirect influence of the educator in these contexts.

I have experienced over time that using more of our whole brain within a learning context, both as a teacher or student stimulates and enriches the whole person including the spiritual aspects of ourselves. Certainly it was the parallels I had already perceived between the potential of whole-brain learning and my studies and experiences in the spiritual sphere, which originally prompted me to undertake this inquiry. In a flier (1992) about the philosophy of the spiritual educational work that the Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University carries out, they state, “students are provided with the essential tools enabling them to discover and release what is eternally present within the consciousness of every human being”. Having had some years of influence from, and involvement with this spiritual university and ‘everyday spirituality’, I believe, like Houston that:
When so little of the physical and mental as well as the innate spiritual vitality of person and culture is being tapped, when too great reliance is being placed on the rational, the immediate, and the functional, then consciousness is caught in a tunnel vision, inadequate to deal with the complexities and challenges of the time (1982: 30).

Whereas I can not yet lay claim to having fulfilled every aspect of my own potential, I have a deep yearning to do so. I believe that getting more in touch with my creative self, unblocking the inner obstacles and learning to express in many different ways, is a key to developing the spiritual aspects of my potential. Along with the use of various A/L techniques, such as ‘memory-mapping’, and music, I have become aware of needing to ‘get out of my own way’, as a means to let the creative ‘juices’ flow. This essentially means to recognise possible blocks, such as negative self-talk, and to apply appropriate principles and techniques. These might include reframing negative language and the use of affirmations and visualisations. At other times, it may be simply getting in contact with an alternate state of consciousness where one’s limiting, analytical side makes way for the imaginative or intuitive self.

Once I am in touch with my intuitive self, I usually experience a great sense of inner harmony and integration. Meditation for me is not only the means to experience a peaceful and positive state through soul-consciousness, but the means to tap into the creative and integrative aspects of my being. When in this state, I often experience a flash of an idea, an image, powerful feeling or a phrase as was the case for the creation of the name, ‘Spirit of Learning’. One of the intentions behind the A/L approach of attaining the alpha brain-wave state, is to encourage the concept of day-dreaming in the style that Einstein is well noted for when he developed his idea of relativity. I found these states of consciousness to be parallel to my meditation practices. Naturally, in a spiritual context, one’s intention is different, although I perceive that there are many similarities and that both learning and spirituality influences the other - hence the spirit of learning!

Certainly this has been the case for Ben, whose drive to express his full creative potential eventually led him on an unplanned path as a teacher. it also led him to an awareness and expression of the spiritual journey he realised he was on. He appears to approach his spiritual development in terms of “a dharma battle”, talking about the need for “psychic self-defence”, of the need to protect oneself as well of being a spiritual warrior. He elaborates on the need to develop courage, the word coming from the French word for heart, ‘la coeur’, and means to open up the heart chakra. Eva also feels that courage is an important power to develop, if one is going to look honestly at oneself. The discovery of A/L techniques, which she found to be “fun” and liberating, have been one way that Eva was able to release some of her creative and spiritual energy and apply this in her work with others. The ability to see “the bigger picture” has been her means to connect with “the divine” and provides a creative driving force for her work as well as for her own developing spiritual potential.
Ben now consciously works from his “spiritual centre” as a way of calling on whatever power he needs. This, he says includes “constantly and consciously” responding to the energy of his students at any particular time. He strongly believes that his ability to respond in this way has been greatly increased through a form of theatre, called ‘Playback’ which is an instructional kind of theatre for self development. There is no doubt that through the specific training and development of creative skills, Ben has been able to incorporate much of his spiritual development into his teaching practice.

Lonny’s commitment to his own development is to increase his intuition and develop his perception at every moment of his life. Having participated in several of his workshops, and having been an observer of his teaching sessions, I have observed that he operates from very deep and spiritually-inclined motivations. He not only wants his learners to learn faster or more effectively, he is interested in bringing about major positive changes in their thinking and perception skills.

In describing his experience as he moved toward A/L as being like “a vision, a mission, an internal shift”, Eric discussed the effectiveness or otherwise of this approach to educating. He said that he relied on his inner knowing that the techniques work as well as the more tangible evidence such as direct feedback from his students. Eric found another good indicator of the effectiveness and accuracy of his own attitudes (which have kept him in good health) was that he had never had to take a day off from work in ten years. Whilst inquiring with Eric, I can not remember him ever using the term ‘spiritual development’. However, because of his attention on being and remaining a congruent person, there is no doubt that developing spiritual is one of his main concerns and commitments.

The ways that individuals approach the development of their own spiritual potential are as varied as are the personalities involved. It is apparent however, that this development has parallels with the approach they take in facilitating others. Certainly, I am convinced that the way in which we further our own spiritual development and potential will directly or indirectly leave a strong and often lasting impression on our students. Since the field of A/L, along with the practitioners themselves has been continuing to develop and embrace new research findings and learning psychology, I have perceived that there is an increasing understanding of why we do what we do.

When Howard Gardner first identified the concept of multiple intelligences (1983), he made it clear that there were many more. More recently, when someone asked him what the next most important ones were, he said that he would place both intuitive and spiritual intelligences as next to be recognised and explored, although he also admitted he had no direct experience with the latter. The majority of participants in this inquiry have indicated that they are regular meditators, using some favoured form that works for each one of us. Others like Eric, regularly use visualisations, affirmations and ‘mind-calming’ as a means to enhance their own
learning processes. I see that the use of these techniques by teachers for themselves, furthers our spiritual development and becomes the seed for others to also embrace them, through both direct and indirect means.

Underlying much of my communications with participants in this inquiry was the question of ‘how do people develop spiritual powers and their inner selves within integrative learning?’ My own experience had highlighted the strong link between the attainment of particular inner powers and outer long-term effectiveness. Nevertheless, I still feel the need to continue asking the question of; how we can manage the task of transforming learning and education, if we remain unprepared to consciously move toward our own self transformation? Fortunately, the Spirit of Learning forums are providing regular opportunities for all those people who are prepared to push past their ‘comfort zones’ and to move toward individual spiritual growth and transformation.

*The spiritual network is potent*  

SOL participant

It has been partly due to the inspiration that Jean Houston has conveyed through her workshops and from her books, that I thought more deeply about the need we have for social support in order to effect and sustain on-going change and transformation. I became more enthusiastic about the idea of exploring the connection of spirituality and learning within a group situation. Spirit of Learning (SOL) forums encourage participants to go much deeper into, and far beyond any particular learning context. It is very much about exploring the development of our full spiritual potential. Although the acceptance of ‘the spirit within’ has been slow for some, the nature of events and the creative and supportive atmosphere tends to encourage the experiencing and honouring of spirituality within each individual. Specific experiences of participants of our events included those of “feeling power” of their own inner journey, a generally increased spiritual awareness which can be apply in one’s work, and experiences of their “hidden potential”.

I believe that we need to be constantly engaged in processes that examine those beliefs that limit us as human beings and prevent us from developing ourselves to what it is possible to become. This involves thinking about and experiencing the deeper levels of our being, which means challenging our existing assumptions, thinking about thinking and examining our deeply held values and dominant attitudes. This is the ‘inner game of learning’, the stuff real learning is about. It is a process which sometimes requires a detachment from our usual consciousness and states to give us different perspectives. It involves a heightening of our perceptions, a development of our intuition, an expansion of our consciousness and provides opportunities for inner change and growth to occur. If we learn to acknowledge and honour these intuitive and spiritual aspects within the learning context as well as ourselves, then we are beginning to make progress towards real education - toward the ‘possible human’ that Jean Houston so beautifully expresses.
Certainly this concept of remembering our essential spirituality, along with the associated virtues, is central to the spiritual practices I have been undertaking for over ten years. Attaining a soul-conscious state I have found to be a crucial first step toward remembering one's real self as a completely positive and actualised being. Although this a powerful awareness and takes considerable time and regular practice to achieve, soul consciousness can become a platform of spiritual awareness from which it is more easily possible to see others in the same light. Furthermore, just as other participants have also experienced, from a heightened state of spiritual self-awareness one can more easily tap into one's innate powers and virtues. These include courage, risk-taking, preparedness to face and transform or transcend internal and external 'obstacles' and limitations.

I am well aware that in more areas than one, there is so much yet to discover about myself, my innate specialities and my capacities. I do not mind that I do not know exactly where my development will take me - I simply believe that with a pure and natural intention to fulfil my potential, essentially at the inner, spiritual level, then I will be guided along the way, toward my innate powers onto new branches and into new trees and forests yet to grow.

*Concerning all acts of initiative and creation there is one elementary truth - that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then Providence moves too*  
*Goethe*
CHAPTER 6: The Essence
The Essence: Major Themes

INTEGRATION

An Integrative World View.

...in the end science and religion are not at odds, but are complementary ways of knowing - both being essential to achieving the highest measure of what it means to be human.

Willis Harman

I had never been attracted to science as a discipline, but when I first embarked on this journey toward attaining a Masters of Science degree in Social Ecology, I learned to understand the reasons for this. Objective, mechanical and mathematical descriptions of nature, along with scientists' obsession with logical facts of certainty and quantification had always left me cold. I could never see the relevance nor the connection to me, the person or to my everyday life. Neither could I see a real connection to my personal experiences and understandings of the integrative and pluralistic nature of the world.

Traditional science has been committed to the exploration of measurable aspects of the physical environment. It has generally ignored issues of the human mind and spirit which are central to the humanities and to religions. Consequently many fields of human endeavour have tended to neglect the totality of our essential nature and as a result, our innate potentiality. Willis Harman has described the history of this science as we have experienced it, as concentrating on "where the light was better" (1987:27). This emphasis on easily observable phenomena, which encourages isolation, specialisation and separatism has occurred within all disciplines.

I always felt there must be another way of looking at the world as well as at the science that I had always rejected. Fortunately current scientific challenges now include the encouragement of explorations into the less obvious and visible aspects of nature within all fields of human endeavour, from medicine to education and the social sciences. These kinds of explorations require an ecological or integrative view of the world, which, I see is the first step toward practical integration within the self as well as within particular fields of society. In their discussion of 'the one world theme', Beare & Slaughter strongly believe that:

A global perspective is the smallest frame within which to view human affairs. Anything less lacks the capacity to deal with the interconnectedness and systemicity that characterise the global system (1994:52).

I am therefore not comfortable with a science that is reductionist in thinking and alienating in its perspective but nor am I advocating a totally opposing view that is anti-scientific. Rather, I am interested in the possibility of exploring the complementary nature of these opposing views and incorporating all newly (re)-discovered facets of nature, expanding upon, rather than disbanding traditional
interpretations of science. Since I understand better now, how and why there are differing and opposing perspectives of life, I prefer to develop and maintain an integrative world view that allows for the uncertainties and paradoxes within the whole scheme of things. I relate to and advocate the notion of developing “positive uncertainty” (Gelatt 1991), as a means to mend the many splits that I have personally experienced as well as those I perceive within society as a whole.

Surprisingly, it was only after I had become consciously aware of and interested in spirituality that I began to show an interest in science as a subject worth considering. When I came across social ecology I was immediately drawn to its holistic, integrative aspects, its emphasis on the web of relationships and the encouragement to bring together and harmonise all parts of ourselves. Within the social ecology environment, acknowledgment of the limitations of the mechanistic world view and more emphasis on integrating rational knowledge with the intuitive, metaphysical nature of our environment was a great stimulus for me to undertake an inquiry within this academic context. The sustenance for staying committed has been provided by the genuine ecological thinking of both staff and students. This has created a special learning community which has supported and encouraged my personal, spiritual process along the way.

I have come to use spirituality as a conceptual and experiential understanding of the inner self, of the reality that lies beyond the purely intellectual and sensory capacities of human beings. For me, spirituality implies a development of and faith in one’s unlimited potential along with the metaphysical, intuitive and paraconscious aspects of ourselves. This development is essentially an integrated process. It also involves an understanding of and personal responsibility for my own states of consciousness and actions, particularly as they affect other people and external situations.

I unexpectedly found myself exploring the meaning of science, by looking at both the traditional approach as well as the ‘new science’. The science to which I became attracted, is a transforming science - one in which a more universal message is carried, one that involves interactions of humans with the natural environment as well as with each other. This view acknowledges the effect of the observer upon the observed and places emphasis on the interconnectedness of all phenomena. It also often draws parallels with Eastern spirituality and in this way, has supported and encouraged my on-going efforts toward an integrated life. Fritjof Capra encapsulates much of my own experience and reflections regarding this integrative approach to science and therefore my view of the world:

So you will find that an ecological view of the world is consistent with a truly spiritual world view, whether its Eastern spirituality or the spirituality of Christian mystics, or Jewish or Islamic mystics or the cosmology underlying the Native American traditions and so on (1991:16).
During the course of my inquiry I have found it rewarding to discover the integrative theories and thinking of leading physicists, psychologists and educators who are also emphasising the personal/spiritual aspects of ourselves within all fields and disciplines. I am grateful to Fritjof Capra for some of the “Uncommon Wisdom” (1989) he imparts and for the intimacy he shares in this book of conversations with remarkable people. I have enjoyed the sharing of his personal experiences as well as his wonderful insights into the lives and minds of people through ‘authentic meetings between human beings’ (ibid. p. 318). These include Werner Heisenberg and his ‘uncertainty principle’, Gregory Bateson and the ‘patterns which connect’ and the words of wisdom spoken by Indira Gandhi; “...women today may have a special role to play. The world’s rhythm is changing, and women can influence it and give it the right beat” (ibid). I experience a sense of relationship with some great minds as I read the personal stories behind the evolution of new ideas and concepts in physics, visions for the future and the links between scientific, philosophical and spiritual traditions.

