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A Case Study Exploring Tutor Perceptions on the Effects of the  
Study Diamond in Developing Critical Thinking on an Open  
University Level 1 Arts Course.

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION (EdD)

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## **ABSTRACT**

This case study explores the concept of teaching critical thinking through a process known as the *Study Diamond*. The *Study Diamond* is a study tool embedded in an Open University (OU) Level 1 Introductory Arts course. Entitled '*Making Sense of the Arts*' and identified by the code Y160, the course introduces students to higher education, distance learning and to three distinctive arts disciplines. Using qualitative data collection methods that include an informal non-directive group interview with Y160 Course Authors, an e-survey of Y160 Tutors, and one-to-one semi-structured telephone interviews with targeted Y160 Tutors, this enquiry considers how the *Study Diamond* process augments tutors' pedagogy. Specifically, through the experiences of Y160 Tutors who use a blended delivery method which includes telephone tuition, it looks at the challenges tutors face teaching the concept of critical thinking on a multi-disciplinary arts course and how they facilitate and measure understanding. The study applies an interpretivist framework whereby qualitative data, together with the researcher's own experience of tutoring on the course, are aligned with an established body of literature specific to adult learning, distance tutoring and critical thinking. In particular the theoretical ideas of social constructivism and transformation learning are considered within a teaching context that is essentially directed at students from a widening participation (WP) orientation. Findings suggest the *Study Diamond* has transferable characteristics that are beneficial to Tutors in their teaching of critical thinking. A model for its practical application in inter-disciplinary arts courses is proposed that aims to support Tutors in guiding students, particularly those new to higher education, through the challenges of academic writing and argumentation.

## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Page No.</b>
<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	
1.1 Background .....	12
1.2 'Making Sense of the Arts' (Y160).....	12
1.3 Centre for Widening Participation and Openings .....	13
1.4 The Student Population.....	14
1.5 Teaching Context .....	17
1.6 Rationale .....	20
<b>Chapter 2</b>	
<b>2. LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
2.1 Introduction .....	26
2.2 UK Higher Education's response to WP.....	28
2.3 Models of Adult Learning .....	37
2.3.1 The Theory of Transformation Learning .....	44
2.3.2 Teaching through Questioning.....	45
2.3.3 Tutor/Student relationship and the Role of the Tutor.....	47
2.4 Critical Thinking.....	53
2.4.1 Academic Writing .....	60
2.5 Summary.....	69

## **Chapter 3**

### **3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS**

3.1 Introduction .....	73
3.2 First Stage - Initial Study .....	80
3.3 Second Stage - E-Survey .....	81
3.4 Third Stage - The Interviews .....	86
3.5 Additional Ethical Considerations .....	91
3.6 Analysing the Data .....	92

## **Chapter 4**

### **4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

4.1 Introduction .....	101
4.2 Implications for the WP Agenda .....	101
4.3 Delivery Model.....	106
4.4 The Pedagogy of The Study Diamond .....	111
4.5 The Study Diamond as a Framework.....	116

## **Chapter 5**

### **5. DISCUSSION**

5.1 Introduction .....	121
5.2 Models of Adult Learning and Theory of Transformation...	122
5.3 Barriers to Learning .....	127
5.4 Critical Thinking and the pedagogy of The Study Diamond.....	130
5.5 Informative and Transformative Learning .....	139

5.6 Tutor/Student Relationship.....	144
5.7 Study Skills .....	149
5.8 Modifying and Adapting The Study Diamond.....	158
5.9 Academic Writing .....	163
5.10 Assessment .....	165
<b>Chapter 6</b>	
<b>6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Chapter 7</b>	
<b>7. REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>176</b>

**Figures:**

1.1 The Study Diamond : Adaptation (1) (Baugh et al, 2006).....	8
2.1 Themes that Influenced the Literature Review.....	26
2.2 The Study Diamond in relation to Halpern's (2003) <i>'Learning to Think Critically: a Four Part Model'</i> .....	56
2.3 The Study Diamond in relation to Brookfield's (1987) <i>'Four Components of Critical Thinking'</i> .....	57
2.4 The Study Diamond : Adaptation (2) (Baugh et al, 2006).....	59
2.5 Core Thinking Skills (adapted from Marzano et al, 1988).....	67
2.6 Grid representing Key Theoretical Concepts and Authors....	72
3.1 Key Points from the Literature Review.....	87
3.2 Key Points mapped to Research Questions.....	95
3.3 An abridged version of e-survey analysis process.....	96
4.1 Tutors' orientation.....	105
6.1 The Study Diamond: Adaptation (3) (Baugh et al, 2006)...	172



**Tables:**

5.1 Y160 Study Skills (Baugh et al, 2006) / Thinking Skills  
(Marzano, et al, 1988).....152

5.2 Adapted from Table 5.2 to incorporate  
The Study Diamond Concepts.....154

5.3 TMA01 Adapted from Y160 Making Sense of the Arts  
Assignment Booklet March (C) 2009 presentation.....164

**Appendices:**

1. Screen-grab from Monitoring of Y160 Tutor e-Forum.....191

2. Question Prompts For Y160 Course Team Interview.....192

2a Screen grab showing example of Contact Summary Sheet...193

3. Screen grab showing on-line e-Survey Questionnaire.....194

4. Example of Scoping Instrument.....198

5. Prompt sheet for Tutor Telephone Interviews.....199

6. Screen grab of Tutor Telephone Interview data analysis.....200

7. TMA01 Modified Tutor Marking Guidelines for Y160 “Making  
Sense of the Arts” (March C, 2009).....201

"I say {to students} after all this is a 'diamond' - a really valuable jewel - and what you have there is something you can treasure and it will be a precious thing for you....".

Tutor D, Interviews, 2009

## Chapter 1

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The impetus for this study arose from my interest in the concept of critical thinking and in particular a process known as the *Study Diamond* (Baugh et al, 2006; see Figure 1.1).

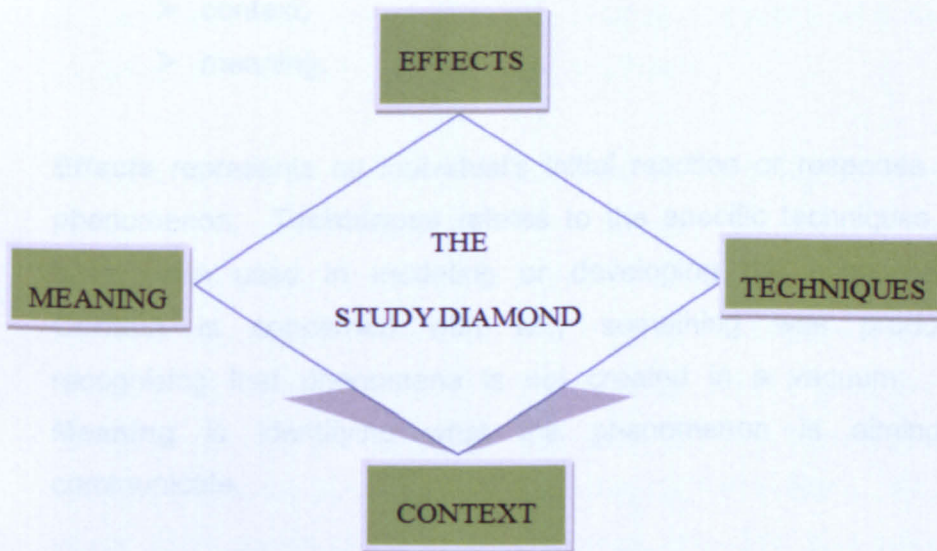


Figure 1.1, Adaptation (1) from Baugh et al (2006)

This tool, devised by Baugh et al (2006), is unique to the Y160 course and is described as:

*“...representing an approach to analysing and interpreting texts such as poems, works of art, pieces of music and works of literature. When used methodically, the Study Diamond provides a reliable and reusable formula for arriving at well-argued conclusions when interpreting a particular work”.*

Baugh et al, 2006, p:18)

Figure 1.1 identifies the four elements of the *Study Diamond* which are central to the pedagogy of the model:

- effects;
- techniques;
- context;
- meaning.

**Effects** represents an individual's initial reaction or response to a phenomenon; **Techniques** relates to the specific techniques that have been used in modeling or developing the phenomenon; **Context** is concerned with why something was produced, recognising that phenomena is not created in a vacuum; and **Meaning** is identifying what the phenomenon is aiming to communicate.

When brought together, the four elements form a useful approach to examining and interpreting both texts and works of art (Baugh et al, 2006, p:19).

The process is embedded in the Open University's Y160, *Making Sense of the Arts* course which is essentially aimed at a student population new to higher education or one which is currently under-represented at university. As a Y160 Tutor I have found the *Study Diamond* useful and illuminating in identifying and teaching the skills for critical thinking, particularly for those students lacking confidence or who may be new to academic writing. Further, as my professional experience is not exclusively with the Open University (I am also involved in initial teacher training and continuous professional development training in the compulsory education sector) I have positive experiences of applying aspects of the *Study Diamond* to my teaching practice in other contexts. However, I wanted to know if fellow tutors on Y160 use and apply the process in a similar way. I reasoned that a case study working with Y160 Tutors would enable me to deconstruct the pedagogy of the process and, given it is arguably linked to analysis and interpretation, I would gain a deeper understanding of what it means to think critically.

Anecdotal evidence that I continue to hear from colleagues suggests that whilst critical thinking is a key learning outcome in higher education (Halpern, 2003; Lea and Street, 1998; Leming, 1998) and is inextricably associated with academic study, in particular academic writing (Lillis, 2001; McPeck, 1990; Northedge, 2005), there is often confusion around competing definitions of what it means to think critically (Facione, 2010, Bailin et al, 1999, McPeck, 1990). Further, whilst there are an abundance of courses, materials and guidance aimed at supporting learners in acquiring what are broadly termed as 'study skills', as well as materials to aid the teaching of key academic skills, critical engagement with course/study concepts often remains elusive for some and challenging for others, particularly those new to higher education.

Throughout my teaching on Y160 I have found the simplicity of the *Study Diamond* useful in a variety of ways. In particular the multi-disciplinary nature of the Y160 course requires the *Study Diamond* to be applied differently in different contexts which is an example of its adaptability. The four elements (or points of the Diamond – see Figure 1.1) suggest a framework and a common language through which Tutors can engage in dialogic discourse. However, I wanted to explore how useful this might be specifically in identifying the concepts of critical thinking and further, how appropriately the process, when used as a teaching framework, translates across the three disciplines. My hypothesis is that the *Study Diamond* has potential for wider application beyond the confines of the Y160 course.

Thus, from this broad focus I formulated the following three questions:-

1. *“How do Y160 Tutors modify and adapt the Study Diamond to identify and articulate the skills and competences that are central to critical thinking?”*
2. *“How do Y160 Tutors use and modify the Study Diamond to connect across and with the three disciplines of the Y160 course?”*
3. *“How does the unique delivery model of the course and the Widening Participation agenda, impact on the way in which Y160 Tutors model their teaching in relation to critical thinking”.*

In order to set the context, I discuss below the background to the *‘Making Sense of the Arts’* (Y160) course which is integral to how this study evolved and which underpins my rationale for how I arrived at the above three questions.

## **1.1. Background**

The population identified for this case study focuses on a group of Tutors who teach on the Open University's Y160 Course, *Making Sense of the Arts* and who use the 'Study Diamond' (see Figure 1.1) as part of an integrated approach to Study Skills.

Specifically, the students, who often stem from a widening participation (WP) orientation (see below 1.3), are introduced to the disciplines of poetry, history and art history to cultivate their awareness of the key discipline concepts and ways of thinking. However, there is also a strong emphasis on developing a range of transferable study skills aimed at demystifying the way in which understanding is generated and transferred (Baugh et al, 2006). An essential part of this integrated approach is the *Study Diamond*.

## **1.2 'Making Sense of the Arts' (Y160)**

*Making Sense of the Arts* was launched in 2006 replacing 'Living Arts' (Y152), the first Arts course in the Open University's *Openings* programme (see also 1.3 p:13 ). At the time of its re-modelling the original Music module was dropped and replaced with a History module to broaden its inter-disciplinary perspective (Interview, Y160 course authors, 2007).

The significance of including History in a multi-disciplinary arts course is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5; nevertheless it is useful to note the philosophy behind the course design.

