



MEDIATION AND THINKING DEVELOPMENT IN SCHOOLS

Theories and Practices for Educators

Heidi Flavian



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Theories and Practices
for Education

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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I would like especially to thank my husband and children, who encouraged me throughout the process of writing this book. In addition, I would like to thank all the researchers and theoreticians who shared their ideas and knowledge with the world and contributed to my understanding of the core meaning of *mediation* and thinking development.

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PREFACE

My understanding that everyone is capable of developing independent thinking skills once they have been guided on how to do so was developed many years before I officially became a teacher, an educator and a mediator. Throughout the three years of high school, once a week, I volunteered as a caregiver of a child who was diagnosed with autism. Although professionals decided that he would not be able to communicate in any way, his parents refused to accept this diagnosis and decided to invite a variety of caregivers who would stimulate him to communicate in different ways. Step by step, it worked and communication slowly developed. Back then I thought it was a miracle, later in life I understood it was *mediation*. Another revelation I experienced was after a few years, as a teacher, during a workshop with Prof. Reuven Feuerstein, who clarified for me the role of the mediator throughout mediatees' thinking development and opened the door for me to the world of *mediation*.

Mediation theories were developed for many years to emphasise society's responsibility towards the success of learning among all children, even though the term *mediation* was usually not used. Out of the several twentieth-century learning theories, I have chosen five main theoreticians who approached learning from different perspectives, at different times and in different cultures. The five theories I will focus on in this book are those developed by Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky,

Feuerstein and Gardner. All five theories include environment, schools and parents in the process of children's learning and thinking development, and they all share the view that children's thinking can be modified. In addition, key results from research in the field of neuropedagogy will be presented to strengthen these theoretical attitudes, since we know today that the brain actually changes as a result of social interactions and interventions. Each perspective discussed here represents a different understanding of society's role in education. Moreover, although these theoreticians did not know each other, their different views of society's role as responsible for all children's development, is the link that may provide educators with a wider and more professional basis for better *mediation*.

While each theoretician believes that his/her theory will be the one to solve most of the dilemmas of education, this book intends to offer practical integration of several existing *mediation* theories. It offers a unique model that integrates different approaches from different periods that can be used effectively by mediators and educators today. Nevertheless, I invite each of the readers to look for other theories and possibilities that also encourage integrating *mediation* for thinking development.

This book offers an opportunity to better understand the role of *mediation* in an era of dynamic social and cultural changes that influence education, in order to better prepare the next generation to become part of society. Hundreds of years ago, ever since leaders of society began to understand the concept of education, the common goal of all was to better educate people in order to make them a productive part of their society in the future. As a result of this broad goal, various approaches to education were developed in order to help individuals become better learners. In other words, theoreticians and researchers studied the human mind and thinking

processes in order to develop better and more efficient learning models.

Mediation, as mentioned, is a process that promotes learning as a result of learner interactions with the environment. Without reducing the importance of classic learning models, nowadays other goals are at the forefront of the education processes: teachers do not need to keep focussing only on teaching specific disciplines; they also need to focus on knowledge that will be useful in students' future. In addition, students are judged on their achievements in school rather than on their understanding and their thinking development and parents try to help their children excel at school rather than excel as members of society. Although the goals of learning knowledge and reaching new achievements are important, teachers and educators should understand how to mediate knowledge acquisition rather than be the source of knowledge.

Mediation processes as mandatory components in education allow all participants to develop better thinking processes. The ideas about *mediation* are wide and cover all areas of life. Therefore, being a great teacher or educator are only two facets of the *mediation* approach. This book will allow all readers to better understand the concept of *mediation*, following with ideas to practice it, and thereby become true mediators.

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