Prigogine & Stengers remind us that “today, interest is shifting from substance to relation, to communication, to time” (1984:8). Gregory Bateson’s “main message”, as summarised by Capra, is also integral to my thesis, “...a central aspect of the emerging new paradigm, perhaps the central aspect, is the shift from objects to relationships” (1989:78). This shifting interest recognises the limitations to explorations through traditional scientific methods, drawing on Heisenberg’s uncertainty principle, and moving toward a holistic or ecological world view.

I see the development of a new paradigm for all domains of society as being one of the major keys to a more positive world future. As I expressed earlier, I see the development of a holistic, ecological view of the world as being only the first step in the process. Although the way we think is fundamental to the way we are, so too do our values ‘pull us’. In exploring an ecological, integrative way of seeing the world and in order to attain a better balance within our lives, the development of values must be seen as at least as important, if not more so than the way we think. As the saying goes; “there is a lot more to balance than not falling over!” (anon).

In a lecture on “The Challenge of the Nineties”, Capra notes a “striking connection between thinking and values” (1991:18). Capra says that within the new paradigm, both of them could be seen as shifts from “self-assertion to integration” as they are both essential aspects of all living systems. He goes on to say that although these two tendencies are opposite, there is a need for individual elements to assert or express themselves, whilst also a need to integrate into the whole, whether it be an eco-system or a social system. In the old paradigm there has been an over-emphasis on self-assertive values and ways of thinking, at the expense of integration. The answer here is not so much to emphasise one over the other but to attain a better balance of the two.
Capra elaborates on the various manifestations of what is involved in shifting from self-assertion to integration, that is to a greater balance in the way we view the world:

As far as thinking is concerned, we are talking about a shift from the rational to the intuitive, from analysis to synthesis, from reductionism to holism, from linear to non-linear thinking. And as far as values are concerned, we are observing a corresponding shift, from expansion to conservation, from quantity to quality, from domination to partnership (ibid).

Self-assertive values, such as competition, expansion and domination are generally associated with men and patriarchal societies, and this is one of the reasons why it is so difficult for most people to even consider shifting to a more balanced system. However, I believe that if enough people wake to and experience their own innate potentialities, then “they will naturally conspire to create a world hospitable to human imagination, growth and co-operation” (Ferguson 1982:73). In any case, as William James reminded us, that out of all the creatures on earth, human beings are the only ones who can change their thinking pattern at will:

Man only is the architect of his destiny. The greatest revolution in our generation is that human beings, by changing their inner attitudes of their minds can change the outer aspects of their lives (ibid p.49).

Along the course of this inquiry my long-held desire to integrate different perspectives and aspects of myself has been gradually satisfied. I have experienced that my own evolution in terms of intellectual and spiritual growth is closely connected with that of other ‘fellow conspirators’, people who are open to change within themselves. Through literature, the arts, personal relationships and global networks, we provoke, stimulate and encourage each other along our transformative journeys. I tend to be amongst the idealists, who whilst recognising the cynicism and the despair of many, often experience a real sense of hope and vision for a more positive future. This in turn tends to heighten my awareness of our universal spiritual connections and promotes a sense of overall integration and potential global harmony. Finally, I resonate with Roger Sperry’s assertion that science and religion can in fact be naturally merged.

Recent conceptual developments in the mind-brain sciences rejecting reductionism and mechanistic determinism on the one side and dualisms on the other, clear the way for a rational approach to the theory and prescription of values and to a natural fusion of science and religion (in Harman, 1987:27).

I feel constantly empowered and inspired then when I realise the extent and diversity of existing global networks which can serve as vehicles for overall positive transformation. I am stimulated and inspired by the increasing array of ‘global thinkers’ who, through their research and articulation re-inforce my own
views and experiences and encourage the conceptual framework within which I continue to explore. Happily, I am finding my world view is constantly being enhanced, stretched and expanded and I am committed to facilitating the development of a similar view in others.

**Integrated Practices in Education**

*Only a new perspective can generate a new curriculum*

Marilyn Ferguson

The dualistic world-view, as promoted and expressed through traditional educational systems, includes an over-emphasis on the intellect of the student, neglecting much of his or her whole potential. Much of educational curricula has become specialised in the extreme, labelling, limiting and alienating learners in the process. Learning has become fragmented, without any underlying purpose, goal or relevance for what is being learned.

Alternatively, whole-person educational approaches which emphasise the integrative aspects of humanity, are based on an ecological, holistic way of perceiving the world and are drawn from insights gained from within a variety of disciplines. These include physics, cognitive psychology, and neuroscience which all recognise the commonly recurring themes of integration and interconnectedness. Integrated practices in education utilise all known aspects of the learning brain as well as the different dimensions of consciousness as a means to promote more of human potential.

In this sense these practices are not only holistic and humanistic, but are also *global* and *transpersonal* in their approach. Along with the teaching of content and passing on of information, great attention is placed on internal the learning process as well as consciousness itself. They have the capacity to firstly awaken learners to their innate potentialities, to their life’s meaning and purpose as well as their connection to the wider world. They create appropriate environments and experiences which stimulate individual creativity and intuition and provide lifelong learning tools so that learners may eventually become autonomous. Marilyn Ferguson describes the transpersonal kind of education as “the emergent paradigm”. She states:

> More humane than traditional education and more intellectually rigorous than many alternatives in the past. It aims to aid transcendence, not furnish mere coping skills. It is education’s counterpart to holistic medicine: education for the whole person (1982:314).

Having always perceived the integrative nature and the power and potential beyond the obvious and the popularisation of accelerative learning approaches, I also believe in its potentially transcendent aspects. My personal approach to A/L is an integrated one which involves full learning awareness. It is well rounded in so
far as it aims to stimulate every aspect of the being: the body, senses, emotions, intellect, creativity and intuition. I also reject an emphasis on the accelerated aspects at the expense of holism. In the following passage Ferguson describes in detail how she sees ‘transpersonal education’, within which I place ‘integrated accelerative learning:

Unlike most educational reform in the past, it is embedded in sound science: systems theory, an understanding of the integration of mind and body, knowledge of the two major modes of consciousness and how they interact, the potential of altered and expanded states of consciousness. It emphasises the continuum of knowledge rather than ‘subjects’, and the common ground of human experience, transcending ethnic or national differences. It aids the learner’s search for meaning, the need to discern forms and patterns, the hunger for harmony. It deepens awareness of how a paradigm shifts, how frustration and struggle precede insights.

Transpersonal education promotes friendly environments for hard tasks. It celebrates the individual and society, freedom and responsibility, uniqueness and interdependence, mystery and clarity, tradition and innovation. It is complementary, paradoxical, dynamic. It is education’s Middle Way (ibid p.316).

This passage summarises many of the themes that have emerged throughout my inquiry, which are also based on the paradigm that “reflects both the discoveries of modern science and the discoveries of personal transformation” (ibid). Certainly it summarises much of the philosophy of SOL forum’s activities, which also places learning in a broader and deeper context by linking it with our own spiritual development whether we are students, parents or teachers. With a focus on awareness of our spiritual essence and the integrated nature of our ‘learning brains’, SOL activities provide valuable opportunities for continual exploration and development of the transformative aspects of learning, within ourselves as well as in the wider world.

*All education should aim at neurological symmetry*  
M. Raina

Since the beginning of my research in 1990, there have been enormous changes and expansion in the broad field of accelerative learning and other whole-brain learning approaches. Increased understanding of the role of the paraconscious and further knowledge of the many intelligences and functioning of the brain have led to a gradually growing acceptance and use of A/L techniques in education and the business world. Since education is becoming more financially accountable, goal-oriented and outcome-based, A/L is often promoted as the answer to speed up and ‘fix up’ learning.

However, since the very foundation of this learning technology is about integration and connectedness within the brain and between levels of consciousness itself, these aspects should not be marginalised at the expense of the
notion of ‘accelerated learning’. Nor should the techniques be overestimated when it is the natural, integrative aspects of human beings that drive them. As Underhill warns, there is the danger of a “richness of techniques and poverty of soul”(u.d.). The emphasis therefore should be on developing and maintaining holistic and congruent attitudes and beliefs amongst both teachers and learners.

The aim of whole-person learning practices is to stimulate innate potential, develop enhanced perceptions, creativity and encourage synthesis. The practices also aim to provide more choices and opportunities to develop inner powers and transcend traditional limitations of thinking and being. A/L research and practice has shown that effective learning occurs when there is emotional involvement and all the senses and intelligences are stimulated in the process. This can be facilitated through the use of a range of techniques including visualisation, guided imagery, metaphor, music, colour, movement, memory-mapping and positive non-verbal suggestion. The benefits of an integrative approach to A/L is not simply the more effective learning of content, but includes enhanced self awareness, learner empowerment, connection with one’s overall life purpose and a sense of global interconnectedness.

In an integrated A/L environment, although the link between learning and one’s spiritual development is not consciously expressed, the experience is very often felt. When attention is paid to accessing resourceful energy states within the learner and regular, reflective activities are used, opportunities for new perceptions and insights can occur. Interactive, experiential activities which include reflection and analysis of the learning processes provide a further dimension in the integrated classroom. Reflection at different stages of the lesson, provide a powerful means to detach, and to gain further insights into one’s learning and thinking processes. Learning how to learn is as important if not more important than what we learn. Silent periods also provide practitioners with space to draw out meanings, perceptions, values and attitudes which can be examined both within themselves as well as their students.

It is no co-incidence that many members of Spirit of Learning forum are regular users of innovative techniques, particularly those used in A/L, either in their teaching or for their own learning situations. The philosophy of SOL goes beyond any one learning methodology however, by consciously adding the spiritual dimension into the integrative learning process. By promoting and “confirming the integration of body, mind and spirit in all learning and teaching” ventures. The relaxed atmosphere that is created outside formal learning and teaching contexts provides opportunities for furthering our self-awareness and personal integration. After participating in SOL events, many people naturally and easily become very aware of the link between spirituality and learning. Following a range of deeply engaging activities and meaningful interactions, we receive regular and frequent comments regarding their experiences of “spiritual interconnectedness”.

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Learning processes and techniques which promote integration within the individual, inevitably bring us closer to co-operating with others, thereby supporting the philosophy of global education. The use of music, drama, metaphor, visualisation and games helps break down the traditional power roles between teacher and students and give an experience of connection and harmony with each other. I, like many other new paradigm educators and authors, believe we need to mend the split between heart and mind and return to the soul of learning. Educational practices must address the intuitive as well as the rational, the emotions as well as the mind. They must not only enhance the learning process but also facilitate the empowerment of individuals, and provide on-going opportunities for positive and creative change.

Jean Houston, international teacher, philosopher, author and visionary teaches all over the world using rich, multi-dimensional methods. She re-connects and re-inspires people to link with their spiritual essence, through drama, dance and ancient mythologies made relevant to current day issues. Her research with people who are of “high actualising intelligence”, and who use their intelligence for creative accomplishment found that in many cases these people were stimulated as children with multi-sensory and arts related experiences (in Dickinson, 1991:4). Since these are acknowledged features of an A/L environment, one would hope that they will eventually create people of ‘high actualising intelligence’ in the future. I would also add that by creating appropriate conditions, the traditional and limiting notion of ‘giftedness’ is expanded. Barbara Clark, educator says much the same thing:

When we have integrated our focus, changed and extended our view of reality, and established the underlying connectedness of each to all, we will then have a new meaning of giftedness. The gifted, the talented, the ‘in-tuned’, and the illuminated will then be merged... (in Ferguson, 1982:340).

As I have already discussed, there are also the paraconscious and personality factors that exist beyond even the above-mentioned elements. Congruent teacher behaviour, is often and more simply described as ‘walk the talk’ and ‘practicing what you preach’, not uncommon maxims for many leaders of influence. A/L teachers in particular are expected to constantly embody the positive non-verbal aspects of communication. This means that we must hold and develop positive attitudes and resourceful states within ourselves as well as promoting them within our students.

These kinds of demands sometimes give teachers great personal challenges with which to deal. When Carl Rogers discusses the concept of congruence with its complexity and implications, he argues that if a person is to be thoroughly congruent then it is obvious that all of their communication would necessarily be within a context of personal perception and this would also necessarily involve risk-taking (1961:5). Nevertheless, I believe that we can do no less than make
continual efforts to develop congruency within ourselves and that is also reflected in empowering and integrated educational practices.

When using A/L techniques, Eva referred to integration in terms of aligning with deeper energy levels, creating clarity and providing a force beneath the words and actions that are involved in the process. John’s sense of interconnectedness provided an integrated learning experience for him and for his students, which he described as when they are “internally referenced”. In inquiring with others, in particular with John, it became clear that one can not predict and plan for students to have an integrated experience. One can have the hope and intention for this to occur, and can be an example by creating congruent conditions. The rest involves ‘trusting the process’ and ‘going with the flow’.

As individual participants and core group members of SOL have discovered, and as is often the case in life in general, one can do little more than set up a conducive integrated learning environment. This should automatically include preparing one’s own consciousness, paying attention to the non-verbal elements, equipping oneself with specific skills for specific tasks, and then allowing ‘the flow’ to occur. In any event, it is clear that integrated learning practices must become the norm rather than the alternative. Certainly I would add my hope that congruent attitudes and values will also be developed by practitioners along the way. In his discussion of ‘the enlightened society’, John Hill states that:

> Education of the individual must come to mean something more than it now does. It must foster and enhance self-development at every level, from grade school to adult education programs. The traditional disparity between intelligence and wisdom must be overcome in the twenty-first century scholar. Both qualities should be embodied in the scholar. . . . Future teachers should carry the example of self-development, psycho spirituality as well as intellectually, to the highest level of all (1987:212).