Y160 is one of (as at October 2010) 15 ten point introductory courses in the Open University's *Openings* Programme (2010/11) all of which are especially designed to give students a taste of a subject; they are also aimed at "new learners with little or no knowledge or experience of studying" (<http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/atoz/openings-courses.htm>).

In this sense it can be seen that the motivation for developing *Openings* was driven by the WP agenda (see also 1.3 and 2.2). However it could also transpire that experienced students familiar with a higher level of study may be attracted to *Openings* to explore a new subject or discipline. Such contrasting motivations for study has the potential to increase the diversity of students who enroll on *Openings* (see also Chapter 4).

### **1.3 Centre for Widening Participation and Openings**

Since 1970, The Open University, has positioned itself as a leading provider of distance learning and continues to attract large numbers of students through a range of educational programmes and outreach work. Such work builds on the principle of 'open entry' and 'access for all' and is reflected in the University's structure and range of teaching strategies that support learning and widen participation. As part of its strategic development, the Centre for Widening Participation (CWP) and *Openings* in particular was launched in 1999 in response to the United Kingdom's (UK) decade-long widening participation agenda (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education/Dearing Report, 1997; Fryer, 1997; Leitch, 2006). Aimed at "inexperienced learners who may have few if any educational qualifications" (CWP Intranet, 2010 p:4), *Openings* and Y160 can be seen as a direct move towards addressing the challenge of an increasingly diverse student cohort (Interview, Y160 Course Authors, 2007).

Whilst the establishment of the Open University's CWP builds on an open entry policy, it nevertheless was pre-dated by other UK initiatives that have sought to provide equality of opportunity and widen access to higher education.

An example of this was the founding in 1903 of the Workers' Educational Association (WEA) to provide support in accessing education and learning for work to adults from all backgrounds who have previously missed out on formal education (<http://www.wea.org.uk/aboutus/index.htm>).

However, *Openings* is reflective of the Open University's historical desire to remove barriers to access. This is most noticeable by the introduction of a non-traditional one-to-one telephone delivery model, which represents a significant change in correspondence tuition and a departure from the more familiar face-to-face teaching employed by most universities (see also further discussion in 1.5).

#### **1.4 The Student Population**

The first *Openings* statistical Report to be produced by the CWP was generated by Adams (2009) and offers an interesting insight into the student population. Adams (2009) reports *Openings* as having a higher proportion of registrations from students with no previous higher education experience (76.22%) compared to all other Open University level one courses (66.55%). Whilst like for like data on the national picture is not directly comparable, this trend would seem to be reflected in national data which records differences in the rates of participation in higher education between advantaged and disadvantaged neighbourhoods as having reduced since the mid-2000s (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2010).

A further illustration of the target audience at which *Openings* is essentially aimed can be seen in the range of external agencies and community-led projects with which partnerships have been established, these include:-



- the Specialist Schools Trust (London) who fund free places on *Openings* for parents/carers of pupils at three specialist schools in WP target areas;
- the National Aimhigher and Surestart initiatives (aimed at raising aspirations and access for under-represented groups);
- the Muslim Women's Academy, who use *Openings* as an introduction to further study;
- Unison, supporting unqualified Health Care Assistants;
- and across the regions, *Openings* works with a number of community learning groups to widen participation and support lifelong learning.

(CWP, 2010).

As at September 2010, the 15 courses on offer in the *Openings* programme range across the disciplines of the Arts, Sciences, Social Sciences and Education and the portfolio continues to grow. All are 20 weeks in duration and students do not need prior knowledge, experience or a qualification to study. Courses are marketed as introductory-level and as previously suggested, are designed to give a taste of a subject area together with developing study skills and building confidence. For example, students who have studied an *Openings* course are more likely to complete and pass a longer Level 1 Undergraduate course and then progress to the next level, than non-*Openings* students (Adams, 2009).

It can be argued that the 'access agenda' has had and continues to have a significant impact on the delivery of learning across higher education, one aspect of which can be seen in the introduction of study and learning skills (Burns and Sinfield, 2004). However, in the sector there appears to be a growing tension between the challenges of meeting the needs of an increasingly culturally, linguistically and

socially diverse student population and, the historical and traditional practices that have long been associated with higher education (Lillis, 2001). In particular, the non-traditional student faces a range of challenges not least of which is the need to master academic discourse. Often seen as a hierarchal form of communication, this contributes to the perceived notion of inequality and power imbalance in the tutor/student relationship (Burns and Sinfield, 2004).

Further, taking the premise that an individual's internalised belief system and perceptions are shaped by their attitudes to, for example education (Bourdieu, 2010), it can be seen that if an individual has had negative experiences of learning in the past, there is a potential for this to create further barriers to the way in which they respond to study in the future (see also Chapter 2).

So whilst the emphasis on increasing the accessibility of higher education to under-represented groups continues to influence practice (Lillis, 2001), there will remain implications for the design and delivery of courses not least around the need to take account of students' starting point, where and when they enter higher education and the past experiences they bring with them (Knowles, 1984, Mezirow and Associates, 2000, Shor, 1992).

To this end, this study sets out to signpost readers to areas for consideration that have relevance to an aspect of pedagogy around which much importance is placed in higher education teaching and assessment.

### **1.5 Teaching Context**

At this point it would be useful to clearly set out the non-traditional teaching context of Y160 which has such significance for this study.

As the only university in the United Kingdom solely dedicated to distance learning, Open University Tutors, or associate lecturers (ALs) as they are known, are mostly employed on a part-time, fixed contract for the duration of the course on which they are recruited to teach. They are employed by one or more of the thirteen regional and national centres (located throughout the UK and the Republic of Ireland), often tutoring on several courses at any one time. They can also be in full-time employment with the Open University and/or elsewhere.

Whilst some Open University courses do include face-to-face tutorials, other delivery models only offer on-line or telephone tutor support. In *Openings* courses, one-to-one telephone tuition supplements paper-based, multi-media and on-line course materials so teaching by necessity is very personalised requiring a different approach and skills set from that which might be expected from tutors facilitating more traditional delivery models; not least because the nature of distance teaching and learning, and the Open University in particular, since the 1990s, has relied heavily on the use of information communication technology (Gerrard and Gerrard, 2002). Open University tutors are required to be competent users of multi-media on-line communication systems

([http://www3.open.ac.uk/employment/tutors/main\\_3.shtml](http://www3.open.ac.uk/employment/tutors/main_3.shtml)). This relates not only to tuition but also importantly impacts on assessment. Often the only form of contact an Open University tutor will have with a student will be through feedback on written assignments. Hence for the tutor, feedback is conceptualised as a key element of practice and is a more embedded aspect of their teaching than perhaps is the case in traditional face-to-face settings (<http://www.open.ac.uk/tutors/development/correspondence-tuition-booklet.php>).

Further, and of particular relevance for this study, *Openings* tutors feedback not only on academic content but also on associated study skills on which equal value is placed in the assessment framework (Openings-induction, 2010). As can be seen in the literature and is discussed later, this has contributed to the perceived changing role of tutors and lecturers in higher education (Burns and Sinfield, 2004).

The flexibility of the telephone model allows most Tutors to be based at home and fit in their Open University work around other full time or part time careers, thereby often attracting a diverse group of professionals with specialised skills who do not always come from traditional teaching backgrounds.

In this sense, the Y160 *Openings* Tutor, is likely to have experience that is broad and additional to the Open University, strengthening the potential for situating findings beyond the perspective of a single institution. Such flexibility also means individual tutor groups can consist of an equally diverse mix of students who may be from different parts of the country, serving in the Armed Forces or who may be studying from prison

However, the flexibility offered by distance tutoring is not the only attraction to Tutors wanting to teaching on *Openings*. They are often drawn to the course because of their interest in and commitment to working with academically disadvantaged adult learners (see later discussion 4.2). In this sense can be seen the notion of a student centred approach to teaching (Rogers, 1957).

Over the last ten years since the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) the emergence of a student-centred pedagogy in higher education has evoked a growing awareness of the concepts that underpin such a teaching style in which the teacher is seen as facilitator rather than deliverer of learning (Beaudoin, 1990).

However, the intimacy of telephone delivery, coupled with time constraints and working with what could be perceived to be vulnerable learners, tutors could be tempted to adopt a more instructional teaching model (Mercer, 2008); that is, a dialectic style that would not necessarily achieve or promote the desired learner independence or confidence needed for sustained progression. A focus of my research therefore is also concerned with how Y160 Tutors adapt their teaching to account for the delivery model and the diversity in the student cohort. To this end I explore the extent to which their teaching style might combine a dialogic and dialectic approach as a result of facilitating learning through the telephone and consider if the *Study Diamond* framework provides a language through which dialogic and dialectic discourse can be initiated.

Similarly, the multi-disciplinary nature of Y160 means that Tutors are not necessarily specialists in all three subject areas, often teaching on more than one *Openings* course at any one time. In this sense I explore how Tutors modify and adapt the *Study Diamond* framework to connect with each discipline through what could be perceived to be a common language for the articulation of skills and competences.

Whilst Open University Tutors do undertake generic responsibilities associated with traditional university lecturing, in terms of teaching and assessment, the design of most Open University courses dictate that programmes of study require a minimal level of tutor input. Conversely, for *Openings* Tutors, whilst they are expected to mediate the teaching materials into which are built self-study activities, often the nature of the client-group, as suggested above, requires a more supportive, personalised interaction which can 'test' the skills of the tutor (see later discussion 5.6 Tutor/Student Relationship). For example, *Openings* courses are marketed on the uniqueness of students having their own "personal tutor who will provide one-to-one telephone tutorials on a regular basis" (*Openings Prospectus, 2010/11*).

Tutors deliver approximately 5 half hour telephone tutorials over the 20 week period of the course, all of which are Tutor-initiated but are planned and arranged in advance in liaison with the students. Additionally, with no formal compulsory lectures, the Tutor role becomes especially significant for keeping students motivated and on track. Such a multi-faceted role therefore calls for a complex set of skills added to which, as previously noted, tutors will not necessarily be specialists in all disciplines. It is therefore the complexity of the tutor role, together with the delivery model, that underpins this study when considering the extent to which Tutors work with and modify the *Study Diamond* to take account of the multi-disciplinary nature of the course.

### **1.6 Rationale**

The subjective nature of the concept of critical thinking can make it difficult to teach, despite that it is probably an activity people engage in to a greater or lesser extent on a daily basis (Brookfield, 1987). Further, the need to engage in critical thinking is sometimes only seen as an academic skill, as opposed to a life skill that is integral to the thinking process itself (Brookfield, 1987).

In higher education in particular, much importance is placed on the ability to write 'academically', which is often viewed as a measure of understanding (Lillis, 2001; Lea and Street, 1998). Northedge (2005) defines academic writing as a form of communication that is cautious, considered and most importantly based on analytical and reasoned argument. However, in my experience students often struggle with not only reading and critically interpreting academic texts but also with the expectation their written work is fashioned in a particular academic and analytical style (Lillis, 2001).

Further, in my own teaching I have also noticed that in essay questions and assessment criteria, notions around critical thinking can be disguised within fuzzy terminology such as “reasoning ability” and “argument analysis”.

As suggested earlier, Baugh et al (2006) – authors of Y160 – propose that by considering all four elements of the *Study Diamond*, students will be able to reach “a balanced and well-argued interpretation” (p:22). Therefore how Y160 Tutors modify and adapt the *Study Diamond* to expose what underpins critical thinking is a useful platform from which to explore this perceived contradiction and ‘fuzziness’, and to expose what constitutes the concept itself – see Research Question 1:

Research Question 1:

*“How do Y160 Tutors modify and adapt the Study Diamond to identify and articulate the skills and competences that are a central component to critical thinking?”*

Taking the premise that reasoned argument is part of the concept of critical thinking and that the *Study Diamond* is applied across the three different disciplines, a multi-disciplinary course such as Y160 is a useful medium through which to explore the complexities of teaching the competencies of skill transference. Much can be seen in the literature that links critical thinking with academic writing, placing the concept in the context of what is perceived to be academic discourse (Lea and Street, 1998; Crème and Lea, 1999; Peters, 1999; see also Chapter 2). For example, McPeck (1990) cites logic as being integral to what it means to think rationally about different disciplines. The need for students to transfer their learning to different contexts is a crucial consideration for how tutors plan and deliver learning (Simonson, et al, 2006).