In my pursuit of more integration between the spiritual and professional aspects of my life, and as previously described, I participated in several overseas ‘integrated accelerative learning’ conferences. To my surprise, I found affinities between my very personal, very spiritual passions and those of other people and organisations. By this time I had already begun to experience the opportunities for furthering my personal growth through connection with a global ‘family’ of spiritual seekers, through the Brahma Kumaris and related networks. However, my connection with the international accelerated learning networks became a natural stepping stone toward integrating the two branches of learning and teaching and spiritual growth.

All of these networks have served to satisfy my need for a link with ‘the big picture’, which has been so important in my search for meaning and to my overall spiritual evolution. Furthermore, they have continued to inform, inspire and
stimulate my interest in integrated learning and teaching practices, providing the latest developments through newsletters, personal communications and specialised literature. Since my first discovery of innovative, international educators and others within the new learning paradigm, I have experienced a world-wide expansion of interest and openness toward educational practices which claim to promote more of our potential along with a holistic and more positive vision for the future.

I have found that sharing our motivations, visions, creative energy and inspirations around our teaching and learning stimulates our innate spiritual potential and our connectedness with each other and our environment. Although I am aware of much more of my own potential and natural gifts, in order to mobilise them I need to feel a strong sense of community and overall purpose and usefulness in the wider world. This global connection is important to me as I want to know that my learning and personal growth plays a part in the whole scheme of things. I make the assumption that if ‘the big picture’ is so important for me it must certainly be for those others who are also facilitators within the integrated accelerative learning field. I also strongly support the Global Vision Statement that:

All individuals have equal opportunities to realise their potentialities through an education which has human, moral and spiritual values at the heart of the learning process”.

I was recently reminded of the truly integrated schooling, much of it informal that Margaret Mead, the anthropologist enjoyed as a child. Her upbringing from infancy involved an exploration of the world around her in every way she or her family could imagine. Each step in the learning processes, promoted mainly by her rather radical mother and grandmother involved the whole body. this included all the senses, as well as a constant stimulation of her imagination and creativity. From early childhood on she was treated as whole person whose opinions and feelings were respected. Jean Houston described Mead’s education as “unique and fortunate” and sums up her education. “Dualisms were discouraged; she was trained to accept the unity of mind and body, thinking and feeling” (in Dickinson, 1991:5).

I would have liked to have been ‘trained’ or encouraged to accept the unity of mind and body, thinking and feeling instead of suffering the largely irrelevant, fragmented and impersonal learning that is still characteristic of Western education today. I too, believe as does Gloria Steinem that: ‘Perhaps Margaret Mead wasn’t so extraordinary after all. Just an ordinary woman with chances we all should have” (1992:216).

27 Global Vision statement from the project conducted by BKWSU in 1991.
Integrating Subtle Skills

The contradiction so puzzling to the ordinary way of thinking comes from the fact that we have to use language to communicate our inner experience which is its very nature, transcends linguistics.

David Suzuki

The seed to integrate my professional teaching with my spiritual journey began from the time I first started teaching in the multicultural field, before I learned about the effect of the paraconscious in the learning process. Over the years I became increasingly aware of the potential influence I was having, either directly or indirectly upon my migrant students from all corners of the globe. This influence, I felt was obvious in some cases and hardly perceptible in others. Even before I learned about the underlying principles of A/L, I realised that no matter what style of teacher or facilitator I was, my role as an ‘authority’ figure was creating a powerful effect in one way or another. Since then I have become increasingly aware of and fascinated by ‘learning between the words’.

As previously mentioned, Denis Postle describes this non-verbal effect we have upon each other as our ‘psychological fields being involved’. Postle has taken John Heron’s original term of ‘emotional competence’ and developed a sophisticated model from the concept, describing it as “... the ability to manage effectively the emotional and feeling manifestations of your own and other psychological fields” (1990:6). His article argues that “our culture is severely impoverished, due to the negative or under-evaluation of feeling and emotion as a source of information and intelligence” (ibid). My experience of teaching within the TESOL field, in contrast to my school learning experiences have continued to highlight and value feelings and interconnectedness. Since these elements lay the basis for learning effectiveness and integrated enjoyment, I know how true Postle’s thesis is. Placing value on the non-verbal influences of teaching and learning below the surface has resulted in many richly rewarding experiences for me and I hope for my students.

Postle’s model aims to accord emotions and feelings complementary value to thinking, logic and intellect. I believe that his provocative question “Is emotional competence a luxury or a professional obligation” should be answered in the affirmative. In essence, his criteria challenge the professional facilitator to be aware of, to access, express and transmute their own emotions and to become skilled in dealing with others (ibid). His argument connects strongly with my own thinking around the notion of developing congruent and ideal qualities within the educator.

I have found that amongst the most important of these personal qualities are; flexibility, patience, being positive, a sense of humour, ability to control his/her own moods and the ability to respond spontaneously to the mood of the group. The development of these qualities is no more evident than it is for A/L practitioners. It has become clear that we need to possess a strong sense of our own self worth and be involved in developing the many different facets of ourselves in
order to model the integrative nature of the theories we espouse and the practices we undertake.

Since it is still not uncommon for me to receive frequent communications from adult students from many past years, I also began to wonder about the potential for influencing people over the longer term. I am well aware that this phenomenon occurs for many other teachers, trainers and leaders in different fields. In other words the effect of our being, as well as the techniques we might use, has lasting influence whether we intend for this to occur or not. My experiences, combined with what I was beginning to discover about the potential powers of the mind, stimulated my developing interest in the influence of the leader. Undoubtedly, I began thinking more deeply about this notion as a direct consequence of my newly embraced spiritual studies and heightened awareness of consciousness itself.

The seed for my subsequent interest in exploring below the surface of learning and teaching was planted by both the obvious effects of a teacher’s influence in the classroom, as well as a more subtle awareness of its existence. Since I felt so strongly about the potential influence I was having upon my students to come, I knew that this was going to be true throughout my whole life and in many different situations. I was amazed and impressed when Jean Houston, at one of her seminars in Australia, stated that “the average person during an average lifetime influences about two million people or more”. Now here was real ‘food for thought’.

As I later began to read more widely on subjects like our essential interconnectedness, by physicists, neuroscientists and others, I realised that Houston’s statistic may very well be close to the actual. If one is in a teaching or leading role I assume that the figure would be even higher. I now know that influence is often felt far afield from one’s physical body. I have experienced the ‘pygmalion effect’, believe in the ‘hundred monkey syndrome’ and feel extremely conscious of and committed to the personal responsibility that influencing entails.

It therefore became extremely important to consider what kind of influence I might be having upon others, especially on those students with whom I spent hours each day and for months at a time. Once I had entered the domain of A/L, learning about the power of the paraconscious and becoming even more aware of the notion of personal influence as a suggestive force, I decided to inquire into the area of educators’ personal, spiritual development. This, I felt would naturally include the subject of influence, ‘political’ sway and power.

Elaina Zucker for the purpose of her research of over ten years has come up with a definition which describes influence as a gentle skill and as an ‘art form’. “Influence is the ability to affect others - observable by its results alone - without the use of force or authority” (1991:3). Zucker has identified seven different styles of influence which she calls “secrets” and explores the depth of each one. Essentially
she is saying that the secret lies in one's ability to recognise the different styles and using them in a way to gain "all-important leverage". The seventh secret provides the most important formula for success. It is simply that "influence equals attentiveness and flexibility", which means the more attentive and flexible one is, the greater will be one's influence (ibid).

This notion is similar to that of Heron's different styles of facilitation which also include the subject of power and styles of influence. He too claims that awareness of how one does things in the classroom, along with preparedness to change are the most important factors. He says, "The key to facilitation, in the learning revolution that is currently afoot, is great flexibility of style in making educational decisions" (1989:10). He argues that an effective facilitator who wants to create conditions for autonomous learning, should be able to move "swiftly and elegantly", as is required, between three "political modes". These modes are; "making decisions for learners, making decisions with learners, and delegating decisions to learners". In summary, if a teacher combines attention or awareness of what is happening below the surface of learning, as well as above, with that of a flexible nature and willingness to let go of traditional power roles, adapt one's behaviour as required, influence can become a 'gentle art form'.

During my early days of teaching, when the subject of influence first became of interest, I became concerned at times about some of my students' dependency upon me and my role. This alerted me to the issue of power and control in the classroom although I had not thought about it at all before this period. I intuitively felt that dependency to any degree was not healthy and would not serve the students' long term learning interests. However, I was not sure what to do about it, as it was a situation I had not expected from adult learners.

Uncomfortable as this awareness of student dependency felt at times, it became the seed for my later more purposeful interest in the concept of teacher as facilitator. This included the notion of shared power and learner autonomy in the classroom. There was no doubt that I preferred a classroom which was dominated by cooperation, collaboration and interaction. However, the question of enabling the students to have more control over the actual process of learning had not emerged with enough clarity. Furthermore, I obviously had not yet mastered the skill of facilitating these kinds of notions to any substantial degree. Although I naturally and instinctively wanted to facilitate in others, it was later in my teaching experience that I came across the terms of "life-long learning" and "learner empowerment" and came to understand all that these might entail.

Gradually, I experimented with encouraging my students to take more power to direct their own learning process. However, I had not learned how to do this in the appropriate way since I was not yet aware of all the subtleties involved. Undoubtedly, my students would have at times felt 'rudderless' and frustrated at times, being used to much more control and direction from the teacher. In his
plenary talk at the ‘Pathways to Potential’ (SEAL) conference (1991) on “the two poles of education” - radical and holistic, John Heron explained what tends to happen in these cases:

The more autonomy given to the student, the more the student has to have been initiated into holistic ways of learning - or his or her autonomy is relatively shallow.

Gradually I learned this lesson, particularly as I realised that, despite their mature age, my students in general were accustomed to very traditional educational systems and it was not fair to swiftly ‘push them over the cliff’ toward autonomy without warning and preparation for the ‘drop’ (or hopefully the ‘flight’). So although they were becoming accustomed to more holistic, communicative language learning techniques, they were not used to having a say in the decision making processes, for example what is to be learned and how they would learn it. I have since discovered with much greater success than in those early days, one must start with the familiar and gradually move into the unfamiliar territory. This movement in itself presents new learning and personal growth challenges for students.

This combination of new paradigm learning approaches with personal growth includes tools for building confidence, self esteem, co-operation, dealing with conflict and making decisions, in other words self management skills. Naturally and essentially then, a model such as Heron’s ‘radical education’, the elements to which I was intuitively drawn before I had heard this name, requires the facilitation of many different aspects of the ‘intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences’.

I learned that if I am to be involved with integrative and holistic learning processes, these capacities need to be paralleled within both teachers and learners. I eventually realised there was a clear need for me to observe and become familiar with the different ways in which, in Heron’s terms, “political decisions” were made in the classroom. If I truly wanted my students to be autonomous, I needed to become more politically aware in order to help pass on that awareness to my students.

... the more two people move in harmony, the closer they feel to one another...

When Ben and I were engaged in several discussions throughout this inquiry he pointed out how our conversation was sometimes like a dance, relating the notion to that of ‘synchrony’. “Conversation as a dance”, “shared synchronisation” and “rhythms of rapport”, as William Condon points out, has great implications for our influence upon our students (in Zucker, 1991:6). If one interacts in harmony, listening attentively and genuinely caring for them as people, rapport will be enhanced and one's potential influence will also increase. Condon came to the conclusion that the more two people moved in harmony, the closer they felt to one another (Zucker 1991:6). The implications for influence are obvious. These
metaphors relate to much of the theories underlying A/L which confirm the power of music and rhythm to stimulate the limbic system of the brain. This area is at the heart of our emotions and although a key factor in stimulating memory and learning, is usually ignored in traditional learning approaches.

As has been demonstrated, so much of our influence through the facilitation of others’ learning, is below the surface. In the case of Eva, who works with people’s energy states, her gift is the ability to deeply feel their blocked energy states within herself. This subtle ability is one which Eva first had to understand through a painful personal process of integration, before she was able to refine it and use it effectively with others. Eva sees learning as an evolutionary process with many layers, and one that needs to progress toward merging the “human and the divine” both within herself and others. Her major personal challenge has been to learn to bring her esoteric understandings and natural abilities to a conscious, “grounded” and practical form. As other participants also expressed, articulating and sharing one’s experiences, has been a useful process in itself. It is one which they have also described as generally fulfilling, and I would add, is also integrative.

It has been shown from this inquiry, that there is great usefulness in talking perceptively and describing in close detail much of what is happening around and/or within us. Win Wenger of The Institute of Visual Thinking, and Project Renaissance in the USA has done extensive research into evoking ‘the Socratic effect’ within oneself. His main thesis is that if people examine their interior and exterior perceptions and describe and record their ‘discoveries’, they will totally enrich their lives on many levels, as well as improving their overall intelligence! He has found that speaking out aloud and regularly recording one’s perceptions into a tape and by describing one’s inner perceptions, is even more productive than journal writing, which is nevertheless still very useful.

The actual experience of sharing aspects of our inner selves throughout the inquiry, has shown to be of great value to individual participants. Some of the conversations I had with Ben, which we both experienced at times as ‘a dance’, inspired us to create something new. In Ben’s case, he felt stimulated to begin writing a book which had been ‘brewing’ for some time. For him, both writing and teaching have become a powerful means to achieve some of the spiritual integration he had been looking for. Ben has been able to use his natural creativity in an integrated way into his teaching practices, whilst simultaneously and consciously using similar approaches to his own personal, spiritual growth. In Christian’s case, his practice of mind power techniques have not only been one of the means to enhance his students’ learning but also the method to develop his own mind, self-confidence and further growth. It has become evident then that as Baker-Miller discovered:
The closer the mind can connect with what one is actually experiencing, the better its inherent creativity can flourish. The more opportunity we have to put our mental creations into action, the more comprehensively we can, in turn, feel and think. One builds on the other (1986:112).