Pedagogically therefore how the *Study Diamond* operates when applied across different disciplines has significance for how effective it is as a teaching tool. This led to the formulation of my second research question:

*Research Question 2:*

*“How do Y160 Tutors use and modify the Study Diamond to connect across and with the three disciplines of the course?”*

In the literature there is some debate around the mechanisms by which skills support is delivered. These can range from programmes that are semi or fully integrated into courses, to ‘bolt-ons’ provided as remedial exercises or separate workshops which are often divorced from the teaching context (Burns and Sinfield, 2004). The integrated study skills approach of Y160 in which generic skills are incorporated into the learning, is a useful context specific environment from which to explore the extent to which critical thinking is part of study skills support. Similarly it is useful to explore the extent to which the language of the *Study Diamond* supports the teaching of generic study skills across the three disciplines of the Course.

Whilst I do not see the *Study Diamond* as another formula for critical thinking, neither do I see it as a self-help guide in ‘how to think critically’, I do see the framework as being a useful tool through which the complexities of what it means to think critically can be articulated. Therefore, by investigating the teaching experiences of the Y160 Tutors, I sought a better understanding of the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond* and how Tutors manage the challenge of transferability in their teaching and assessment of critical thinking.



Similarly, the complexities arising from the WP agenda (in terms of the growing diversity in the student population) are sometimes signalled as a reason for the loosely termed 'problem' of student writing (Lillis, 2001 p:16). This deficit model of learning, along with the study skills debate, can be seen as underpinning a paradigm shift in the role of the tutor (Burns and Sinfield, 2004). If tutors do rise to the challenge of intensified study skills support as an integral part of their role, it is argued that significant learning can be achieved (Burns and Sinfield, 2004). However, there could notably be issues for staff development and also for how lecturers are 'valued' as 'educators' and 'judged as academics' (Warren, 2002, p:12) which would reflect on their own perceived identity as tutors.

Further, it is significant that this enquiry is conducted in a context in which the target audience is principally students from a widening participation (WP) orientation. The relationship Tutors construct with their students through the highly personalised delivery model of telephone tutorials (see also 1.5) is noteworthy, and led me to consider the third research question:

Research Question 3:

*"How does the unique delivery model of the Course and the Widening Participation agenda impact on the way in which Y160 Tutors model their teaching in relation to critical thinking?"*

Moreover, across higher education, academic staff continue to acknowledge students' struggle with conceptualisation and reasoned argument (Burns & Sinfield, 2004; Pithers & Soden, 2000) suggesting surface level understanding and engagement rather than deep learning (Entwistle, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998; Puxley, 2008).

For example, my experience suggests that reproducing an argument as presented by a tutor or gleaned from course literature, will reflect to some degree understanding of the position held or described in a text (surface learning) but I suggest it will not necessarily evidence conceptual understanding. Demonstrating a sound understanding of the concepts (deep learning) will involve a critical examination and interrogation of ideas (Entwistle, 1991). In this study I sought to develop an understanding of the pedagogical theory behind the *Study Diamond* to show how it illustrates critical reflection and argumentation (argumentation defined here in the context of higher education as being the use of a 'logical or quasi-logical sequence of ideas that is supported by evidence, Andrews, 2010, p:2). In this way I aim to contribute to the discourse on what it means to think critically.

Further, given that the *Study Diamond* is embedded into the pedagogy of Y160, my contention is that Tutors use it as a vehicle for articulating and modelling the skills inter-woven in critical thinking. In doing so, they encompass the skills for reasoned argument and criticality which are synonymous with the action of thinking (Marzano et al, 1988). In this sense it can be seen as a holistic approach or response to learning which seems to mirror the current focus in higher education for promoting critical reflection and evaluation as an essential life skill. It could be argued this is due in no small measure to the closer working relationship that is encouraged between higher education institutions and employers (see Leitch, 2006 discussed later in 2.2).

Similarly, a review of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), Honours Degree Bench Mark Statements for Art and Design (2008), History (2007) and English (2007), make reference to an increased emphasis on developing thinking and/or critical thinking skills.

In a recent report undertaken by the QAA, a need was identified for a partnership approach to developing curricula that satisfies the demands of the employment sector and fulfils the rigour of academia. The QAA termed this as being an “employer-responsive provision” (QAA 2010, p:1). The Report acknowledges the challenge involved in providing a cohesive curricula that fulfils employer needs and meets with the academic requirements of developing higher level thinking skills, specifically in terms of skills such as “critical evaluation” (QAA, 2010).

Such curriculum demands suggest an increasing importance on understanding the thinking process both from an academic perspective and also in terms of developing the holistic individual.

Therefore a theoretical understanding of the *Study Diamond* as a teaching tool for accessing criticality fits with recent curricula developments in Higher Education. It contributes to a developing understanding of course design and delivery issues in relation to study skills arising from an increasing diversity in the student population.

Additionally, having witnessed discussions at various staff development workshops and observing that it was often a talking point on the Open University's Tutor on-line forum (see also Chapter 5 and Appendix 1), I was not surprised by comments that some Tutors have issues, for example with applying the *Study Diamond* to History (Interview with Y160 Authors, 2007). So whilst I recognise there are concerns with its transference across disciplines, I nevertheless assert that with modifications it is a useful tool and has potential to be used beyond the confines of Y160. It was this notion that underpinned my exploration of how Tutors work with and apply the *Study Diamond*.

## Chapter 2

### 2. Literature Review

#### 2.1 Introduction

In order to address my research questions my literature search focussed on three broad categories

- the historical context of widening participation in UK Higher Education;
- the theories of learning that significantly draw on the characteristics of the adult learner;
- the concept of critical thinking itself and its relevance to the notion of learner transformation in the context of academia and beyond. See Figure 2.1:

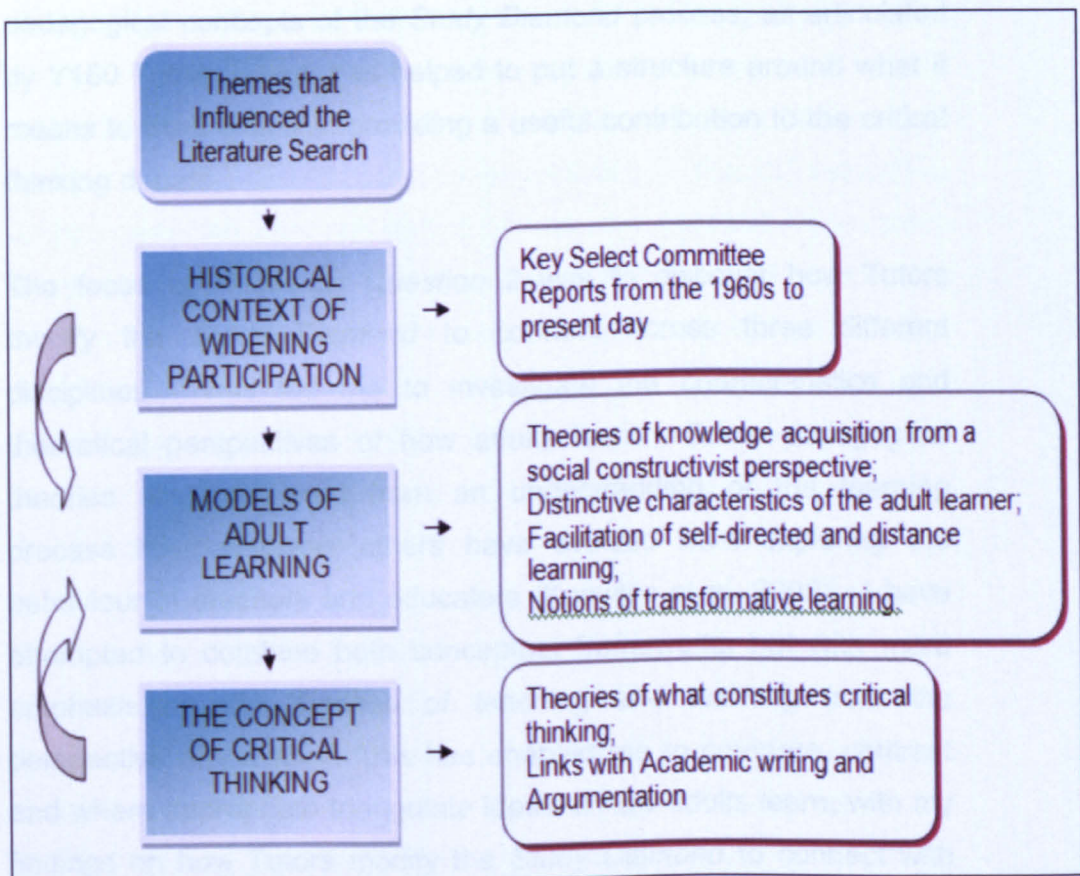


Figure 2.1: Themes that Influenced the Literature Search

The descriptors in Figure 2.1 reflect how each theme has relevance for the theoretical perspectives that underpin my research questions. For example, in order to explore how Tutors use the *Study Diamond* to teach the concept of critical thinking (*Research Question 1.*) the literature revealed a perceived complexity around the concept particularly in terms of whether it is a skill to be learnt and applied or if it is perceived as an element of the thinking process itself, thereby contributing to the more holistic development of the individual (McPeck, 1984; Brookfield, 1987). In this sense there are links with the intensity of the Y160 delivery model in potentially facilitating a more intimate tutor/student relationship whereby Tutors are more likely to position the concept beyond an academic context. Similarly, theoretical ideas from the literature have been synthesised with the pedagogical concepts of the *Study Diamond* process, as articulated by Y160 Tutors, which has helped to put a structure around what it means to think critically, providing a useful contribution to the critical thinking debate.

The focus of *Research Question 2* was to discover how Tutors modify the *Study Diamond* to connect across three different disciplines. This led me to investigate the characteristics and theoretical perspectives of how adults learn. Some pedagogical theories are positioned from an understanding of the learning process itself whereas others have evolved from exploring the behaviour of teachers and educators (Knowles et al, 2005). I have attempted to combine both conceptual frameworks but with more emphasis on the theories of teaching and learning from the perspective of the tutor. This has enabled me to compare, contrast and where appropriate triangulate ideas of how adults learn, with my findings on how Tutors modify the *Study Diamond* to connect with three different disciplines. In this way some of the pedagogical benefits of the *Study Diamond* have been revealed, strengthening the potential for transference to other contexts.

*Research Question 3* is concerned with how the telephone delivery model and the perceived orientation of the Y160 student population impacts on the way in which Tutors plan and deliver tutorials. Exploring the historical emergence of the WP agenda has helped to contextualise the challenges facing higher education in terms of the growing diversity in student population, as well as what underpins the drive towards changes in curriculum design and delivery.

Informed thus by the framework outlined in Figure 2.1, in this chapter I discuss the literature I have reviewed under the three headings and, where appropriate, have included sub-headings to indicate an interconnecting or emerging theme.

## ***2.2 UK Higher Education's response to Widening Participation***

Research into successive government committee reports from the mid-1950s to 2006, suggest that WP is not a new phenomenon. Concerns over the inequality of opportunity in the UK education system and the lack of skilled manpower available to sustain economic security and growth (Lawson and Silver, 1973) appears to be an on-going and recurring focus in one guise or another for policy decision making. It was the Central Advisory Council for Education (CACE) Report (1959, 1960) more commonly referred to as the Crowther Report that first sought systematic sociological answers to the effects on education of economic and social change. It considered education from two perspectives, as a right for every citizen to be educated and as an economic investment for the nation in order to sustain growth (Lawson and Silver, 1973, Curtis and Boulwood, 1970). However, it was the Committee on Higher Education (CoHE, 1963, chaired by Lord Robbins and commonly referred to as the Robbins Report) that was the first to be commissioned to specifically investigate higher education (Curtis & Boulwood, 1970 p:417).

By today's standards, whilst the Robbins Report speaks of education success in a rather limited way - seeing it as the achievement of a First Class Degree - it usefully highlights three categories of society that have relevance for the WP agenda.

First, the report acknowledges there was a section of society for whom the achievement of success in higher education would be assured, irrespective of any economic or environmental consideration (CoHE,1963).

Second, and perhaps controversially, the Committee proposed that even with first class tutoring, there would always be a section of society for whom higher education was not an achievable outcome, alluding perhaps to the acknowledgement today that University education is not the most appropriate choice for everyone leaving compulsory education. However, and perhaps most importantly, the Committee acknowledged that in the 1960s there was a considerable section of society for whom going to University was not an option because of the environment in which they lived and worked, the socio-economic background of their parents or their past experiences in formal education. In other words the barrier to progression into higher education, was not solely reliant upon academic ability. It is perhaps this section of society that could today be identified as the audience for whom Y160 and the WP agenda is most targeted.

The Committee also reported that at the time there were many adults for whom higher education could be an equally desirable option and that entry to higher education should not just be seen as having relevance for young people and school leavers. The Report highlighted that, in economic terms, there was a pool of untapped talented adults for whom refresher courses or re-training could be the answer to fulfilling the critical manpower gaps that existed at the time.

Interestingly, students in the 30-39 and 40-49 age groups were cited as constituting the highest proportion of registrations on *Openings* courses (Adams, 2009); reflecting Robbins (CoHE, 1963) and later the Leitch Review (2006), in which it was proposed that government policy and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) should focus on “Widening the drive to improve the UK’s high skills to encompass the whole working-age population” (p14:35).

For UK HEIs, many of the issues in the second half of the twentieth century originally highlighted by Robbins (CoHE, 1963) and then later Dearing (NICHE, 1997), remain the same today. Dearing, drew on the wider economic and social influences that affect participation in higher education, emphasising the importance of the development of skills for economic growth. It broadened the context of higher education to include all forms of post-compulsory learning above that of the UK’s Advanced Level qualification and its equivalent. One of the main differences between the Robbins and Dearing Reports was that whilst Robbins saw higher education providers as having two distinct purposes, that of developing employability skills and developing “the general powers of the mind” (26. P:6); Dearing saw these as a single objective. The Committee suggested that higher level intellectual thinking skills should be intrinsically integral to developing knowledge and understanding on any programme of study (5.8) – echoes of what can be seen in education today (see, Chapter 1:1.6). There is also throughout the Dearing Report, recognition of the challenges for HEIs, especially in terms of ensuring that provision will meet the changing learning patterns of students, the advances in information technology and for teachers particularly, the diversity of the student population.

Furthermore, a concept frequently linked with WP is the notion of lifelong learning. The 2005 National Adult Learning Survey (NALS) reported that between 2002 and 2005 the adult participation rate in learning had increased by 4%.



Fryer (1997) – the then Chair of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning – identified that whilst some adults do achieve a good standard of qualifications through pre and post compulsory education and go on to embrace continued learning through life, there remains what he describes as the majority who have little or no formal qualifications and have no desire to gain any (Fryer, 1997). He goes on to criticise the Dearing Report (1997) which suggested that a target of 35% participation in higher education was ‘mass education’ and quotes participation rates in other countries as being 60% and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) as considering 45% as being desirable. This debate hints at a suggestion of societal issues around attitudes towards lifelong learning which is further acknowledged by Fryer (1997) who cited that essentially a change in culture was needed.

In this respect programmes such as *Openings*, and courses like Y160 - for which there are no entry requirements, and which embody the flexibility that distance learning affords – embraces the lifelong learning ideology of inspiring and extending interest, through its range of subjects and disciplines but specifically, through its unique pedagogy (Openings Prospectus, 2010/2011).

As inferred above, more recently the Leitch Report (2006) promoted a ‘culture of learning’ (p:2) at the heart of which was seen the development of skills that are portable and transferable and which will ‘impact across all sectors of society’ (p:5). The notion of being critically informed and aware can be ‘organisationally and culturally beneficial as well as personally liberating’ (Brookfield, 1987, p:43). For example:

*“A factory or business in which a critically informed work force is encouraged to examine the assumptions, underlying policies and habitual practices, and to challenge these when they are inimical to communication or demeaning to particular groups, will likely be more productive and less subject to crippling stoppages”*

(Brookfield, 1987 p:43):

The distinctive delivery model of the *Openings* programme and the concept of distance learning are synonymous with the notion of WP and lifelong learning. The driving force behind the development of the *Study Diamond* was to bridge the gap in student competencies, given the audience for whom the course was essentially designed (Interview, Y160 Authors, 2007 – see Chapter 4). The Open University's definition of WP extends beyond that identified in the Dearing Report (1997). Using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), WP is seen as students with low socio-economic status, who have no higher educational qualifications, who live in the 25% most deprived areas or who come from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Additionally, *Openings* is focused on under-represented groups, such as those with prior lower levels of qualifications (one A level or less), Spoor (2007).

However, even with the former New Labour government's target-driven approach of 50% of all 18-30 year olds to be participating in higher education by 2010, Leitch (2006) identified there remained issues around the development of skills and the creation and preparedness of a workforce to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

In the current economic climate, a similar picture is emerging today whereby on the one hand there is still a need to address equality of opportunity, emanating from a sense of social justice and a rights discourse, whilst on the other, a move to sustain and maintain a workforce that will ensure the nation can meet future economic challenges. Although, with respect to the new Coalition Government, little is known at this time about the Government's short-to-medium-term strategy for higher education, nevertheless the initial document issued on the 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2010, pledges to "judge any proposals" in the light of increasing social mobility and of attracting a higher proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds into higher education (Conservative Liberal Democrat coalition negotiations Agreements, 2010, p:5) thereby suggesting a continuation of this fusion of ideals for a widening participation agenda. Further, maintaining and prioritising the promotion of lifelong learning to increase participation in learning appears also to be on the new government's agenda (Lambert, 2010).

Nevertheless, to address the needs of a growing diversity in higher and further education student intake, there has been an increasing move to supplement programmes of study with courses specifically aimed at developing study skills (Ashcroft & Foreman-Peck, 1994; Burns and Sinfield, 2004). This has been fuelled by a perception that students enter higher education lacking basic skills and an ability to think and write in an academic way (Crème and Lea, 1998); which can subsequently impact on, for example, how assessment processes are devised and the extent to which they are an accurate reflection and measurement of learning (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007).

Traditionally, in higher education, students' knowledge and understanding are measured by some form of academic writing which is then evaluated by tutors through either formative or summative assessment.

Even modular or portfolio based courses usually require some element of exposition in which content is match to course assessment criteria. But the assessment of higher order thinking can be complex and making a judgement on an essay, exam script, or coursework (particularly in the Arts and Humanities disciplines) has its limitations (Knight and Yorke, 2006). Consequently, the on-going re-design of study skills programmes and assessment strategies in order to take account of an increasingly wider range of generic skills, and the notion of building into the assessment process a stronger element of student involvement, mirrors the changing face of teaching and learning in higher education. Further, and of significant interest for this case study, distance education, it is argued, essentially evolves around learner-centredness and is a highly personalised facilitation and augmentation of learning (Beaudoin, 1990). The emergence of an increased focus on student-centred learning activities since the 1970s, coupled with the advancements in information technology, has contributed to dramatic changes in 'faculty roles' (Beaudoin, 1990, p:1).

Similarly, as previously suggested, such changes have been brought about in no small measure by the increasingly diverse student population, employer market forces and the government skills agenda (Bloxham and Boyd, 2007; Knight and Yorke, 2006).

The Quality Assurance Agency for higher education (QAA) Code of Practice reflects these developments in its latest review which places a clear emphasis on a strong alignment between learning outcomes and the assessment process, together with a call for diversity in assessment practice that will offer more opportunity for students to demonstrate their capabilities, (QAA, 2006, p.4:13/14).

The way in which higher education has embraced the WP agenda through its increased focus on study skills, access programmes, and its emphasis on self-directed learning, could be said to epitomise this cultural shift. For example, May and Bridger (2010) in a report to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) identified a range of recommendations for facilitating a programme of change that will embed inclusive policy and practice. In particular they cite curriculum design and continuing professional development as part of a mixed-method approach that will foster “shared responsibility and accountability for inclusion” (May and Bridger, 2010). And, whilst Leitch (2006) drew attention to the low social mobility in the UK - emphasising that education and in particular the development of skills, improves an individual’s life chances (1.39:p.36) - specifically, Leitch recommended HEIs move away from a focus of participation (as embodied in the former Government’s Aimhigher initiative) towards a stronger emphasis on the development of the workforce as a whole, to enable the UK to meet the employment challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

However, as previously suggested, this was not just a UK phenomenon. The Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) reported that, globally, within the last decade adult learning has gained a higher public and government profile as a result of a rise in unemployment amongst unskilled workers and a greater recognition of the importance for a skilled workforce if economic growth is to be maintained (OECD, 2003). Whilst there is no direct reference in the marketing that links *Openings* courses to the employability agenda, endemic in the ethos of distance learning and in *Openings* in particular is the development of generic skills (alongside subject content) that will be valued by employers.

That is to say, strong emphasis is placed on time management, organisational and planning skills, which inevitably come under more pressure in distance learning where learners could potentially be studying alongside full/part-time work and family commitments. In this sense employment and/or career change can be seen as being at the forefront of the reasons why learners might be drawn to Y160. The OECD also acknowledge the increased range in learning opportunities for adults as well as being a response to the employment agenda and the need for basic skills or up-skilling, may also be in response to social and civic preoccupations (OECD, 2003). This is a theme which is further supported by the suggestion WP is not so much social justice but rather a way of social control (Archer, 2007). Framed around the former New Labour policy that promoted a dual rationale for WP - that of social equality and economic stability - it could be argued that in fact it disfavours participation in higher education that is not directly linked to or motivated by economic wellbeing (Archer, 2007). Similarly, it could be said that the notion of increasing diversity and access to higher education is mitigated by the suggestion that not all HEIs are compatible in culture and organisation and thereby not all are in a position to respond to the diversity of the student cohort and individualised learning that is promoted. In this sense therefore an argument can be made for seeing WP as creating inequality, reducing choice and to some degree engineering the choice students make based around economic forces and the abilities of an institution to meet students' academic needs (Archer, 2007).

For the Open University, the distinctive features of distance learning afford additional challenges especially in terms of programme design and the teaching and delivery of courses. Most Open University students are part time and geographically mobile, as indeed are the Tutors (see, Chapter 1).

Whilst, the University is famed for its use of information technology and multi-media to facilitate a distance-learning model, differentiating and individualising learning remains an on-going challenge; perhaps uniquely so, given the University's open entry policy. It is against the historical background and evolution of widening participation and the on-going fusion of social, cultural and potential economic benefit, that I position this study. I suggest that as a result of the pedagogical complexities resulting from a growing diversity in student population, there remain issues for how institutions manage the design and delivery of courses. Specifically, the complex issue of how skills are developed and balanced with subject content, and the notion that knowledge and skills need to be portable, can be seen as challenging the traditional role of the tutor. It is in consideration of such a context that I interpret the teaching experiences of Y160 Tutors. This has further led to my examination of some of the literature that explores the specific characteristics that underpin the adult learner.

### ***2.3 Models of Adult Learning***

Research into how adults learn initially "began as a reaction to child-based models and aimed to sketch out the distinctiveness of adult learning" (Tusting et al, 2006 p:1). A rationale for a separate model for adult education is presented by Knowles (1983) based on a number of suppositions about how adults approach and react to learning. First, Knowles (1983) suggests that as adults develop understanding and knowledge about themselves they become self-directed in their learning. Second, that adults accumulate a 'growing reservoir of experience' which serves as a resource for learning. Third, that adults' 'readiness to learn' is situated within a developing social orientation of which they may or may not be aware. Finally that, driven by an urgency to apply learning, for the adult, knowledge becomes more 'problem-centred' rather than 'subject-centred' (p:84).

Such assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners has relevance for this study especially in relation to how entry or access level courses are devised and how teaching and learning strategies can be adapted to accommodate the needs of students entering higher education at different points and for different purposes.

This links to the idea that adults bring with them a wealth of knowledge and experience (Shor, 1992; Knowles, 1984). However, it is acknowledged that experiences are not always positive (Hanson, 1996). This potentially negative side (Habermas, 1990) can result in creating barriers to receiving and embracing new learning (Brookfield, 2005; see, also Chapters 4 and 5). It is useful in this study therefore to consider the notion of the distinctiveness of the adult learner. How Y160 Tutors use and adapt the *Study Diamond* to introduce new concepts or perhaps change perceptions or mind sets about learning will be influenced by the perceived pool of knowledge and experience that learners bring with them to their learning.