With regards to my own involvement in A/L methods beside which I place NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming), Wyatt Woodsmall articulates much of my own natural and intuitive interests. These interests, some of them at the time not necessarily intellectualised, nevertheless, first brought me to this inquiry. They will no doubt propel me toward seeking further integration within myself as well as interdependence in all my human interactions.

One of the presuppositions of NLP is that mind and body are part of the same cybernetic system. Thus, any effort to reduce human activity to one of these three dimensions [sub-modalities, strategies and beliefs] is obviously a distortion. Any such division is purely arbitrary to start with. Thinking, feeling and doing are all one process. Any 'unified field theory' needs to begin with this recognition. To fail to do so can only lead to reductionism (1991:3).

As I have learned from my spiritual teachings and has emerged in my inquiry as a whole, the aim is to make thoughts, feelings, words and actions the same. To me this is the ultimate integration and although a destination to which I aspire, I do regular battle with the split and splintered parts of myself. I have experienced and observed that if the intention, that is the consciousness, is 'pure, and one is committed to becoming complete and developing total integrity, the rest will eventually follow. Naturally this will not be without constant attention, effort, courage and the development of personal powers and qualities along the way.

I see that in order to avoid a 'richness of techniques, poverty of soul', there needs to be an harmonious interplay between the techniques of the particular method used and the integrity of the practitioner. The following statement is frequently used by practitioners as a wall peripheral. It offers a nice reminder to teachers to place more importance on integrating the 'art of being and caring' than the 'art of knowing'. "Students are more interested in how much I care than in how much I know".

An integrated application of A/L provides learners with potential tools that go way beyond the formal learning environment and along with them for the rest of their lives if they wish. Similarly, the influence of a teacher's personality and essence can be transmitted across time and space, even way beyond one's imagination. When the appropriate environment is created, it highlights even seemingly minor aspects of our beings. Awareness and knowledge of the power of suggestion and the paraconscious in the learning process, as used and reflected in A/L, undoubtedly puts the spotlight on practitioners' attitudes and behaviour. In other words the concept of congruency has been and will remain an essential 'subtle skill'.

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Carl Rogers describes congruency as a term he uses “to indicate an accurate matching of experiencing, awareness and communication” (1961:1). I find this a simple but thought-provoking definition which tends to summarise the various concepts and manifestations of congruence that have arisen throughout my explorations. Certainly inherent in the concept itself is that of integration and unity. Rogers gives the example of an infant being so appealing is because “they are so completely genuine, integrated or congruent” (ibid). In this example he also uses the notion of ‘being transparent’, in as much as the infant is usually their experience “all the way through” (ibid). I like this description, as it is totally congruent with the notion I use of the previously stated, ‘being the same in thoughts, feelings, words and action’.

In different ways participants have included the need to be congruent within themselves as a crucial element for their own self development. Christian expressed the concept of congruence in terms of his whole life being “virtually fused” with his ideals of social and human development. Lonny sees absolutely no separation between the techniques he uses and his own personal/spiritual development, including that of personal congruence and professional integrity. Gloria also uses A/L techniques for her personal learning purposes, enabling her to tap into more of her own potential, just as is her purpose in teaching others.

Following an initial interview with Eva, I asked her what specific attitudes or way of being had the most beneficial effect on her students. She answers that it is “modelling”, showing people how you teach which is the most important. “One’s body language reflects one’s state”, in other words”, I am responsible for the energy structures that I’m producing through my words or behaviour. Eric had no hesitation in answering that congruency is the most “critical connection” between A/L techniques and his own personal development. His experience has led him to believe that congruency is both “a blessing and a curse”, at both the social and professional levels. He found that people don’t expect and are often uncomfortable with others living their life with integrity outside the professional realm. This creates a paradox where although people are attracted to this quality of integrity, and ‘being an example is the hook” for most learners, it can also be a ‘curse’ for the practitioner.

I have also experienced this same phenomenon and have often wondered why that was. I can only surmise that those qualities or virtues that one often admires in others can also repel one, because they know that they are not prepared to do what ever it takes to develop them within themselves. In his discussion on congruence, Rogers agrees that the concept is a rather complex one with “many different characteristics and implications”(1961:2). However, for the purpose of this inquiry, being congruent in terms of aligning one’s awareness at least with one’s communication is a powerful refinement within the self which transmits favourably and strongly to others. He says further about congruence that:
Accurate awareness of experience would always be expressed as feelings, perceptions, meanings from an internal frame of reference. . . . If the person is thoroughly congruent then it is clear that all of his communication would necessarily be put in a context of personal perception (ibid).

Rogers adds that this does not necessarily mean that if a person always speaks from a context of personal perception, then they are automatically congruent. This reminder runs parallel to John’s statement that “until people get inner wisdom, they are externally referenced.” It is clear in any case that there are both internal and external efforts to be made in order to develop congruency within ourselves.

Often perceived and implied but not always articulated, is the need to develop courage in order to become congruent and have integrity. Just as I have argued earlier for the need to have courage, to dare to imagine and ‘dream’ in order to overcome ‘the agony’ and fulfil ‘the ecstasy’ of one’s potential, I have found that courage is a required value or virtue for one to attain constant congruency and integrity. I have experienced that in the very act of exploring this concept of congruence and having integrity, I am constantly questioning many more of my everyday actions, not only in terms of my work but also socially. At times, I have wondered, “do I dare to communicate everything that I am and that I believe in possible contentious situations?”

In support of Edron Devrington’s argument that ordinary life is a ‘habitual trance’, he describes courage as “the power to let go of the familiar” and a quality with which we are not “over-endowed”. He declares the following:

Educators are no less prone than others to cling tenaciously to the safe, the established, the accepted. After all, if I innovate, I draw attention to my actions and will not be held responsible for them. But if I stick to the tried and true, it is not I who bears responsibility - responsibility falls upon the established method, so no one is responsible. How comforting! How easy! How irresponsible! (1984:2)

As I write this I immediately realise why, as a young girl I often felt that “I never wanted to be conspicuous” (see ‘Personal Roots’). I have often been afraid to ‘stand out in the crowd’ for these very reasons that Edrington describes. However, since then, my drive and commitment to follow my passions, to become congruent, to have integrity and to make a difference, have given me some courage. I no longer feel conspicuous, or at least if I am, I feel more comfortable with the fact as I know I am not alone in my attempts to want to soar beyond a view of life that is full of misery, despair and hopelessness.

All around the world there exists a global family of ‘conspirators’ who nourish, support, fertilise and inspire further spiritual growth in one another. I am now more concerned with making conspicuous the glaring splits and mismatches between what we are in essence, and how we are presently expressing ourselves in
the world. I am also further inspired to become more fully integrated in the manner described by Teilhard de Chardin:

Do not forget that the value and interest of life is not so much to do conspicuous things (although we must have this ambition), as to do ordinary things with the perception of their enormous value. This I think, is the mystic to come (in Ferguson, 1982).

Carl Rogers says that courage is “a quality which is not too widespread”, because “the risk of being changed is one of the most frightening prospects most of us can face” (1970:3). I believe, however, that this is one of the main challenges as well as one of the rewards that we A/L educators need to take and experience. The need to develop and maintain this quality within ourselves, continues to emerge in many different forms under many different circumstances. However, the committed and systematic use of many of the techniques for our own purposes, along with a good ‘dose’ of faith in one’s intuition and trust in the process will I believe, help develop courage and other virtues within us.

The Spirit of Learning forum has been established partly as one means for providing both nurturing and challenging support to those of us who are ‘breaking new ground’ and feeling that it is at times simultaneously ‘shaking’ beneath us. Along with a strong sense of connectedness that participants regularly experience at SOL events, they also express experiences of SOL events in terms of congruency and integration. The following are some phrases that were contributed at a recent event:

Live it and be it . . ., walk the talk . . ., from the intellectual how to the spiritual now. . . , going within through dance and drama. . . , flow with the spirit. . . , be in the moment. . . , meditation, reflection, action - a learning cycle. I was really impressed with the example shown . . ., there was total acceptance. . ., Opportunities to connect my heart and head. . ., It’s exciting to have my inner feelings in deep connection with others.

Throughout the course of this inquiry, I have learned a great deal about developing and integrating subtle skills into my professional life. this has been through regular personal connections with and frequent readings of like-minded people around the world. As has become evident throughout my thesis, one of these key influences regarding the need to develop subtle skills in facilitation processes is educator, Adrian Underhill. Underhill is also Director of the International Teacher Training Institute and Language Centre Group in the United Kingdom. I have found great support in being aware of his concerns for developing the inner self ‘behind the methods we use’.

Many of Underhill’s writings seem to articulate some of these same concerns and needs to which I feel we educators should attend. As editor of an international journal, called “Teacher Development”, he is responsible for publishing and writing many articles which place attention on the same kinds of interests of my
own. He frequently expresses his passions which overlap a great deal with mine, in different ways, but with the same sort of awareness. After first meeting Underhill at the international A/L (SEAL) conference in the UK in 1991, I was pleased to share with him the great value I place on his now well circulated (by me for one) statement;

Doing the same things with a different awareness seems to make a bigger difference than doing different things with the same awareness (1989 b:260).

Underhill feels that this statement represents the main challenge that educators have in dealing with different approaches to the new paradigm for learning, which he often describes as 'humanistic'. Rather than 'pushing' any specific teaching methodology, Underhill does strongly, and I believe passionately, advocate the need for "a quantum shift" in our ability as educators to facilitate more effective learning. He regularly describes this shift as being "at the level of our attitudes, our awareness, and our attention to process" (1989:260).

The following quote by Underhill summarises, (emphasis mine), much of my own theories, beliefs and passions about these subtle aspects of the educator’s personal, spiritual growth.

When the teacher's body language and verbal message say the same thing, that is, they are congruent, the message is powerful and the teacher comes across as authentic and genuine... Humanistic education pays particular attention to the intention behind any teacher/facilitator, and to the congruence with which that message is transmitted, and to the effect these things have on the overall learning atmosphere... But it is the teacher who is responsible for setting the standard for the quality of feedback that is to become the currency (1989b: 257).

Finally, I believe that integrating subtle 'arts' or skills can only be developed and refined through an attitude of willingness and openness as well as with regular and on-going practice. As this inquiry has demanded, I have attempted to remain constantly awake to all that I have experienced and discovered about my own consciousness and spiritual development, as well as honouring those shared aspects of self growth in others.
Integrating Spirituality - Integrity

Psychological and spirituality need to be seen as one

Thomas Moore

In his discussion of the psychological fragmentation of the typical individual and the incongruence that is usually occurring between the conscious and the unconscious parts of the mind, Willis Harman says that integrity has become “a rather old-fashioned term [and notion]” (1987:17). I agree, and yet wonder why that is. Is it because of the increasing paradoxes and complexities of modern living? Is it that the emphasis of materialism in our spiritually deprived lives has provided more and more choices with less and less time or opportunities for introspection and reflection? In any case it seems that the problem is that most of us have increasing difficulties aligning the conscious and unconscious parts of ourselves and making decisions which are congruent to our values. In my own journey toward attempting a sense of integrity right from the beginning of this research inquiry, I realised that I needed a combination of time and space for reflection on my deeper driving forces and values. I also discovered I needed to be in regular connection with supportive influences and like-minded ‘souls’ along the way.

In the early days of my attempting to find my specific focus for this inquiry, it took some time before I realised that I could express my spiritual interests more openly than I had expected. Usually, subjects such as spirituality and even ‘developing the inner self’ were not expected and encouraged topics for research in a traditional educational setting. However, the integrative nature of social ecology along with the realisation that I needed to find my inner-most passion and therefore my integrity as a starting point, encouraged further exploration and expression of the same. This process of formulating, identifying and expressing my passion naturally and essentially involved an experience of integration within myself. Once I discovered A/L and associated research and literature, I also intuitively felt that my drive toward spiritual and professional integration was an important endeavour, not only for myself but also for others.

The ‘public’ expression of inner passions has been a liberating and integrative experience for me in itself. It also indicated that I was getting to the heart and soul of ‘what I was on about’ and I felt my research would therefore have integrity because of it. My experiences of exploring personal/spiritual development within the accelerative learning context have introduced to me an enormous array of innovative thinkers, authors and educators from all over the world. They have also demonstrated similar notions of integration, interconnectedness and integrity in a multitude of ways within many different domains beyond education. Both my speaking and my reading about my own passions led to the realisation that my ‘personal impulses’ are in fact, global impulses. Inherent in these personal impulses is the development of both intuition and integrity.
According to "Linda Shepherd "it [intuition] is a holistic awareness that includes diffuse sensitivity to both the internal and external worlds, and sometimes even transcends input from the senses" (1993:204). Intuition rather than book or formal learning has played a major part throughout my entire professional teaching life. It is also embedded within my research process as well as the topic itself. Intuition eventually drew me toward holistic, integrative learning approaches and has given me "a vision of wholeness" (Shepherd 1993:245). This direction has led me to incorporating another level of learning which takes into account higher levels of perceptual thinking and being, with my spiritual development. I have discovered that the quality of one's learning experiences, either as a student or a teacher, directly affects the quality of one's spiritual development.

This was not something I read about, rather it has involved many strongly felt experiences and personal observations over time, some of which have parallels in other domains and have since been documented by others in many different ways. In any case the use of intuition for learning and teaching has been one of the most valuable 'intelligences' that I have discovered. Certainly, I have learned to trust it more and respect its integrity in terms of valuing spontaneity, creativity and unexpectedness.

Intuition and spontaneity have both featured strongly throughout this inquiry and of course parallel some of these same elements within the A/L approach itself. I have come to trust and value my own intuition a great deal more as a result of this research process. This intuition has often guided me at times to the 'right' book, quotation or reference which helps support my thesis. The use of intuition, along with the intellect, to inquire into attitudes, values and consciousness, has highlighted the need for a separate method for research, including the evaluation of its overall effectiveness, that is its validity.