In the andragogy/pedagogy debate it is argued a further difference that sets aside the adult learner is the absence of constraints or external controls to adversely impact on motivation or purpose (Knowles, 1984). Institutional control however can be seen in the certification of courses in higher education, applied as a means of measuring achievement against specific competency levels (Hanson, 1996). At the centre of the Arts disciplines can be seen the 'essay', often used as a key assessment tool but which it could also be argued is a *particular* way of 'constructing knowledge' (Lillis, 2001, p:20). Given the growth in the diversity of students entering higher education and the potential for an increasing difference in the ability and/or experience of students (as alluded earlier), additional pressures could be seen to be placed on tutors in terms of planning for and delivering learning to students with a complex range of needs.



It is also argued that learning is a *continual* process in the sense implied by the term 'lifelong learning' and that an essential element is social and cultural interaction (Mezirow and Associates, 2000; Hanson, 1996). In this respect, adult learning could be seen as different from pedagogy because of the difference in age and therefore the perceived amount of experience and social interaction from which the learner is able to draw in order to build on new knowledge. Drawing on prior knowing evokes a sense of familiarity and is reflected in concepts explored in the theory of 'communicative action' and 'lifeworlds' (Habermas, 2006). It is suggested that interpretations of the world and therefore new ideas or situations will be informed according to the "stock of knowledge that 'always and already' stands at the disposition of the actor in his lifeworld" (p:128). However, although there is not always, or necessarily, a fundamental structure to this 'stock of knowledge' - seen as a "transcendental" way of knowing, occurring as result of everyday experience - it can provide "an eye to basic epistemological questions" (p:129). Such notions have relevance for how Y160 Tutors model their teaching strategy to take account of the potential diversity in experience of their student cohort (see Chapter 5).

Negative experiences at school and how such legacies might affect students' response to new ideas, draws on a constructivist model of learning which stems from the work of Piaget (Trusting and Barton, 2006). As with other developmental psychologists in the 1930s, Piaget attributed knowledge acquisition to the development of learners recall and reconstruction of prior events and experiences – their 'schemata', McLeod (2004). The emphasis is on the learner as the maker of meaning. As new knowledge is gained from experiences, it is integrated into an existing framework or understanding without changing that which already exists.

However, I would suggest a potential weakness of this process can result when new knowledge does not relate to existing knowledge or there is a mismatch or historical barrier causing an imbalance between the challenge posed by the new knowledge and a perceived lack of the required skill necessary to understand it – hence impacting on confidence.

Mitchell (1998), speaking about the theory of ‘flow’, describes this conflict of consciousness as when the:

*“.. imbalance is persistent and pervasive .... when the world typically and in general presents challenges significantly greater than or less than one’s perceived skills, when one is no longer free to choose, or when uncertainty spreads beyond a limited stimulus field, then social life itself takes on a predominantly certain or uncertain quality, colouring definitions of both self and society” (p.36).*

When applied to new learning and in particular in the context of Y160 when a student is presented with an unfamiliar style of poetry (Haiku) or a Turner Prize exhibit they do not like, it can be seen that many of the elements suggested by Mitchell (1998) could affect how adults receive and respond to new ideas. The theory of ‘flow’ in recognising that “optimal experience” necessitates a balance between the challenge it brings and the skills an individual might possess, explains the structure of consciousness as composing of three functional systems, the most important of which is ‘awareness’ (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1998). It is suggested that awareness triggers thought and cognition, feeling and emotion, impulse and desire and the ability to choose (Hilgard, 1980).

Aligned to the suggestion of 'awareness' and embedded in Y160 and the *Study Diamond* is the notion of what could be called an 'invitation'. That is, tutors stimulate awareness and interest by 'inviting' students to participate. Through the concept of 'effects' (see Figure 1.1) students are invited to express their opinions and ideas about a phenomenon. Even if it is a negative response, there is still recognition and acknowledgement that the opinion is valid.

I argue this approach has significance for building confidence and engagement which emanates from an acknowledgement by Y160 Tutors of students' 'starting point' (see, Chapter 5). This can be seen as contrary to the deficit model, implied by the WP agenda and in particular add-on study skills packages (see also, Chapter 5). Rather, the pedagogy of Y160 through the concept of inviting meta-cognition, can be perceived as embracing an ideology that stems from the notion of an empowering education (Shor, 1992). That is, a pedagogy related to 'developing strong skills, academic knowledge, habits of inquiry' (p:15) in which tutors value what students bring with them to the learning experience (Shor, 1992; Interview, Y160 Authors, 2007).

Such a view of pedagogy also considers the purpose of learning and what influences *purpose* and *reason* both in terms of a cultural canon and, as previously discussed in the context of socio-economic influences. Mezirow and Associates (2000) report on Habermas as usefully identifying three '*domains of learning*' (p:8) which are closely inter-related. The first, classified as *instrumental* learning is task orientated and usually involves improving 'performance' generated by a need to 'solve a problem' (p:8) – this could be seen in the light of up-skilling, supporting a WP employability discourse. The second is *communicative* learning in which emphasis is placed on exploring 'meaning' and verifying 'truth'.

This can involve a “critical assessment of assumptions” that supports the justification for commonly held or accepted ways of thinking; in this way I suggest generating a critical perspective. Criticality as a concept embedded in Y160 emerges in the notion of ‘context’ (see Figure 1.1). However, for the educator there could be an inevitable fusion of the instrumental and communicative concepts. This could be seen in terms of the way in which tutors support students in the development of the necessary skills to complete an assessment task and ‘perform’ successfully.

To some degree this can be viewed as surface level learning (Entwistle, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998). However, the third domain ‘emancipation’ is re-defined by Mezirow and Associates (2000) as ‘transformation theory’ to which both instrumental and communicative learning relate (p:10). When instrumental learning is combined with the notion of communicative learning there is a sense that deep learning or higher order thinking is occurring. Mezirow and Associates (2000) define communicative learning as the generation of analytical and critical awareness. It is in this respect that criticality is often perceived as a strong basis for measuring academic performance.

Further, it is suggested that such pedagogy has ultimately the potential for liberating or ‘freeing up’ thinking but also importantly for developing ‘autonomous thinking’ (Mezirow and Associates, 2000, p:10), perhaps even more important for learning at a distance. Such a model can be seen as having two related intentions (Peters, 1973). One extrinsically centres on results, and leads to a specific outcome, such as an understanding that might be represented through the practical skill of academic writing. The other suggests an intrinsic view.

From this view point a sense of holistic growth and development is achieved through self-realisation and the change that can come from, for example, changing your perspective about poetry or being able to 'read' a painting which originally you were unable to do. Such a perception of extrinsic and intrinsic learning I suggest evolves as a result of *critical* engagement with a phenomenon or idea (*communicative learning*) rather than passive or unquestioning acceptance of a new idea. The notion of a "transformative impetus" that thinking critically can offer (Brookfield 2005 p:353) suggests critical thinking is more than an academic skill to be confined to educational settings but rather that it has real world value enabling society to "take the reality of democracy seriously" (Brookfield, 1987, p:x) thereby supporting the notion of learning as having intrinsic as well as extrinsic value (Peters, 1973). In this respect it can be seen how critical thinking could have special relevance to individuals from a WP orientation with potentially low confidence and self esteem and that the Tutor has the possibility of effecting holistic change (see Chapter 5).

Intrinsic and extrinsic learning, draws on the philosophy of Dewey (1910). His writings, which focus on thinking and the interpretation of facts, emphasise the importance of "drawing inferences ..{and}..basing conclusions upon *evidence* .{my italics}" (Dewey, 2009, p:19). He goes on to cite the need for training, stating that, "Natural intelligence is no barrier to the propagation of error, nor large but untrained experience, to the accumulation of fixed false beliefs" (p:21) thereby reinforcing the role of the educator. In citing the need for 'evidence' it can be seen that critical thinking is not a new phenomenon to be submerged within the concept of study and thinking skills per se, but rather there is an inductive and deductive process that needs to be undertaken in order to generate good judgement. Dewey (2009) clearly acknowledges that it is the "work of teaching" to train "habits of thought" (p:26) because the concept is too important to be left to chance.

However, moving students from descriptive, opinionated or anecdotal writing, to an academic style in which arguments are well structured and supported, as inferred previously, can be challenging for the Tutor. This study explores how Tutors rise to such a challenge using the *Study Diamond* to liberate and structure thinking.

### **2.3.1 The Theory of Transformation Learning**

Identifying assumptions or conjecture embedded in information or knowledge draws on the theory of transformation (Mezirow and Associates, 1978). As suggested, it is the action by which learning is achieved through an awareness of, and reflection on, an individual's own premises and where the learner is able to critically evaluate the validity or reliability of the information. This occurs through a process of reasoning. Meaning or understanding is established but is then either validated or re-assessed by the learner.

When the process of reasoning takes place, the learner draws on his/her own 'frames of reference', which have developed or evolved over time and which have been influenced by the learner's own cultural or idiosyncratic nature (Mezirow and Associates, 2000 p:5). This clearly reflects a model of learning that embodies criticality in that by developing a sense of enquiry, balanced by reasoned scepticism, adults can use prior knowledge (frames of reference) to interpret and find meaning in new knowledge and experiences.

However, it could be argued that transformation theory does not take sufficient account of the social context. For example, not everyone has developed the capacity to identify and challenge underlying assumptions (Belenky & Stanton, 2000). This is especially the case, I would suggest, when learners are confronted with information deemed to have come from an authoritative source and which is presented as course material (Freire, 1993; Lea and Street, 1998,).

In this situation, (as discussed previously) students may be reluctant to question or critically engage with ideas communicated through academic discourse. Similarly, learners from a WP orientation, will often be reticent to voice their own opinion about a phenomenon, favouring the safer option of reproducing the pronouncements of others. So whilst Mezirow's (2000) theory draws attention to the need for critical awareness in order for transformation to occur, it does not take account of the thought process individuals need to go through in order to "know what they know" (Belenky and Stanton, 2000, p:72) or indeed, I would argue, to know what they do not know. The process offered by the *Study Diamond* however, in using a Socratic approach (Mercer, 2008) to encourage students to think about the techniques used and the context in which the phenomena has been produced, introduces the skills of reasoning. It is Tutor's perceptions of how such a transformation might be achieved, through their use of the *Study Diamond* to develop critical awareness, which is explored in this study.

### **2.3.2 Teaching through Questioning**

As suggested, the essence of the *Study Diamond* 'invites' exploration of phenomena (see, Figure 1.1) which is facilitated by the Tutor through the four elements of the *Study Diamond*. There is little research that directly relates to "teaching students to formulate their own questions" (as implied in the *Study Diamond*). Rather, much of the research on questioning evolves around the effects of "teacher-generated questions and efforts to train students to answer questions" (Marzano et al, 1988, p:88). In this context it was useful to explore the kind of discourse Tutors have with their students. Given the limitations of telephone tutoring it would be reasonable to presume a didactic approach and yet the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond* prompts students to embark on their own enquiry through the course literature (see Chapter 5).

In this sense, the act of knowing through questioning can be seen to draw on the historical method of enquiry that became known as Socratic elenchus (Reeve, 2005). This process involves a cross-examination that challenges inconsistencies until an acceptable resolution is reached. There is however much confusion in the literature in defining what Socratic questioning is, as exemplified by the fact the term Socratic is usually followed by a variety of words that can have different meanings and interpretations, but which are usually synonymous with a process or procedure such as, for example, 'reasoning', 'manner', 'teaching'. The primary contention in the literature appears to be whether Socratic questioning comes from the premise of the questioner knowing the answer and seeking to change the individual's beliefs or behaviour, or if the questioner is attempting to help the individual generate their own solutions to a problem and facilitate a process of self-discovery (Carey and Mullan, 2004). In this context I suggest that the questioning approach Y160 Tutors employ could stem from either purpose. For example the Tutor may be wishing to change a student's previously held perspectives about poetry or, through the use of the 'effects' element of the *Study Diamond*, attempting to build a student's inner confidence by encouraging the student to form and value their own opinion. In this sense the Tutor will know the discipline 'techniques' that lead to or created the desired 'effects' but they will encourage the student to articulate their own responses to a phenomenon and use or research through the course literature their own understanding of the 'techniques' in order to analyse it. Such a teaching strategy suggests the student is learning how to learn but at the same time is taking control of their own thinking processes (Nisbet and Shucksmith, 1986).

It is argued that Socratic questioning can help students demonstrate a higher level of critical thinking (Yang et al, 2005), thereby changing their behavioural response to learning.



In particular Yang et al (2005) support the view that the Socratic questioning style is a powerful teaching approach which facilitates an “exchange of ideas and viewpoints, giving new meaning to content, exploring applications to problems and providing implications for real-life situations” (p:164). It is suggested that exploring criticality through ‘real-life’ situations can be especially pertinent for enhancing the teaching experience (Yang et al, 2005). Similarly, Wiessner et al (2000) point out that the use of questions is an effective way of creating an environment in which students can think for themselves drawing from their own reservoir of knowledge and experience. However, *facilitated* (my italics) questioning can frequently “open up new avenues for understanding” (Wiessner et al, p:337) thereby adding a critical element to the thinking process. It is the impact of using the telephone as a medium through a Socratic-style of questioning that is of particular interest for this study.

### ***2.3.3 Tutor/Student Relationship and the Role of the Tutor***

I also consider the tutor/student relationship and its impact on facilitating learning as it evolves through telephone tuition. In this respect I reflect on models of adult learning as previously discussed that stem from a social constructivist perspective where social/cultural influences can have a meditational role in the learning process (Tusting and Barton, 2006) but also where humanistic theories of Rogers (1957) and the distinctive characteristics of adult learners, merge with the notion of learning as transformation (Mezirow and Associates, 2000; Shor, 1992). Mezirow and Associates (2000) build on Habermas’s theory of learning as being rooted in experience and importantly the critical reflection and rationalisation of that experience.

However, as highlighted earlier, critics suggest the conceptual framework of Mezirow (and Habermas) may be too narrow to take account of social context and in particular power differences that can have relevance for critical reflection (Hart, 1990). For example, it is acknowledged there can be a perceived imbalance in the tutor/student relationship or what Belenky and Stanton (2000) cite as being “asymmetrical” (p:73). Such observations are reflective of a perceived hierarchy emanating from a view of academia in which tutors are seen as the deliverers of the information and “knowledge and power are fixed from above not negotiated or discovered from below” (Shor, 1992, p:200). Such a perspective I suggest may underline students’ reluctance or lack of motivation to critically evaluate and engage with academic discourse.

An important unilateral role for the tutor therefore, is one in which Vygotsky’s (1978) notion of cultural mediation is reflected (Shor, 1992). That is, where knowledge is gained through social interaction, as perhaps exemplified in the didactic dialogues Y160 Tutors have with their students (see Chapter 5) but through which there is also a shared understanding and knowledge of the culture in which the dialogue takes place.

My experience suggests that the relationship develops relatively quickly because of the nature of the telephone medium and in the data, tutors report that telephone tuition was significant in the development of a successful tutor/student relationship thereby creating a positive learning environment. The idea of Tutors creating the optimum learning environment relates to the theory of ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1998) whereby students are not threatened by the interaction with the tutor but at the same time are motivated and excited by the challenge of the learning experience.

Communication via the telephone can be seen therefore as encouraging a sense of anonymity allowing for a reduction in some of the self-consciousness that students often feel when speaking with their tutor. With the on-going advancements in information technology and communication, there is an abundance of literature that explores communication interaction and knowledge transfer, loosely described under the concept of computer-mediated communication (CMC), Riva and Galmberti (1998). However, research into telephone tuition has been less prolific. Literature that is available draws mostly on, as implied previously, the context of guidance and counselling. Tait (1999) and McLeod (2004) for example offer useful insights into the advantages and disadvantages of telephone communication as compared to face-to-face interaction, some of which has relevance for tutoring over the telephone. In particular Zhu et al (1996) identifies anonymity as being especially beneficial, enabling individuals to be honest in their exchanges which allows relationships to develop more quickly.

Further, it is suggested that in linguistic forms of communication, cues normally available through visual behaviour, in their absence, become symbolically represented through the internalisation of the language used (Mead, 1962). It can be seen therefore that for telephone communication the act of internalising is important in terms of understanding and arriving at meaning. Also, it is suggested that interpretation and meaning is governed by the participant's knowledge and understanding of the rules and conventions associated with symbolism (Habermas, 2006). Therefore, in the transition from gesture-orientated meaning to symbolically arrived at meaning, the effectiveness and perhaps accuracy of the transition will be determined by the rules and conventions (or 'frames of reference', Mezirow and Associates, 2000) from which the participant is operating.

In this sense within a telephone tutoring context, how effectively a student's 'frames of reference' (their prior knowledge and understanding) are utilised and perhaps developed, will impact on how meaning is arrived at and whether or not transformation of formally held frames of reference take place. It is the role the *Study Diamond* plays in guiding the tutor in this complex process that has significance for this study in determining the impact the delivery model plays in this process.

However, it could be argued that the competencies of the facilitator are more important in telephone work, as exemplified in the exchanges with Y160 Tutors where it is suggested they have to work quickly, flexibly and in particular intuitively (see Chapter 1:1.5; Chapter 4). The absence of non-verbal cues can be disconcerting as cited by Earwaker (1998) in reference to a study which has useful parallels for the tutor/student relationship.

In his account it was revealed doctors often operate at two levels with their patients, one termed as 'clinical' in which the power-centre is the doctor and the subsequent discussion and interaction is doctor-led; and the other as 'collegial', where it was observed a balance in power and the interaction between doctor and patient, could be likened to that of a discussion between colleagues rather than any kind of hierarchal dialogue.

The notion of a collegial (as well as a more didactic) relationship between tutor and student is explored in this study to determine the extent to which the balance of power, as Earwaker (1998) suggests, might be more evenly shared and which could therefore be of particular benefit in facilitating learning and building the confidence of students from a WP orientation.

The concept of power relationships has some correlation with the theories of economic, social, cultural and symbolic 'capital'.

If viewed from the perspective of practical, financial and intellectual assets that might be gained from a university education, it can be seen to generate potential barriers to the way in which students engage with learning.

Drawing on the distinctions made by Bourdieu (2010; Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000) between the different forms of 'capital' gain that can be achieved, there is a fusion of possible issues that might arise. For example, economic capital sees gains in financial terms achieved through exposure to work-related opportunities that can emanate from having a university education and, as previously discussed, this has been one of the driving forces behind successive governments in their promotion of the WP agenda (see Chapters 1:1.3 and 2:2.2).

Social capital, is seen as the influence and support that can be experienced through social networks and/or membership of specific groups, such as for example a university Alumni or a student e-forum.

Cultural capital relates to the knowledge, skills, and education that might advantage an individual and which could potentially afford them a higher status in society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000) but which can be suggestive of, as previously advised, a perceived deficit model (Lillis, 2001, Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000). In this sense, a fusion of the reasons underpinning economic, social and cultural capital can be seen to have implications for the tutor/student relationship and how individuals engage with the concept of criticality and with academic discourse (see also Chapter 5).

Finally, symbolic capital is the authoritative recognition bestowed on an individual by virtue of the role or position they hold based on the ritualistic and prestigious value embedded in the status attributed to the position or role (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000). In this sense the symbolism might not only be seen in relation to the role of the tutor but also embraces the hierarchical structure and organisation of the

educational system per se and the symbolic associations that come with achieving a degree as well as the hierarchical associations that might surround different subjects and disciplines (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000).

From this stand point the tutor/student relationship and in particular the intimacy of the telephone interaction is a powerful way of facilitating the 'capital' gains from which can come a notion of transformation (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) as potential barriers or prejudices are overcome (see also Chapter 5).

Belenky and Stanton (2000) suggest Mezirow's concept of transformation "provides us with a means of coping", as technology opens up new avenues of communication and "cultures cross paths in ways unimaginable one hundred years ago" (p:71). It is however ironic that with the increase in distance learning, and given that telephone technology has been available for far longer than computer technology, telephone tutoring is not more widely employed or that it does not play a more central role in course delivery especially, as this study illuminates, it is perceived as being significant in facilitating positive tutor/student relationships.

However, as inferred earlier, the role of the Tutor is heightened when tutoring over the telephone medium as tutors often need to work intuitively or spontaneously and unlike face-to-face, there are no visual clues to guide or signpost when intervention or explanation is needed (see Chapters 4 and 5).

In this sense, whilst professional performance can be described in a number of ways, it can usefully be seen as the embodiment of three types of what Eraut, 2000 describes as 'tacit knowledge'. The first category, relates to having an understanding of people and situations; the second is seen as the rules that inform the intuitive decision-making process; and the third suggests both kinds of

knowledge come together when action is routine but punctuated by the need for intuitive decision-making drawn from an understanding of the situation (Eraut, 2000).

It is the suggestion of a fusion of these elements that are explored with Y160 Tutors. In particular the extent to which the perceived 'rules' that guide Tutors' decision making, but which also inform on intuition, are achieved through their modification and adaptation of the *Study Diamond*. Similarly, it could be argued that over time and through the "routinised action" of regular telephone tutorials over successive course presentations, Tutors gain a "tacit understanding of people and situations" (Eraut, 2000 p:1) borne out of a perceived affinity with the target audience (see, Chapter 4).

## **2.4 Critical Thinking**

Much has been theorised about the concept of critical thinking, but as suggested previously, and in academic practice in particular, it can still be seen to be used and applied inconsistently in UK Higher Education. 'Critical' is often used negatively – in the sense implied by disapproval or disagreement. Halpern (2003) suggests it is a process of evaluation and reflection and thus can have positive and or negative outcomes. Brookfield (1987) sees critical thinking holistically, as part of active engagement with life but also acknowledges a negative perception where critical thinkers are "sometimes portrayed as cynical people" who condemn the work of others without making any contribution themselves (p:5). This hints at the notion of evidence-based criticality and the need for structured argument.

In traditional pedagogy, discipline content is often presented as 'nonproblematic' (McPeck, 1984, p:41). However, by consciously building into academic courses an element of scepticism, critical thinking can become embedded in the learning (McPeck, 1984), strengthening the idea of it being an attitudinal way of thinking.

If on the other hand, critical thinking is viewed as a set of generic skills (as suggested by Halpern, 2003, see Figure 2.2) a key issue identified for teaching is the potential for inconsistencies in the way in which terms are interpreted. As McPeck (1990) suggests, the more generalised the language and syntax, in an attempt to maximise the domains of thinking to which general principles might be applied, the more complex and therefore less useful the outcome will be as a teaching framework.

As reported, there is a perception in the literature that students struggle with the critical element of thinking and writing (see Chapter 1; also Brookfield, 1987; Lea and Street, 1998; McPeck, 1990; Shor, 1992). More recently, Pithers and Soden (2000) recount the rarity of finding evidence of critical thinking in student essays and of the high proportion of writing where assertions made by students are unsupported. However, despite the wealth of literature that continues to be produced in an attempt to solve these pedagogical issues, the concept of thinking critically remains problematic for academic staff and students. An inconsistency that is frequently highlighted is the confusion and elusiveness of the concept which is contrary to the status in which it is held in most higher education assessment criteria (Leming, 1998). McPeck (1984; 1990) in drawing attention to the complexities, usefully highlights its interrelationship, or what he refers to as a 'fusion', of the concepts of reason and argument (p:4). He suggests that whilst there may be some agreement on the purpose of, and importance for, developing an ability to think critically, there remain mixed interpretations of what it actually means (McPeck, 1990). Similarly, the notion of 'argument', which is at the centre of the *Study Diamond* process (Baugh et al, 2006) and which has been closely allied to critical awareness, is also seen as a term that has many "associations, making it difficult to distil the salient points' (Andrews, 2010 p:10).