Every other participant in this inquiry, as well as almost every other book I have perused on interconnecting topics, has placed intuition as a key component for developing one's full potential. Much of the approach taken by A/L practitioners in facilitation, although based on solid theoretical principles, is also based on a deep faith in our own intuitive intelligence along with a commitment to furthering the same in others. Finally, areas of science and other disciplines have validated this part of ourselves which has been sorely missing in most educational practices in the past. Intuition goes a long way toward correcting the balance and mending the split within ourselves, maximising our full potential and developing our overall spirituality.

Intuition is particularly valuable in a learning paradigm which not only acknowledges its importance but encourages and validates it as a powerful learning and teaching tool. Many valuable contributions to scientific thought, from people such as Darwin to Einstein have occurred as a result of intuitive and/or creative thinking. For those of us who have always felt our strong intuitive tendencies, as
being valid and a reliable inner guide, we feel even more confident and confirmed that we were right all along (at least some of the time!).

This is all not to say that intuition always proves to be correct. As Timothy Leary found, under the influence of intuition (or was it drugs?), “last night I solved the mystery of the universe but today I have forgotten what it was” (1983). This amusing example demonstrates the elusive nature of intuition, and in attempting to maximise its use in our developmental processes, perhaps we need to have a pen and paper ready! This elusiveness is a similar phenomenon involved in any serious attempt to ‘catch’ and replicate a particular sense of *flow* or *interconnectedness* that as it has been shown, can occur in the learning/teaching process when the conditions are ‘right’. When we deny our intuition, we deny our sense of relatedness - to others, to nature, and to our inner selves” (Shepherd 1993:224).

My inquiry has shown that the development of all parts of ourselves with an emphasis on aligning the unconscious and conscious aspects of our minds can bring us to new levels of awareness and understanding. As has also been demonstrated, personal paradigm shifts are often the key toward a new ‘enlightenment’ level of learning and being. Practitioners need to take the time to explore their own motivations, reflecting on their own consciousness and actions, and realise they have more than likely experienced a paradigm shift within themselves, either before or along their A/L journey. I believe that this kind of self-inquiry will ultimately enhance our innate creative capacities, refine our sensitivities and heighten our spiritual awareness in order to facilitate further deep learning and higher thinking processes within others.

My personal integrative process through this inquiry, has involved awakening to my own and others’ spiritual essence in terms of our everyday professional lives. Along the way I have discovered more aspects of my own potential. The gathering together of together the many branches and sub-branches of this complex tree and making sense of it, firstly for myself and then for others has been illuminating. It has involved challenging myself around my own potential, integrating mine and others’ connecting experiences and developing integrity as an educator. I have been constantly attempting to grasp all the connections and patterns in a creative and intuitive way, which I have found to be a preferred style of learning and communicating for me.

This making sense of patterns and connections around learning and teaching is a uniquely personal process. It is essentially about peoples’ needs to make sense of themselves and the world around them. This phenomenon is certainly true of myself. Throughout this journey I have been necessarily extended and challenged in both the professional, personal the spiritual domains. This thesis therefore represents an expression of some of that inner ‘adventuring’ and personal/spiritual expansion.
In any case, from the beginning, I could take no other course than be personally committed to looking inward to attempt to heal the split that I recognised both within myself and without. The assumption underlying all my views and activities both personal and professional, is that we can and need to bridge this split, to become ‘whole’ again. Firstly, we need to find ‘the spirit’ within ourselves through exploring our intuitive and metaphysical aspects and then within our learning and teaching approaches and indeed in all fields of human endeavour. This approach to education is very much an interdisciplinary one, as is the very essence of social ecology. Unfortunately, in many traditional institutions, this kind of approach is not considered to be serious, academic or scientific enough.

To me, however, if we care to examine closely enough there is no doubt there are obvious parallels and patterns of spirituality within many other domains. As many participants have also emphasised, there is a powerful connection between our own spiritual development and the methods of learning and teaching we do. One encourages, stimulates and inspires aspects of the other. I often experience that we are a transitional stage between two opposing paradigms, and as such are ‘holding a paradox’. For this reason alone there is a current need to raise awareness of and provide opportunities to explore and experience spirituality in terms of our everyday life. Eventually this phenomenon will spread and there will be a natural experiencing of spirit in learning as well as all of life, rather than our having to talk and write about it.

At a lecture in London in 1991, Dom Bede Griffiths spoke about the need to integrate the three levels within ourselves, the physical, psychological and the spiritual”. He used the term “psychic unity” that lies behind the separated selves which is like Jung’s notion of the ‘collective unconscious’ which lies behind the conscious minds, were “...we go right back to the beginning of humanity” (reported in Gersh, 1992:6). It is however, the spiritual dimension that Griffiths describes as being beyond both the physical and the psychological world where”... one reality unites the whole creation, unites every level of being”(ibid).

I agree with this perspective. I also find that for practical purposes and like Thomas Moore, that “…we have to make spirituality a more serious part of our everyday life” (1994:xv). Here Moore expresses my own intuitively-felt need and particularly for this inquiry, to make ‘personal and spiritual development’ synonymous. or at least to integrate the two. Given that we now know how the scientific world view has helped compartmentalise many different aspects of nature and within ourselves then there is a strong case, from an integrative world perspective, for the spiritual to be part of every day life and of all domains.

When John and I discussed the notion of the “split awareness” that he aims to facilitate within his students, I asked him how important he felt this state to be. He replies that “in terms of spirituality it’s getting very close to the Hindu terms
body/soul combination, so it's not a split, it's a combination". In almost all explorations about the teaching/learning process, and his own personal development, John always emphasises the integrative aspects, those that relate to the merging, combining and connection. Although he rarely talks of his own spirituality, it appears John's experience of a sense of interconnectedness with everything and everyone has laid the basis for his way of perceiving spirituality and real learning.

Similarly within A/L methodologies, students are shown how their own brain learns by patterns and connections. A more spiritually aware and experienced practitioner is also able to point out through example and other suggestive means the integrative forces that exist within our whole selves as well as in the wider world.

If my heart could do the thinking and my head could only feel

Van Morrison

As a consequence of this inquiry, it has become clear that the spiritual development and professional development for practitioners can not be separated. My original impulse to merge these domains has been echoed in different ways by most other participants, as well as by other people who are committed to the promotion of integrative, transpersonal education in general.

Nevertheless, it remains a challenge to pursue methods of research which are naturally qualitative. Any study of mind or consciousness, particularly when the topic is the development of spiritual values and qualities such as love, respect and empathy, is not by its nature straightforward. These elements, which I perceive to be fundamental to an integrative approach to A/L, can not be measured, rather they need to be experienced, embodied and shared with others. The way in which these elements are transferred to others is so elusive and yet important to the social scientist.

Ferguson's reference to a kind of 'cosmic homesickness' and a split within the self resonates strongly with me and my discovery of my own spirituality (see Chapter 1). She believes that "we perform split-brain surgery on the self and isolate heart and mind" (1982:83). I have observed that any involvement in activities which aim to merge the heart and mind not only highlight our innate potential but also highlights a sense of the loss of spirituality that we have experienced over a long period in our everyday lives. For me this is more of a re-discovery which has involved realisations of, reconnections with, and re-emergings of my essential spiritual nature.

All participants in the inquiry have perceived a direct link with their own spiritual development and the learning and teaching they do within A/L. This in some ways is not surprising, since through our knowledge of brain theories and human potential in particular, we have become so much more aware of how much more we can become! An integrative approach to this technology reminds us that we are
a central influence in the process. We need to use much more of our innate faculties which are naturally and intricately tied up with the development of who we are as individuals.

Jonas Salk in ‘Survival of the Wisest’ explains what is happening within our minds in this process toward developing wisdom. It is the same phenomenon that I perceive participants within this inquiry more consciously attempting.

The artist draws upon that part of the minds that functions beneath consciousness... while the scientist, by and large but not exclusively, uses that part of the mind that functions in consciousness. The part of the mind that functions beneath consciousness also operates during consciousness... it is necessary to learn how to draw more upon it and employ it for solving the problems of life, of survival, and of evolution. Wisdom arises from both parts of the mind (quoted in Emery, 1982:7).

With this awareness and an openness to continue learning for ourselves, the further we move along different branches with the aim to facilitate autonomous learning within others, the closer we tend to come to discovering more of our own spiritual essence. Participants in SOL events, who come from different domains and professions, are initially drawn to the vision of Spirit of Learning, with its emphasis on the integration of body, mind and spirit in all learning and teaching. They find that their experiences within the group further highlights a sense of integration within ourselves as well as a sense of connectedness with others and the environment. There is also much attention placed on exploring ways in which these inner ‘adventures’ through SOL activities can in turn, be incorporated into people’s lives outside the group, not only in the professional domains but all areas of society.

Although different aspects of A/L have been emphasised by participant practitioners in different ways, a common thread has emerged in the way each one approaches their teaching. This involves the intention to create harmony or congruence between the sub-conscious and conscious states and external behaviour, not only for their students but also within themselves. The implications for practitioners are that we need to be constantly aware of the paraconscious processes. This requires attention on our own as well as our students’ processes, considering the integrative and multi-layered nature of human beings. In summary, effective and powerful influencing as an A/L facilitator depends on being an effective person, fully aware and in touch with their own subtle ‘powers’ and the integrative nature of the learning brain, as well as all those within the learning process.

All of us at different times have been attempting to capture and articulate the elusive nature of our interactions in our particular learning environments and educating roles. However, whilst this subject remains as fascinating and sometimes as elusive today as it ever did, I am reminded of my original and fundamental
spiritual teachings; that the only thing that one can really be responsible for is one's own consciousness. It is also paradoxically true that we are also responsible for everything to everyone else, in as much as our consciousness affects others and the environment through our interdependence. Once again if inner awareness becomes a key component to outer action, it must play a great part in helping us to act with integrity when dealing with others.

I have discovered that bringing the 'unconscious to the conscious', through critical reflection of our learning and teaching, as well as facilitating the same in others, is a developed 'art'. It is becoming increasingly clear how SOL offers an opportunity for people to bring to the surface those 'life-enhancing' values that we currently honour. These include those virtues that we hope to develop in ourselves and those images to what we aspire and may become in the future.

If we are involved in the creation of a new perspective for education, then we also need to continually ask questions about our own congruency and integrity, which include our personal visions, intentions and values. Questions such as how can we as educators transform our attitudes, values and behaviour to ensure we realise our visions for education and society at large, become crucial at this period of time. This in turn means that there will be more of a need for teachers to become emotionally and psychologically competent in different areas as they enter a different learning paradigm and begin to use non-traditional type techniques.

As an educator and a concerned global citizen, I am facing the same world dilemmas as my students, and am committed to seeking practical creative ways of facilitating education for a healthy global society. Many traditional values and attitudes have now deteriorated or are perceived as "empty, threatening or problematic" (Beare & Slaughter 1994:13). As educators, we bring to our work a range of experiences, perspectives, assumptions and values which inform, colour and shape the educating we do. I have discovered that with clarified visions and values and intentions to facilitate full awareness within our students, we educators are already a step in the direction toward congruent behaviour.

Making conscious those aspects which have remained unconscious within ourselves is an important stage of our development toward congruence and integrity. It is this notion of the paraconscious that Lozanov favours and which I believe facilitates our development toward being "a person of integrity". Diane Whitmore expressed it at the SEAL conference in a different way:

The value and quality of our contact with those we teach depends upon both our inner reality and our outer behaviour. The quality of what we do is the sum total of us that we present to the learner (we teach what we are) (London, 1991).

My intention for this inquiry has been for us educators to examine the essence of who and what we are. It has been about sharing and developing positive attitudes
and values which help support the educating we do in accordance with those values within integrative learning contexts. The inquiry has confirmed the value of self-discovery processes which facilitate an integration of personal growth and professional educating. Interacting meaningfully and honestly with each other at deeper levels around this personal, professional link provides different perspectives on oneself, stimulates new thinking as well as providing valuable opportunities for life-long learning and spiritual development. To this end, I see the deeper and more meaningful inner work we, as educators do now, the more chance there is of an outer transformation and more effective and positive influence upon others in the future.

*Human harmony is the concord of different elements in one composite whole, where the spirit and the body meet, and the rational is joined in harmony with the irrational.*

Andreas Ormihoparcus (1517)
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CONCLUSION

Interconnectedness

We are all members of the human race and the human qualities we share are vastly
more important than the differences dividing us

U Thant

The merging of individual experiences, readings, interactions and personal
reflections throughout my spirit of learning journey, can be expressed through the
integration of the three major themes into the overall theme of interconnectedness. It is the ‘pattern which connects’, within myself, in my
relationships, and with the ideas, experiences and writings of others. In my inquiry,
since I believe that “the search for life in the universe has led us to ourselves”
(Peck 1986:9), I have focussed on the ‘universe’ within us. Spirit of Learning is an
exploration based on the assumption that in examining our inner selves, we are
led to understand and connect with more of the world as a whole and the meaning
of life in general.

Through my explorations I have become even more aware of the “essential
interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomena” (Capra 1983:285). The
recognition and experiencing of our essential interconnectedness is like a ‘gift from
God’. It is a powerful reminder of the spiritual essence that we humans all have in
common. Participants in the inquiry also shared their experiences of ‘everything
being interconnected’, as in John’s earlier experience of there being “one energy
spirit underlying law of the universe and of all life”. In what ever way people may
perceive this “one energy spirit”, it is undoubtedly an individual choice and
experience. What has become relevant for this inquiry is that by increasing our
awareness of our spiritual selves, we can ‘tap into’ this higher energy in a way that
can transform us, and those whom we influence and teach.