Yet, as with critical thinking, the discourse of argumentation is considered an essential element of higher order thinking and conventional academic writing. Further, as alluded to previously, understanding the concept as a life skill has implications for how it is taught and presented in an academic arena. In this respect I have looked into the work of Brookfield (1987) and Halpern (2003) both of whom see critical thinking as an essential life skill. Each take slightly different perspectives which is suggested in the representation of their Models (see Figures 2.2 and 2.3) and which essentially distinguishes between criticality as a technical skill as opposed to something that is embedded in the thinking process itself (see Chapter 5). Presented as a four-part model, Halpern (2003) asserts a skills based approach to developing and internalising the thought process (p:14). When comparing Halpern's model to the *Study Diamond* it can be seen that the *Study Diamond* framework appears to be more analytical and process-based; whereas Halpern's model would appear to be focused towards learning the skills in order to *train* the mind – see Figure 2.2 below:

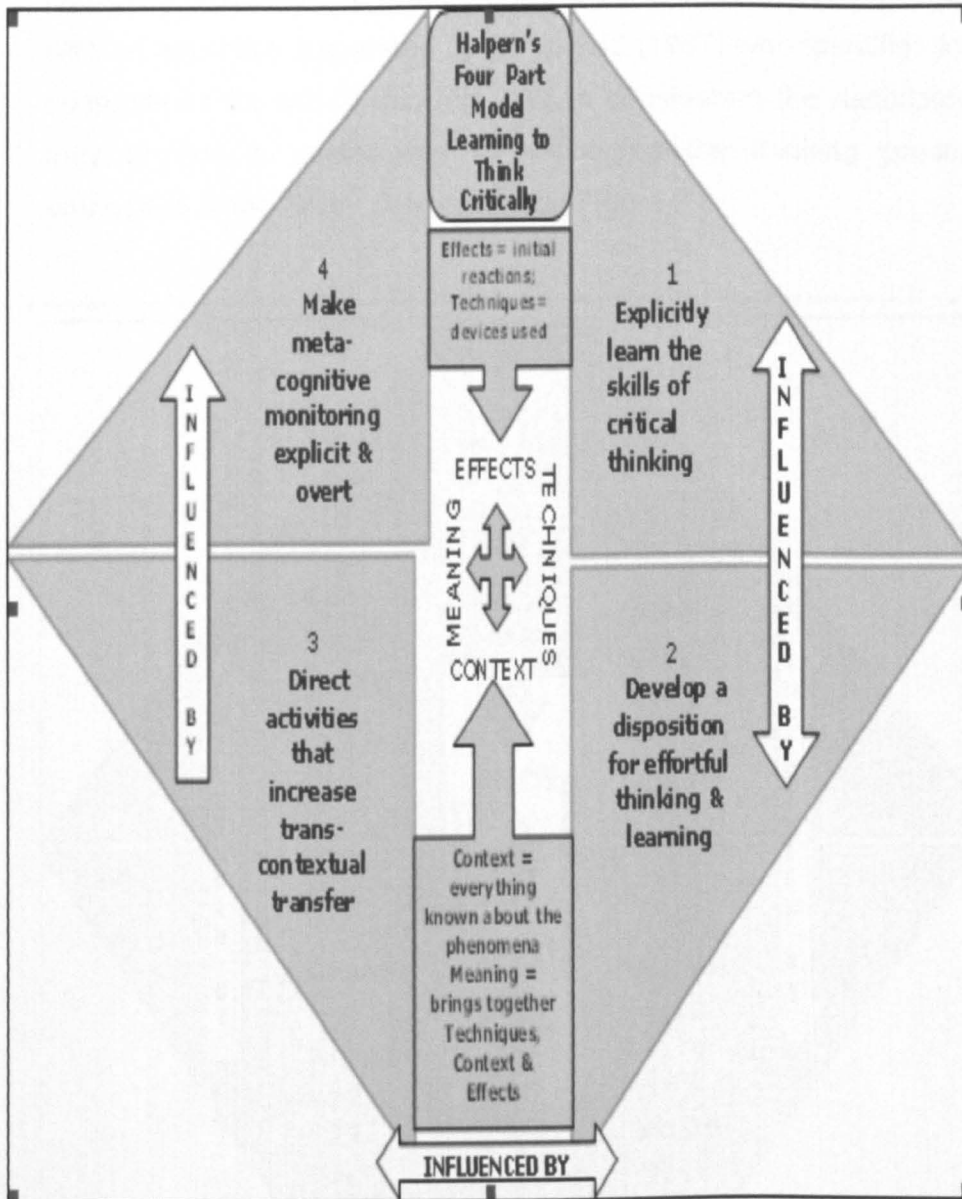


Figure 2.2. The Study Diamond in relation to Halpern's (2003) Learning to Think Critically: a Four Part Model

However, it can be seen from Figure 2.3 there are many similarities with an approach suggested by Brookfield (1987) who identifies four components for critical thinking. When considering the descriptors, they provide a useful way of explaining the thinking process embedded in the *Study Diamond* : see Figure 2.3:

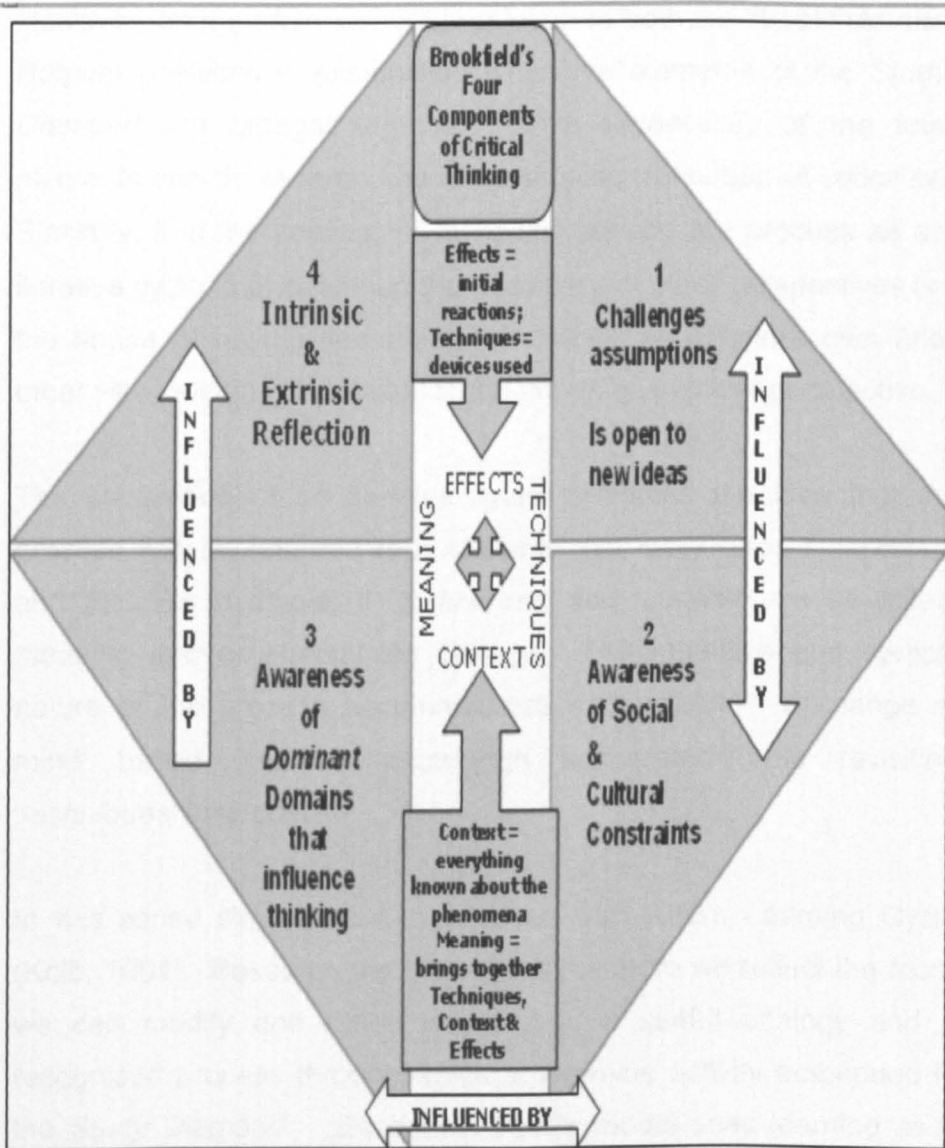


Figure 2.3. The Study Diamond in relation to Brookfield's (1987, p:7-9) Four Components of Critical Thinking

I suggest the main difference between the two approaches is that Halpern (see 1. Figure 2.2) is inferring a set of skills for critical thinking to be learnt and then subsequently applied, whilst for Brookfield the concept of skills is more inherent in the thinking process of each of the four elements which correspond to the suggested 'actions' implied by the *Study Diamond* elements. However, an important aspect in relation to both the Brookfield and Halpern positions is exemplified when the elements of the *Study Diamond* are brought together. The *connectivity* of the four elements can be seen as key to developing the notion of criticality. Similarly, it is the concept of *re-visiting*, seeing the process as an iterative cycle, that opens up the possibility of other perspectives (in the sense of having something with which to compare own and other view points) which leads to the notion of a critical perspective.

The suggestion of an iterative cycle reinforces the idea that the process can be returned to if students 'get stuck' (see Chapters 4 and 5). For example, if '*techniques*' and '*context*' are re-visited, *meaning* and or *effects* can change. The repetitive and cyclical nature of the process accommodates and validates a 'change of mind' based on new knowledge assimilated from revisiting '*techniques*' and '*context*'.

In this sense similarities can be seen with Kolb's Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984). Based on the theory that the more we reflect the more we can modify and refine ideas, it is a useful analogy and a recognised process through which to examine activity embedded in the *Study Diamond*. Essentially Kolb's model sees learning as a continuous process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation and that for deep learning all four elements need to be synthesised (Trusting and Barton, 2006).

This is helpful when considering the iterative nature of the *Study Diamond* – see Figure 2.4.

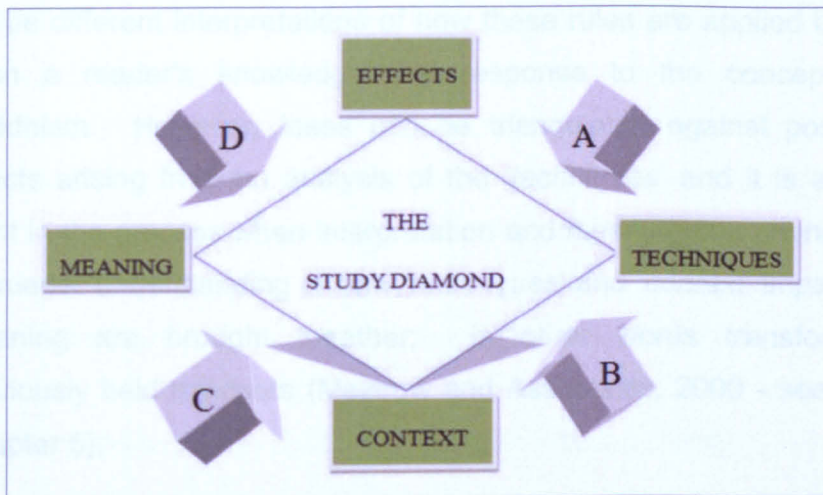


Figure 2.4. Adaptation (2) from Baugh et al, 2006

Figure 2.4 indicates where Kolb's four modes of learning fit with the *Study Diamond*. "A" represents Kolb's concept of concrete experience – in this I suggest that by learners considering the personal 'effects' of a phenomenon, they can actively engage in the experience albeit initial reactions may be negative as in, for example, reacting to the complexities of a Turner Prize exhibit. "B" represents the process through which learners reflect on 'new' learning. They consider how the new 'techniques' they have been introduced to may have created or contributed to their initial response. "C" correlates with Kolb's theory of "abstract conceptualisation (Kolb and Kolb, 2005). Here, I suggest the *Study Diamond* differs from Kolb's idea of 'abstract' or theoretical conceptualisation as the framework invites an opportunity to evaluate learning based upon the learner's own reaction and indeed to reflect on other possible reactions about which they may have read or experienced. In other words allowing for subjective interpretation based upon personal experience and schemata which will also take account of difference in cultural contexts.

For example, Haiku poetry is embedded in Japanese culture and whilst there are 'nine rules of Haiku' (Baugh et al, 2006, p:57) there will be different interpretations of how these rules are applied based upon a reader's knowledge and response to the concepts of Buddhism. However, ideas can be triangulated against possible effects arising from an analysis of the '*techniques*' and it is at this point in the process when interpretation and meaning can change as a broader understanding of how '*techniques*' and '*context*' impact on meaning are brought together; in other words transforming previously held mindsets (Mezirow and Associates, 2000 - see also Chapter 5).

As suggested in the literature there appears to be conflicting views as to whether critical thinking is an essential element of the thinking process itself or whether it sits within a catalogue of study skills to be learnt and subsequently put into action. This raises the question of transferability and how learning might inform or be applied to other contexts. On the other hand, if thinking critically is positioned within the complex phenomena of the thinking process (Andrews, 2010; Marzano et al, 1988; McPeck, 1990), there is a sense it becomes generic to and part of thinking per se; that is, viewed as a process rather than an outcome (Brookfield, 1987). In this study it is argued that the *Study Diamond* framework facilitates the development of a critical perspective through the signposting of the need for 'evidence' in order to support a persuasive argument, in this way criticality could be seen to become a generic part of an individual's way of thinking.