The spirit of learning journey has also revealed that ultimately, an increasing
awareness and perception of our interrelatedness, involves an individual spiritual
responsibility to contribute to society and the world at large. Robert Ornstein and
Paul Ehrlich in “New World New Mind” state this in another way:

To us most religions and spiritual groups have, at their core, a vital
message: that all human beings are connected to one another, affecting
one another’s fate and that of the world, and that people must find
within themselves a moral compass for orienting both people and their

In terms of finding a “moral compass’, I have journeyed to find my own spiritual
core which is my guide in connecting to others and to my environment. From a
basis of soul consciousness I can relate to others as spiritual beings in a way that is
much more powerful and meaningful than usual. Participants in the inquiry have
discovered that the deeper unspoken connections between us and different
elements of the learning process can be encouraged. Our inner compass guides us
in the decisions we need to make in our work and life in general. Our explorations involve ways of encouraging and nurturing this kind of inner guidance and spiritual consciousness within ourselves as well as attempting to facilitate the same in others.

My inquiry has focussed on new paradigm learning educators in particular and the need to look after our spiritual selves. We need to nourish, sustain and continue to grow in accordance with the positive and transformative nature of the philosophies we espouse and the innovative, integrative methods we use. Our inner journeying begins with increasing our awareness of ourselves as learners and teachers as well as of those we influence and educate. By reaching inward and accessing our own spiritual potential we can also access some of the inner powers and virtues that exist within us.

My explorations have begun and remained with myself as central to the inquiry. From an increasing awareness and practice of my own spirituality, I have woven the personal, spiritual and global understandings and insights from others into my own life’s learning and teaching journey. I have experienced this journey as a multi-layered one, learning to value the space between my thoughts and words as much as the ideas and words themselves. Insights and experiences gained from and with others have been rewarding as they have triggered further understanding within me and highlighted the connections between us.

In Chapter 1, I related the story of discovering and understanding my ‘essential self’ and my attempt to grasp the mysteries and challenges of the world around. I have been motivated ever since to reconcile different elements of human nature instead of perceiving them as separate, disconnected and alienated from soul. I reflect back to my eight year old self at boarding school when I played the major role in a school play, called ‘The Wattle Tree’. I was the tree, standing for one and a half hours with arms outstretched, laden with boughs of wattle.

During the play ‘I’ experienced all seasons of life and all nature of things around me. I swayed back and forth in the wind, speaking my feelings out aloud whilst children ran around, taunting and playing with ‘me’. I learned to adapt to the external environment, drawing on my inner strength to feel elevated, connected but also simultaneously separate and independent. I recall the sometime sense of isolation and loneliness as well as the relief and sense of freedom when I was left alone from outside forces. I loved and strongly related to my role as that tree, to the unique and powerful position I held and the influence and usefulness I provided. I have realised since how I relate to a sense of individual strength, separateness, independence, influence and beauty, whilst simultaneously experiencing a connection to all other forms of life. I now see that much of my own learning journey since I first recognised my essential spirituality can be encapsulated within this early ‘dramatic’ experience.
When I first began exploring my ‘roots’ as related in Chapters I and 2, I realised how related my very essence and my inner development are to my external learning and teaching practices. I have learned and grown spiritually while understanding my preferred way of facilitating others. Each step of this predominantly introspective and reflective inquiry process has become a further means by which to increase my self-awareness. I have learned to connect with a much deeper flow of learning and living that goes way beyond specific techniques. By developing myself in this way I am expanding my own consciousness and enhancing the quality of my influence upon those I teach.

Inquiring with others has demonstrated that we educators in particular need to develop dual-awareness within ourselves. This involves balancing internal needs and development for ourselves with serving and facilitating others to discover and attend to their own. Part of this notion has been encapsulated in the term of ‘learning how to learn’, to which integrated, accelerative learning practitioners in particular are committed. In helping students learn about themselves, we also help them uncover the motivations behind their learning approaches and therefore their whole lives. This in turn highlights the need for us, as both teachers and learners, to explore and uncover meaning and purpose within our own lives.

This spirit of learning journey for me began as a result of my deep motivation to integrate the different aspects of myself, in particular the professional and the spiritual. I had become aware of and had learned something of the power and effects that our thoughts and energy states have upon others. I felt that there was a need within my self and with others to share our awareness, our insights and to explore our inner development with others. Along the way, the ‘spirit of learning’ in one way or another has attracted a wider range of like-minded people. There has been an increasing awareness and understanding of the deep connection between who and what we are in essence and the suggestive influence we have upon others.

Inner exploration involves raising all aspects of our awareness, maximising our potential and developing and refining inner powers and the subtle ‘arts’ of both teaching and learning. It involves developing more of our own intellectual, creative and spiritual potential, by using and integrating different mind/brain faculties and finding and forging new patterns of meaning within our lives. Interacting with others and sharing common philosophies, experiences and reflections around our learning and teaching has helped to make sense of and integrate many of the smaller themes that have emerged throughout the whole inquiry. It has also encouraged a sense of belonging to a universal family through understanding our commonalities and empathising with each other at a deep level.

There is now enough material from studies of human development, psychology and science to develop a new curriculum to deal with existing educational
problems and create ‘a new world order’ (Ornstein and Ehrlich 1991). My inquiry has highlighted the need to shift our understanding of ourselves as separate individuals. We need to understand and develop our natural and essential connectedness with each other, in the spiritual realm as well as the physical. My thesis argues the need for each educator to reach deep within ourselves to examine, adapt and gently transform our individual selves. For myself, I have found that the more efforts I make toward learning about and developing my inner self, the more I can extend enthusiasm and love for others’ learning and growth. This, I see is the fun and the challenge of the ‘inner game of learning’, an apt name for a cyclic, interconnecting and on-going, life-long journey.

For me the notion of serving and teaching others is not necessarily about doing and behaving externally. More and more often it is simply about being my authentic self, focussing on my own consciousness, becoming aware that the paraconscious will naturally and automatically influence and educate others. My explorations have focussed on the role of inspiring and encouraging others to teach and lead authentically. Within this understanding there is the need for educators to ‘clean up our own act’ in terms of our consciousness. This means that we need to develop practical ways of bringing our thoughts, words and behaviour into alignment.

The notion of spirit of learning can be seen as a seed which has, through indirect means and ‘cross-fertilisation’, nourished thinking and interest in the process of personal transformation amongst a growing spectrum of life-long learners and teachers. In a broad sense it is concerned with the re-creation of new ways of seeing, being and behaving in the world, so that we can each contribute positively and consciously to creating a better and sustainable future. Education and educators must become more global and future-oriented, and emphasise humanity’s deep interdependence. I believe that those educators and leaders who are awake have the task of leading the ways in this kind of thinking and transformation.

My inquiry has demonstrated that the key to developing new visions of reality for society in general will be the exploration and development of enhanced, universal attitudes, values and personal qualities. By tapping into our own learning and spiritual capacities, we can learn to enrich both our personal and professional lives and transform our consciousness and behaviour in general. As an educator concerned for our future world, I am personally committed to looking inward, to examining these values and attitudes that drive my life and my work. I have experienced that at the heart of my involvement with these learning approaches, lies a sense of love for my ‘work and my play’ as one, as well as for my learners and myself. As a result of my inquiry, I have learned that:

The most essential task of all social science is to make people aware of their own values. . . the social sciences should make clear which value positions lie behind the various controversial issues in modern society
and enable people to make the right choices in view of their own value 
(Weber quoted in Emery, 1982:1).

Science for me can only be meaningful if it is embedded in our daily lives and it takes into account me, 'the observer'. In this case, it means the social researcher and those people who have participated in this spirit of learning inquiry. I have more than taken into 'account' myself, the primary researcher and almost unwittingly, found myself becoming more and more central to the whole inquiry.

My research has not only called for increased self understanding, expanded thinking and improved teaching practice for the self but has emphasised the importance of a more global, spiritual consciousness. In this way, the inquiry can contribute to a more positive and productive vision for the future for society at large. One of my hopes is that we individuals will be encouraged and inspired to act upon our self discoveries and new insights in a way that will optimise our own innate learning capacities and spiritual potential. The encouragement is to develop, nourish and sustain individual self explorations and growth amongst people of influence as a means of contributing to a more holistic and harmonious world. As we become much more effective 'life-long learners' we also become more effective, and authentic facilitators of change for others.

Education for the future must involve an awareness of educating for a global society. For the educator this involves the practice of expanded thinking and the creation and sustenance of a positive vision for the future which we can then pass on with credibility to our students. Since I am personally and passionately committed to contributing to both the vision and creation of a better world this factor will remain an important ingredient of my life-long learning and teaching journey.

My research has also highlighted the strong resistance that people have to personal change, in particular to those of our own attitudes and habits. I have come to see the opportunity to change and to transform, as a freedom for the bondages of mind. When I met Dr Lozanov in 1991, he went to great lengths to convey this same notion within the educational context. As someone who had experienced the physical loss of freedom when under house arrest in his own country, the question of 'freedom to choose one's way' had become an important one to him.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the significant influence that Victor Frankl's camp experiences have had upon my own thinking about the meaning of life. I strongly believe that we educators need to understand and experience the freedom of choice within our own inner lives. Only then can our integrity and our real spiritual selves be conveyed with conviction to those we educate and influence. I believe we can be deeply inspired by and learn much from such people in the way in which they have been able to go beyond the usual self limitations of mind and character. Frankl eventually realised that:
Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms - to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's way... It is this spiritual freedom - which cannot be taken away - that makes life meaningful and purposeful (1984:86-87).

Frankl's experiences and deep realisations about human beings serve as a powerful spiritual reminder for me. His words really bring home to me the choice we constantly have at any given moment. We do have the freedom to explore and transform the way we think and act in the world, although rarely do we use this full capacity under even normal situations.

In Chapter 3, I discussed how A/L educators, because of the nature of the context in which we teach, have become very aware of the natural and innate existence of human beings' inner capacities and powers. Since practitioners have had access to much of the latest knowledge about the mind/brain and consciousness, it is natural to develop a commitment to furthering others' full potential. Being passionate and committed has encouraged us to develop our own potential which includes the ability to transcend some of our less useful and negative habits of thought and behaviour and to choose our own ways. Some of the processes we have used for ourselves include personal introspective reflections and interactive explorations within group situations such as the SOL forum.

The following inner powers and personal qualities are particularly important.

* 'Awakeness' - involving alertness and awareness of the self, others and the process of learning and teaching.

* Expanded Consciousness - including a global perspective, holistic world view and awareness of planetary interconnectedness. Also includes developing perceptive powers, intuition and 'holding a paradox'.

* Responsibility - to the self, others and the world in general.

* Commitment - requiring having a sense of mission or purpose, wanting to make a difference.

* Observation - the power of 'dual-attention', of partially withdrawing the mind from external scenes whilst remaining simultaneously fully aware.

* Focus - positive determination and 'pure' intention or consciousness.

* Courage - willingness to take risks and move out of one's 'comfort zone'.

* Being a Learner - an attitude of being a life-long learner and relinquishing one's role as an expert.

* Responsiveness - involving acceptance of newness and change and includes 'choiceless awareness', spontaneity and 'feeling the pulse' of others.

* Authenticity - being congruent, genuine, true to one's self, the same inside and out.
The development of these powers and qualities within the teacher will inevitably help bring about more pedagogical moments, serving as opportunities for deep transformation within both teachers and learners. Conversely, a reliance on external supports limits teachers in their natural abilities to develop and heighten awareness, intuition, curiosity and the ability to respond to each individual and moment. An unquestioning adherence to any teaching methodology without regard for our inner selves involves a danger of ‘sanitising’ a method or placing it as more important than the learner. A truly whole-person approach to learning and teaching can uncover the spiritual, universal values that drive our innate motivations to learn and grow as human beings.

The accelerative learning/teaching context has facilitated the raising of educators’ awareness of our own inner self. I agree with Underhill that “the teacher’s own attitudes are a model for the class, and help to shape the unseen ground rules by which the group will operate” (1989 b:253). I also believe that by raising our own consciousness, we connect with the ‘higher’ levels within our students. The learning process then becomes not only an effective and enjoyable one but can be also a true meeting of spirits and a powerful experience of interrelatedness.

Over recent years there has been an increasing global interest in the kind of themes that have been emerging throughout my inquiry. David Shanks in the New Scientist, in an article about memory, learning and the unconscious, states that:

Renewed interest in conscious phenomena, together with new experimental techniques, have made consciousness a flourishing research topic. A new perspective has emerged on the role consciousness plays in our behaviour. . . (1991:33).

The more experience I have had of the connection between my own state of mind and my students’ well-being, the more aware and ‘in tune’ I have attempted to become in the classroom. Becoming more aware of, developing the ability to observe myself and to have more control over my own energy states, has been of immense benefit in facilitating others. Although A/L practitioners in particular are very aware of this phenomenon in theory, I have found that we need to continually practice and have the experience of it as often as possible. This awareness keeps us constantly and naturally interested in the subject of ‘consciousness as a flourishing research topic’.

Individual participants in the inquiry and I suspect, most A/L practitioners engage in regular practices for themselves which relax, focus and maximise the powers of their own minds in some way or another. By expanding our consciousness in this way it allows us to ‘hold the paradox’ and embrace the new paradigm of learning and living which is upon us today. I believe that the holding of two contrasting views of the world is necessary until the ‘critical mass’ finally shifts the balance to revolutionise society at large. I agree with Miller Mair when he talks about the care we need to take if we are to discover what is deeply important to us. In taking such
care, he says we will have to free ourselves enough to imagine how things may be beyond the way we have been taught not to see and not to say (1989:13).

*The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them*  

Albert Einstein

The tone and tempo of current innovative educationalists is intensifying in terms of the message they are giving. ‘Learn fast, expand consciousness and find new ways of thinking and living before it is too late’. Undoubtedly, current world economic and educational failures have added this dimension of urgency to the learning revolution. Daily evidence indicates that it is raised awareness and education which is the only hope to swing humanity around to a path of creative construction away from the self-destructive path that we are on. A realistic acknowledgment of the inadequacies of the traditional paradigm for learning may be the impetus for people to embrace alternate approaches such as integrated, accelerative learning.

Despite my obvious enthusiasm for innovative approaches to education, I have serious reservations about the potential of any particular learning methodology to bring about a radical shift in human consciousness or action. Not the least of these reservations is the constant reminder of people’s *resistance to change* as well as the frequent incongruence between rhetoric and the actual being of professional leaders from all domains. There is no more important task for educators, especially for those who are already aware, than to continue to ‘work’ on our own consciousness, regardless of what educational approach we use.

In the end, since ‘the medium [the teacher/trainer] is the message’, the spotlight must be placed and remain on us. Edrington’s statement supports my thesis that; “the most enduring and pervasive principle in education is that students learn by emulation”. And finally a contention which could sum up much of my reasoning for undertaking this inquiry.

*It is teachers’ consciousness which needs ‘cleansing’ so that students come forth from the educational bath with that fresh set of principles, insights, skills and knowledge necessary for the kind of world which the students will inhabit* (1984:4).

Indeed my thesis is an argument for on-going attention on personal, spiritual development not only for all educators but influential leaders in general. Undoubtedly such a journey, particularly for people who are accustomed to success and achievements in the outer world, is a daunting one. I realise that we must ‘learn to fly’ in a gentle manner so that others will learn to fly with us and we will not be concerned if we become ‘conspicuous’:

*Be like a bird that, pausing in her flight archile on boughs too slight Feels then give way Beneath her and yet sings knowing that she has wings*  

Victor Hugo

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Jean Houston’s words of “these are the times and we are the people”, along with her close mentor’s, Margaret Mead’s, had a strong original impact on me when I first heard them just as I began this research. When I feel alone or daunted in my mission to contribute toward creating a better world, Mead’s inspirational words act as a reminder for me; “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has”. Since the A/L networks in themselves tend to be global, reaching across to many parts of the world, we have excellent opportunities for extending our circle of influence. The SOL forum provides a spiritual network which complements the innovative learning environments with ‘soul food’. It is now also beginning to have an influence outside Australia.

As the other side of interconnectedness is reaching outwards, we need to connect with others in a way that Thich Naht Hanh calls ‘inter being’. It is clear that we can not be fully personally developed without interactions with others which have mutual reciprocity. Networking provides opportunities for this development. Throughout my adult life I have made and maintained connection with others at a level beyond the material, the mundane and the limiting. Maintaining networks also helps me to ground myself, my theories and ideals. It is a way of exploring with others how to implement my passionate visions and put spiritual values into practice.

As a result of opportunities provided through various networks, I was able to explore the topic of this inquiry. Through the maintenance of them, I can continue to learn and grow, not only professionally but at a deeper, psychological spiritual level. Personal growth and spiritual networks provide a strong and expanding basis for enjoying exchanges with an enormous variety of like-minded and ‘like-spirited’ people around the world.

*It is not so much the amount of specialisation of knowledge that determines the capacity of our minds, but the quality of our thoughts, our feelings toward each other and our world.*

B.K. Chander

If individuals, unite and mobilise their particular personal powers, qualities and virtues, magic can occur. Networking within world-wide groups has greatly reduced the distance between different languages, cultures and religions, and enhances our ultimate spiritual interconnectedness. The A/L networks have brought great opportunities to inspire, dialogue and challenge me to further my professional work in this field and have provided for me a means for a sense of interdependence at a global level.

The most significant of all my networks has been a world-wide connection of students and teachers from the Brahma Kumaris Spiritual University, the world headquarters of which are based in India. Partly through my association with this university over 11 years, I have learned to place deep value and significance on a teacher or leader’s personal, spiritual growth. On many occasions I have had frequent discussions on the subject of ‘the teacher as an example’ with spiritually-minded professional people who visit from all over the world. Many of these
people teach spiritual philosophy and practical meditation to the general public. Others are leaders in various fields and professional educators who take an innovative and integrative approach to their practices. 

These like-minded ‘souls’ come from an enormous range of cultural and professional backgrounds and have provided wonderful opportunities for my exploration of the subject of our own personal, spiritual development. It is probably not a co-incidence that four of the individual participants in this inquiry have all been drawn to visit the Mt Abu headquarters for international conferences, and all without prior knowledge of its existence. The common thread of being a spiritual seeker with a commitment to personal and global transformation has promoted a sense of unity, connectedness and ‘global conspiracy’.

Since my thesis implies that we educators need to develop inner powers to counteract the opposition to change, and to re-inforce our ‘army of conspi-rators’, I also believe that networks are a “tool for transformation... for the next step in human evolution” (Ferguson 1982:231). Robert Muller describes networking as “the new freedom, the new democracy, a new form of happiness” (undated United Nations publication. Networking has become a valuable and rewarding means for inquiring with others in this inquiry as well as for furthering my own overall development and growth.

*If the spiritual is greater than the mental, it is certainly true that the mind produces the forms that serve the turn of the being; ‘philosophies’ can, in the end, only be understood as poems and as Poetry*

Lewis Thompson

Throughout my inquiry, I have been impressed by the many inspiring, often ‘poetic’ ways in which various thinkers and authors are able to express similar observations, experiences, visions and impulses that I share. I have been given much more food for thought and many more experiences to integrate than I had ever originally anticipated. I have frequently wondered how I would capture the significant ‘essence’ (the major themes) of my inquiry in writing in a way that could also be inspiring and transformative for readers. Despite the considerable challenges and time involved in my exploration and my writing, I remain inspired to articulate and document previously unconscious or intuitive knowings and experiences.

The reflections in which I have regularly engaged have taken on many forms. They have included deep personal introspection, sharing with others, and reflection on the writing of this thesis. One of the most valuable and insightful means for reflection along the way has been my personal journal writing, an activity which has been largely spontaneous and irregular. It has led me to some important realisations about myself, for encouraging my self awareness and personal growth. It has also encouraged a deepening awareness of my state of consciousness at different phases of the inquiry. The insights I have gained have been particularly valuable in my role as a facilitator of others’ learning and
personal development. In this way I become more aware of the ever continuing braiding together of my inner being with others and their inner worlds.

Although the ‘unique meaning’ I have gained during the writing of this thesis may be immediately relevant to me, I have written with a conviction that my experiences are common to many other educators and life-long learners. I have also written with the hope that readers will resonate with some of my narrative and find universality in the content and the process. During the course of some of my writings, I wrote down my own overall life purpose which I consider has been integral to this research inquiry:

I am personally committed to contributing with integrity to a world-wide connection of spiritually minded leaders and professional educators who are aware of our innate goodness and unlimited learning potential and who desire to facilitate the same in others.

My mission in order to carry out the above is:

To constantly remain self-aware, honest, enthusiastic, energetic and authentic in all areas of my life and continue to learn to integrate my work and my play, my education and my recreation.

It has been clear, by the frequent use of quotations throughout my thesis, that I have been deeply inspired by the very poetic words of many different authors from around the globe. I would like to acknowledge each one of them and express my appreciation for the wisdom and beauty of their uplifting messages. Their influence is a reassuring reminder that the written word can after all be a powerful one with the potential to inspire and transform. I would like to conclude with some words of wisdom and power from Nelson Mandela that were recently sent to me from a friend in South Africa. I feel that the timing of receiving these words from a great spiritual being and influential world leader was perfect. They capture much of my concluding thoughts and final reflections on this journey and leave me with increased hope and purpose to carry on my life in the spirit of learning and love.

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There’s nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory of God within us. It’s not just in some of us; it’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.28

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28 Inaugural Speech as President of Republic of South Africa, 1994.
Spirit of Learning

An Exploration
into the Role of Personal/Spiritual Development in
the Learning, Teaching Process

Dawn Emelie Giggys
B.A., Dip. Ed.

Research Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Masters of Science (Honours)
Social Ecology

University of Western Sydney - Hawkesbury
Richmond, NSW Australia
May, 1996
PLEASE NOTE

The greatest amount of care has been taken while scanning this thesis,

and the best possible result has been obtained.
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I would firstly like to offer my deep thanks and appreciation to my two supervisors, Dr. John Cameron from the School of Social Ecology at the University of Western Sydney (Hawkesbury) and Dr Ian Mills from Victoria. I have been extremely fortunate in receiving unlimited encouragement, patience and welcome advice from them both. I have benefited greatly from their professional and constructive suggestions, their clear intellects and the empathy they have conveyed. I have enjoyed all of our interactions and found it a privilege to have their involvement as an essential ingredient to my own personal and professional development. I would also like to thank Marilyn McCutcheon for her early encouragement and support.

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I thank Mike for providing a quiet and cosy country retreat home and for his unwavering faith in me for much of the writing of this thesis. I thank all the group members of the Spirit of Learning forum, for their indirect contributions, their spiritual energy and commitment towards the transformation of education at large.

Finally I wish to convey my deep thanks and appreciation to my brother Paul Griggs and his company Design Works, for the many, many hours and long nights involved in unravelling the mysteries and magic of computers. I thank him deeply for his generous gift of time and talent in the design of the graphics and his ‘perfect eye’ and patience in formatting this thesis. I thank the rest of my family for their loving support and for their interest in my inquiry.

Finally I thank my father for his lasting inspiration, and whose spirit lives on.
DECLARATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

[Signature]
Spiritual development
is about the development of each person's life story,
with its distinctive beginning, middle and end.
It is about how each of us
narrativises the big and small crises
of daily living and working.

Robin Richardson
ABSTRACT

*Spirit of Learning* in a general sense is an exploration of the inextricable link between learning, individual personal development and potential. My thesis emphasises the personal/spiritual development of the educator, including myself, within an enhanced, holistic learning context, which I call *integrated accelerative learning*. The inquiry examines the way individual educators and ‘life-long learners’ develop their inner selves, by exploring some of their relevant attitudes, values and significant life experiences.

The accelerative learning approach is based on a philosophy which includes an expanded view and maximisation of human potential. It incorporates the knowledge of individual learning styles, ‘multiple intelligences’ and emphasises the development of effective life-long learning strategies. Throughout the thesis the use of the term ‘spiritual development’ is intended to be interchangeable with ‘personal development’ and is based on my view that the essential self is a spiritual being.

I describe an ‘educator of integrated accelerative learning’ as one who is aware of, and to some degree, consciously utilises elements of the paraconscious (beyond the usual conscious level), in order to enhance the teaching/learning process and promote personal development within the learner. My thesis is that we educators need to examine the essence of ourselves behind these innovative methods we use. My belief is that we need to nourish, sustain and grow in accordance with the positive and transformative nature of the philosophy we espouse and the methods we use.

Within the area of personal/spiritual development, many themes have emerged, including the changing role and attitudes of the educator from teacher to facilitator. The theme of integration is a particularly strong one and includes the concept of congruency, encouraging the development of all aspects of ourselves and integrating one’s personal and professional lives. In general, I have discovered that most of the smaller themes can be identified under three major umbrella themes. These are *integration, awareness* and *human potential*, the development and expansion of which can be seen as promoting a sense of *interconnectedness* and the development of *spirituality* in general.
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INTRODUCTION

The Seed

I cherish trees because of their natural correspondence with the greener, more mysterious processes of mind - and because they seem to me the best, most revealing messages to us from all nature, the nearest its heart.

John Fowles & Frank Horvart

Education for the 21st century demands that we find more authentic, relevant and effective forms of learning to deal with a fast changing and challenging world. At the same time, there is an increasing and corresponding need for facilitators of others’ learning to accept that we are also life-long learners who need to learn to manage the ensuing inevitable changes. This implies that continuing to learn, change and grow at both the professional and personal levels are essential. This inquiry focuses attention on the personal growth and spiritual development of educators including myself, who are approaching our work with a strong awareness of a need for fundamental change within education in general. It argues that these elements cannot be separated from the influence we have upon our students and peers.

Spirit of Learning in a general sense, is an exploration of the inextricable link between life-long learning, spiritual growth and human potential. The role of the educator as a ‘medium’ or messenger lies at the heart of my thesis, with a strong argument for us to examine and develop our own inner selves in order to meet some of these fast increasing external demands. The research study places myself at the centre and includes a small group of educators from both within Australia and overseas. Our learning and teaching experiences and reflections, as they relate to the theme, often take the form of personal narrative. The inquiry eventually broadens with the initiation of the Spirit of Learning forum (SOL). This forum consists of an on-going group of life-long learners and educators who are committed to the integration of ‘spirit’, along with body and mind into all learning and teaching processes.

The past ten years or so have seen a great expansion in the development of new learning technologies for people of all ages, subject areas and levels of education. The context for my inquiry is the holistic, ‘new paradigm’ learning environment, which involves an innovative, experiential and integrated approach to learning, teaching and training. ‘Accelerative’ or ‘accelerated’ learning are generic terms used to describe this kind of approach and which incorporate a range of the most up to date learning strategies. This also includes a philosophy which acknowledges and honours the concept of expanded human potential and promotes learning as a natural and enjoyable process.

Accelerated learning has very often been misunderstood and misinterpreted as it has taken on varying meanings for different people. Nevertheless, it is a term which seems to have ‘stuck’ and I have been greatly influenced by much of the research and philosophy behind it. Throughout this thesis the term will be used in
its broadest and most current sense, incorporating new and expanded meanings as they have occurred over time. There will be an elaboration on the most relevant and commonly accepted elements of this methodology, as well as the philosophy behind it in Chapter 3. Throughout the thesis, there will be an emphasis on the personal, spiritual growth of the educator who practices within this new paradigm learning context.

For simplicity and convenience 'integrated or (accelerated) accelerative learning' will be mainly referred to as 'A/L' and the practitioner of this approach will be termed an 'A/L educator'. There will sometimes be the need to emphasise the 'whole brain' notion, as there will be with the terms 'integrated', 'enhanced' and 'innovative'. My own understanding of accelerative or accelerated learning agreed by those who use this approach to facilitate others, is included in accordance with how I use the term throughout this thesis. My description is as follows:

Integrated, accelerative learning involves the knowledge and conscious utilisation of aspects of the 'paraconscious' elements to promote whole-person learning, psychological well-being and human potential in the teaching process. Paraconscious refers to that part of the mind beyond the conscious, including the flow between the sub-conscious and conscious parts, and will sometimes be referred to as the sub-conscious. An A/L educator includes teacher, facilitator, practitioner and trainer and throughout this thesis these terms will be also be interchanged according to the emphasis required.

Long before formal training courses had begun in Australia, I had predicted a popular expansion of the new paradigm learning industry. In using the term 'accelerated' however, I felt concerned about the emphasis on this aspect in the learning process, as has been the common tendency, in contrast to its integrated nature. Along my own 'accelerative learning and teaching journey', I have also personally felt a strong need to both give and receive support, and to encourage and share relevant experiences with like-minded educators. I have found there is a constant need to acquire new skills, develop professional congruency, remain constantly aware of the learning process, and to keep up to date on new research findings within the field.

A crucial element within this focus is that of the teacher's/educator's role in terms of her own personality and way of being. It is obvious that the personal/spiritual development as a complement to professional development in teacher education in general is often not even acknowledged, let alone promoted. Within the context of integrative, accelerative learning, in order to be congruent to the inherent philosophy, I believe that an emphasis on the deep connection between our inner and outer lives is essential. The very nature of this methodology necessarily stimulates a need for educators to turn inward to explore their own learning capacities, attitudes and values.
One of the important basic assumptions I have for this inquiry is a need for ongoing promotion of the development of a range of ‘life-enhancing’ attitudes and personal qualities amongst educators. I believe as does Gregory Bateson; “before we apply social science to our own national [or educational] affairs, we must re-examine and change our habits of thoughts” (1972:160).

The seed for Spirit of Learning can be traced back through recurring themes (patterns) and tendencies as they relate to learning and personal growth throughout my own life. These include a constant seeking of alternative perspectives, meaning, relevance and integration. I eventually realised that it was the desire for integration of my professional teaching/learning path with that of my spiritual path on which I had embarked that led to this inquiry. In my own pursuit of spirituality, I had come to understand and value life a little differently and I wanted to make this perspective relevant and practical in my every day life and teaching work. I had also perceived and experienced many parallels within the two paths and I wanted to explore these and add more meaning and depth to my professional work.

The knowledge and promotion of the paraconscious and whole-person teaching, in accelerated learning which aims to maximise learning potential, also highlights the potential and personality of the educator. In the A/L learning environment there is much emphasis on consciously utilising non-verbal aspects of the teaching process to bring about more effective, ‘accelerated’ learning. Many of these non-verbal and sub-conscious elements represent the very essence of the educator her/himself as well as how she/he deals with them. It is this essence or spirit that I have wanted to explore.

My own experience along with observations of other A/L educators, demonstrates that we can no longer avoid turning within to examine our own sub-conscious, inner selves. The philosophy underlying this learning/teaching approach requires that we ‘dig deep’ and learn to practice what we ‘preach’ in even more demanding ways than with traditional teaching techniques. I see this ‘digging’ stage as an enormous challenge which requires constant self-inquiry and willingness to change ourselves. I became curious as to how novice as well as established and successful new paradigm A/L educators, dealt with these challenges. I wanted to know how they perceived the link between their professional and their personal development.

The pursuit of spirituality in my own life as well as an integrated approach to my teaching at the time, undoubtedly stimulated my interest in this phenomenon. I have learned to place value on my own strongly felt intuition and the ‘beyond the rational mind’ type of experiences and feelings, particularly in the classroom. I use the term ‘personal, spiritual development’ as a means to demonstrate what I see is the inextricable link between these two aspects of human development and growth where the psychological and the spiritual are implied in the same sense. In other
words, the essential personal self is a spiritual being and so personal and spiritual growth and development are intended to be synonymous.

Individual participants in the inquiry consisted of seven A/L educators who believe they fit the description as previously stated. These participants were all introduced to the topic through a questionnaire, which in most cases, paved the way for more spontaneous and in-depth discussions and the sharing of relevant personal stories. The nature of my ‘organic, integrative research process’ has tended to provide opportunities for on-going personal reflection and insights for all those involved. This factor has been instrumental in confirming what I feel to be some of the validity of the study.

Over recent years, there has been an increase in recognition for and promotion of a more ‘real’, more personal and I believe a more valid science. However, the eventual documentation of one’s personal perspective in the social sciences, has for the large part, been expressed in traditional, impersonal, objective ways. Throughout this thesis, I have placed myself central to the whole inquiry, and have taken a very personal perspective in my writing. This has at times, left me feeling rather vulnerable and emotionally exposed. My personal learning throughout this process has inevitably had significant impact on my own spiritual growth.

Along the way, I have found the necessity to regularly confirm my commitment to the topic, as well as to the process itself as it became increasingly evident that I could not avoid my own inner exploration along the way. This has not always been a very comfortable experience, particularly in regards to the documentation of this thesis. This in itself has presented many challenges, as well as an enormous personal ‘learning curve’ to overcome. However many different sources of support and encouragement along the way, have served to continually renew my confidence and my spirit to complete my work.

Throughout the thesis, particularly in the first two chapters, I will be relating my personal and professional learning journey as a narrative from a strong, subjective position. I believe as Susan Kreiger in ‘Social Science and the Self’, so aptly argues, that:

We ought to develop our individual perspectives more fully in social science, and we ought to acknowledge, more honestly than we do, the extent to which our studies are reflections of our inner lives (1991:1).

The phenomenon I perceived as a worthwhile and interesting subject for study, is about these very reflections. The School of Social Ecology, which encourages the pursuit of non-traditional approaches to learning and doing research, has provided a unique, supporting and challenging learning community for this inquiry. In this innovative academic context, the individual is very much acknowledged as part of the whole system. In this environment, the development of all aspects of the self, including the spiritual in the researching process, are honoured and encouraged. I
discovered holistic, co-operative, participatory research methods to be a natural, congruent and appropriate means for my inquiry. In fact I could not imagine conducting my academic research under any other circumstances.

The reflexive process, that is the systematic observation and reflection on one’s own personal learning, has been essential to my inquiry. It is one which is strongly promoted and encouraged within the course. This research process has required me, the primary researcher to constantly reflect upon my own assumptions, beliefs and values. In turn, I have learned to become aware of the need to challenge, change and extend myself along the way. I have learned to record significant personal insights which directly affect the way I think and learn, and in turn the way I teach and facilitate others. Participants have also expressed that this inquiry, by focussing on the inner self, has provided an opportunity for them to reflect on ‘why they do what they do’ as educators. In this way, the reflexive process has tended to be a liberating one where I believe the scope for personal change and growth is of a more expanded nature than within traditional social science research.

A social sociological view of the world stresses an approach toward ‘healing the split’ between two opposing world views that a more traditional approach to science and learning has not promoted. It aims to combine phenomena and see it in its totality. Social Ecology is a transdisciplinary approach to the relationships between people, their communities and their environment. It honours the psychological dimension, (to which I add the spiritual dimension), as being integral to the inquiry process. This view is consistent with the new vision of reality that Fritjof Capra describes. That is one which is “ . . . based on awareness of the essential interrelatedness and interdependence of all phenomenon. It transcends current disciplinary and conceptual boundaries. . . .” (1983:285). Similarly;

Social ecology recognises all knowledge as a manifestation of the values, culture, history and experience of the knower. Knowledge reflects the past history of a person’s ‘being in the world’: it cannot be absolute, independent or value free and this requires that we explicitly recognise our values and examine them as part of our activity as social ecologists (part of our reflexivity) (Melser 1991:1).

Within this innovative, intellectual framework of social ecology, my pursuit of integration of the professional and personal/spiritual domains of my life has been strongly supported and validated. The universal nature of my topic has kept me excited. It has appealed to my commitment to encourage the development and maintenance of a holistic and global perspective for education and life-long learning in general.

During early inquiries and discussions with people within the A/L field, I received positive responses of curiosity and interest in my thesis topic. I assumed that if this exploration was relevant in one learning context then it would almost certainly
have implications within others. This assumption was confirmed along the way as wider interest continued to grow throughout my study. It was this interest which eventually brought together like-minded people from different learning backgrounds to form the Spirit of Learning forum (SOL).

The 'scientific' knowledge of the role of the paraconscious in the learning process has continued to give me confidence to explore these aspects within myself. Methodologies which encourage the maximisation of our innate qualities and capacities have given me freedom to trust, intuit and flow toward my topic focus. I believe this kind of freedom is essential for people prepared to innovate with and explore non-traditional approaches to learning. Along my explorative journey, I have needed to become aware of and to reflect upon the relevant and recurring connecting patterns in my life which lie at the heart of my research.

In a co-operative sense, this inquiry has also set out to provide opportunities for educators to identify and share the primary motivations underlying the work we do within A/L. The uncovering of our inner impulses, motivations and values, has tended to highlight our deeper, innate, 'spiritual' qualities. This focus is in accord with those of Dr Georgi Lozanov, acknowledged seminal researcher of 'Suggestopedia', an accelerative learning method developed in Bulgaria in the sixties. Despite my interest in this method of learning, I have always been drawn to an emphasis on the development of the 'personality of the teacher' over and above particular techniques employed. It is this fascination with the potential influence of our own 'beings' upon others, that led me on this self-discovery journey with other like-minded teachers and life-long learners.

**Spirit of Learning as an Organic Integrative Process**

The overall approach to this inquiry can be divided into three main phases throughout the thesis. The characteristics of each phase is described as follows:

**THE FIRST PHASE: INQUIRING ALONE** Observations, readings and reflections on personal experiences and professional influences are strongly represented in the first three chapters.

The first two chapters involve exploration into my personal learning, my formal learning and my teaching 'roots'. These explorations have involved going within as a means to gain insights and understandings relevant to the whole inquiry.

**Chapter 1** begins with retrospective observations of my personal/spiritual growth in relation to my overall life's learning journey. These have been significant in providing insights into my essential spiritual self as well as identifying some of my assumptions regarding psychological and spiritual development.
Chapter 2 explores my past educational and professional influences which have been significant in forming attitudes around learning and also to my role as an educator. It lays the groundwork for understanding much of my passion for learning, and my purpose in exploring within an integrated approach to teaching.

Chapter 3 provides some answers to the question of how do we personally and spiritually develop ourselves as innovative educators. It captures some of the emerging themes which relate to our ‘ways of being’ as teachers working within the integrated accelerative learning field. It explores the influences which have affected my personal growth and the way in which I see myself as an educator. In turn I began to learn that my very spiritual essence influences others when engaged in the facilitation of their learning.

This chapter also includes relevant understandings gained through wide readings of literature on topics ranging from new paradigm learning, and accelerated learning to personal growth, spirituality, psychology and the new sciences. It describes the contributions of experienced educators, philosophers and A/L personalities, to the general topic of personal development for teachers within the field of accelerative learning.

Phase 1 has been an integral stage in examining ways to develop myself personally, spiritually and professionally in relation to my general teaching practice. In turn it provides the basis for the next phase of exploring with other like-minded educators, the subject of the influence of our personal essence upon those we facilitate.

THE SECOND PHASE: INQUIRING WITH OTHERS Planning and action. This stage describes in more detail the ‘natural, integrative process’ of the whole inquiry, with a particular focus on my inquiring with others.

Chapter 4 This chapter highlights the journey toward establishing an appropriate, nourishing and congruent methodology for the overall inquiry process. It discusses my concerns and the considerations necessary in approaching a deeply personal, qualitative research with others. It includes a description of the action taken to explore the topic on both an individual basis as well as within a group situation. The integrative, open-ended nature of the inquiry will be described, along with the ‘organic’ establishment of the Spirit of Learning forum, an on-going inquiry group venture.

Chapter 5 describes the direct responses to a questionnaire from three individual participants as well as in depth involvement in the inquiry through personal meetings and correspondence from the other four. These in-depth responses include participants’ deep motivations and attitudes around their development as A/L educators in relation to the essence of their own lives and personal
development. A sample of responses from different participants at SOL events, appropriate to the major themes of the inquiry, will also be included.

THE THIRD PHASE: DISCUSSION & REFLECTION Making Sense of the Inquiry

Chapter 6 gathers together the three major themes which have continued to emerge strongly throughout, whilst ‘inquiring alone’ as well as with others. Different aspects of each theme will be explored and discussed in some detail, along with personal reflections on the insights gained.

The Conclusion emphasises the significance and implications of the inquiry in terms of our essential interconnectedness. It summarises the recurring themes of the thesis which includes developing and maintaining a subtle, spiritual consciousness, positive and flexible attitudes and ‘inner powers’. It will also include a description and some reflections on the process of documenting my research. This has represented a most powerful source of learning and growth for me, including some pain, much pleasure and some ‘paralysis’. The stages involved in writing my thesis have been constantly and inextricably tied to the various stages of my own personal development along the way.

I shall now take you, the reader, on this journey with me beginning from the roots of my metaphorical tree, travelling upwards through the trunk and outwards along the branches and sometimes into the forest. Each chapter represents an important vital stage of the overall tree’s growth. To remain alive, neither the branches nor the roots can be separated from the tree as a whole, nor finally from the forest. Similarly I, the researcher can not be separated from my research. My own personal, professional, spiritual development and expression are totally interwoven with the many branches of this tree of learning and inquiry.