#### **2.4.1 Academic Writing**

In their studies, students are expected to present well argued accounts of their chosen subject which Andrews (2010) argues can be likened to a process of "osmosis" (p:196). The notion of argument, as with critical thinking, is deeply embedded in society and the educational system.

The UK democratic political system, for example, is an illustration of where opposites are brought together in an 'adversarial model' from which it is expected that truth will emerge (Andrews, 2010, p:195).

Taking the premise that an argument, in an academic sense, is the "evidence cited in support of a proposition" (Andrews, 2010, p:39) and that the purpose of using argument is to be persuasive, it can be seen that a sceptical evaluation of 'evidence' is needed in order to construct an argument. It could be suggested therefore that within the complexities of thinking there is a close alliance between the two concepts, supporting the view of critical thinking as a 'dialectical substratum' (Andrews, 2010, p:159) of the thinking process.

As previously discussed, the much publicised scepticism around students' ability to apply academic discourse – not least from academic staff (Lea and Street, 1998; Crème and Lea, 1999; Peters, 1999) – has led to the introduction of study skills programmes which can be seen as discriminating against students and reinforcing a "deficit model" (Burns and Sinfield, 2004). A further negative reinforcement of the problem can be seen where students are categorised into specific groups (access students, students with English as a second language, ethnic minority students, dyslexic students and international students) and specialist support provision is set-up, marking them out in an attempt to raise the quality of writing to an academically acceptable standard (Crème and Lea, 1999 p:5). The deficit model implies the difficulties are within the individual and contrasts with a 'social' model approach to inclusive practice, where barriers to learning are seen to exist in the structure or framework of the educational setting and, more broadly, in the attitudes and structures of society (Daniels and Garner, 1999).

Further, Crème and Lea (1999) report on study skills programmes seen as higher education's attempt to 'normalise' academic writing which can result in taking the writing out of the person, de-personalising it to what is referred to as the 'default' genre of university literacy (p:7). In this sense students can become focussed on trying to discover how or what they should be doing rather than tackling the problem or engaging with the question (Crème and Lea, 1999). However, Y160 is designed with an integrated study skills element that aims to develop generic skills in a context that is not divorced from the course content but rather runs alongside. It also has a strong emphasis on students exploring their own responses, feelings, opinions and in this sense, the focus can be switched from one which is only concerned with what the course material is saying, to one in which students are guided to construct and critically examine their own opinions (Baugh et al, 2006; Interview, Authors, 2007). Such an approach I suggest is embedded in the design of Y160 and is embodied in the pedagogy of '*effects*'.

However, the nature of Study Skills and Writing in higher education is complex. Writing can aid thinking which can help organise thoughts and stimulate a process of decision-making in order to arrive at a potential conclusion (Halpern, 2003). This, for example, can be contrasted with thinking patterns that might occur in unprepared speech or oral communication in which the 'weighing up' element and therefore critical reflection is arguably less considered (Halpern, 2003). Conversely, in higher education there are different kinds of, and purposes for, writing which Lea and Street (1998) usefully categorised into three writing-types.

The first sees Study Skills as the learning focus for writing, 'a set of atomised skills' which are learnt and then transferred across a range of circumstances which draws on an 'instrumental' view of learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).



The second, is what Lea and Street refer to as the 'academic socialisation perspective'. This is identified as literacy in which students' orientation, interpretation and conceptualisation of the study topic is demonstrated, thereby showing deep rather than surface learning; a 'communicative' notion of the learning experience (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). Such a constructivist approach is student-centred but importantly takes account of the social construct. However, it cannot be assumed that the culture of academia is homogeneous, such a vision does not allow for differences in interpretation across universities or indeed between faculties and tutors. Therefore, taking the premise that a critical perspective would be part of the interpretation and conceptualisation for deep learning, it highlights the underlying issue of how criticality can be consistently identified and measured across disciplines.

To some degree the issue of measurement is exemplified in Y160 (given its multi-disciplinary content) and where the application of the *Study Diamond* with History is seen by some Tutors as problematic (see, Chapters 4 and 5 ). For example, the teaching of History in higher education "has always contained multiple voices" (Booth, 2008, p:1). Such a perspective stems from the distinction Marwick (2001) makes between history seen as "the bodies of knowledge about the past produced by historians", and "the past" as "everything which actually happened, whether known, or written about by historians or not" (p:2). In this sense Marwick, who erred on the side of the latter, took a different perspective in relation to Primary and Secondary sources; specifically, making the point that the social cultural dimensions that secondary sources offer can often provide more valid and reliable insights into the past than original primary sources which may be:

*“full of prejudices and errors. They were not written to serve the interests of historians coming along later: they were written to serve the interests of those who created them, going about their own business”.*

*(Marwick, 2001, p:3)*

Importantly, Marwick (2001) cites that historians do not rely on single sources but are continuously seeking to triangulate evidence that will corroborate, qualify, correct and refine nuances that lead to a particular interpretation or perspective. In this sense it can be seen there is synergy with the *Study Diamond* process from an iterative perspective and in particular relating to the concept of questioning which is also relative to the notion of criticality (Brookfield, 1987, Halpern, 2003, Marzano et al, 1988).

But whilst there remain differences of opinion as to whether the discipline of History should sit within an Arts framework or a professional subject training framework, there has been nonetheless considerable interest in the teaching and learning of history over the last 15 years. Sparked by the diverse capabilities of an increasingly disparate student body arising from the WP agenda (Booth and Nicholls, undated) and, as a result of new methods and approaches to curricula development and delivery, teachers and students are now more actively involved as “partners in enquiry” (Booth, 2008 p:5) promoting an emphasis on the learning of skills for enquiry as much as the subject itself. Doubt about meaning is a key aspect of any enquiry especially for the historian who will be faced with interpreting an incongruent range of data and sources (Beck and Jeffery, 2009). From this perspective it can be seen that History was a useful choice as a subject in a multi-disciplinary course in which criticality is a key learning outcome.

The third writing-type to which Lea and Street (1998) refer is 'academic literacies'. Here value is placed on 'identities' and sees literacy as involving a variety of 'communicative practices, including genres, fields and disciplines' (Lea and Street, 1998 p:3).

Interestingly, it draws attention to the notion that a student's own personal identity may be challenged by the switching of identities between disciplines as they may feel threatened and resistant to the need to conform and write in a particular academic style (Lea and Street, 1998). Such an approach reflects a relatively new concept in the discourse on literacy.

Known as 'New Literacy Studies' (NLS), it is concerned not so much with the acquisition of skills but rather with exploring what literacy means in terms of its 'social practice' and from a critical discourse analysis perspective to establish meaning (Street, 2003; Lea and Street 1998). In its broadest sense, NLS recognises the concept of multiple literacies and their variance according to place and time resulting from social and cultural influences. NLS also acknowledges that dominant literacies will evoke influence and power whilst the less dominant can appear to be marginalised and can be resistant to change (Street, 2003).

This discourse, in relation to the *Study Diamond* process, has relevance for the way in which students are encouraged through dialogue with the tutor to use their own socially orientated perspective in order to understand the pedagogies of '*techniques*' and '*context*'. In this way meaning is established and evidence collected enabling the student to produce a structured argument in support of a particular interpretation - what Lea and Street (1998) might refer to as academic literacy. It is also useful to note that in developing this approach Lea and Street (1998) highlight students can feel threatened.

This is reflective of, as previously discussed, academic writing seen as hierarchical and a potential barrier to learning (Shor, 1992; Freire 1993). Such a view is connected to the notion of empowerment, when individuals are encouraged to critically evaluate their own opinions, therefore potentially their own values in the sense of transformative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).

As suggested, there are multiple ways of describing critical thinking - as either a skills set, a mental process or a procedure; and, heuristics is identified as having a part to play in considering an iteration of ideas (Bailin et al, 1999). For example, a starting point for when the thinking process begins and when prior knowledge is activated, is often when faced with an unresolved problem or an indeterminate situation that needs to be explained (Marzano et al, 1988) - as in the situation when students are introduced to a new form of poetry (Haiku) or a new style of art (Turner Prize).

Whilst normal everyday thinking occurs naturally, higher order thinking requires an awareness of, and competency in, the component skills that make up the thinking process (Marzano et al, 1988). Much is written on the notion of what constitutes core thinking skills. However, Marzano et al, (1988) offer a useful summary of the competencies that are frequently referenced in the literature, identifying in total 21 thinking skills. Figure 2.5 below shows the components that I suggest underpin the 'prompts' encapsulated in the *Study Diamond* but which also encourage a Socratic approach (Mercer, 2008) to teaching through the concept of 'problem-posing':

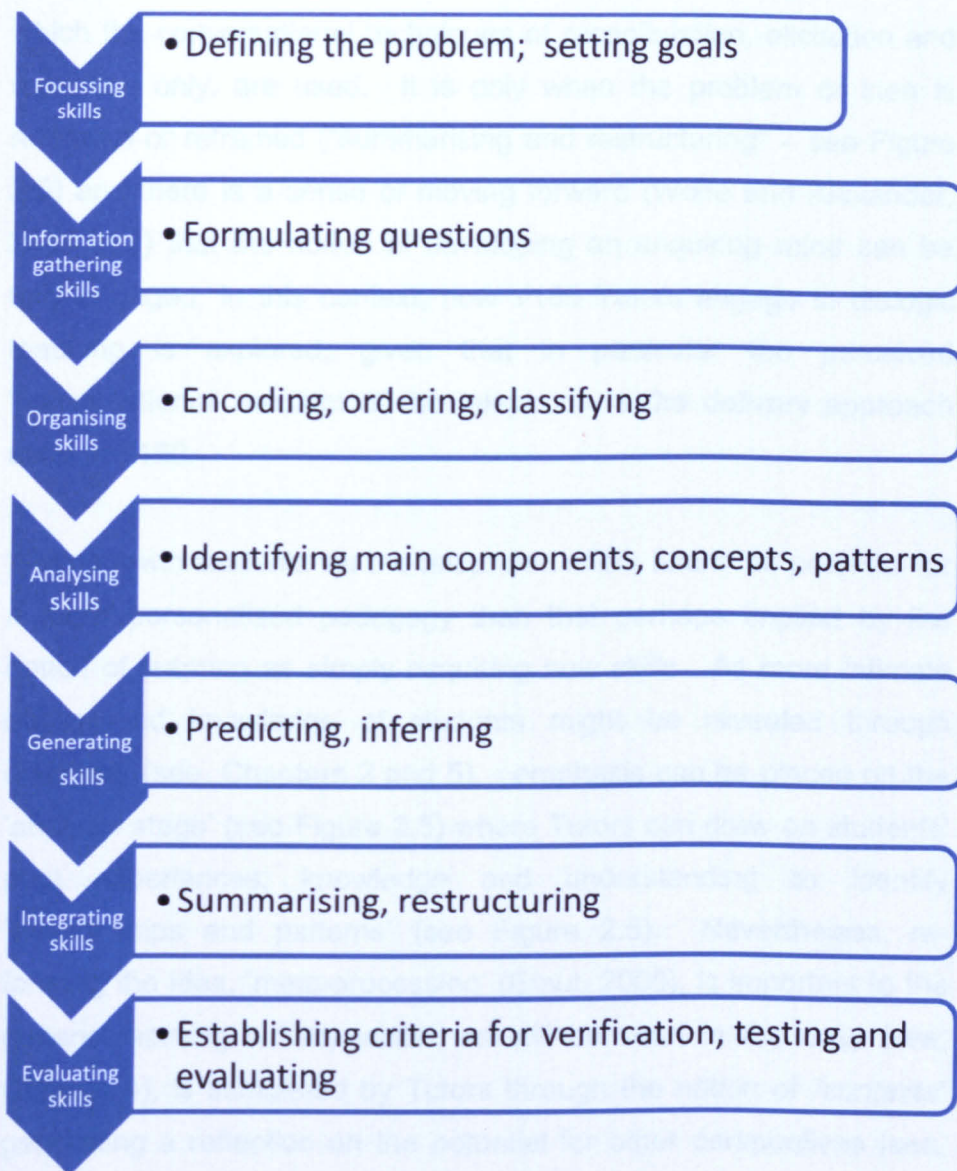


Figure 2.5, Core Thinking Skills (adapted from Marzano et al, 1988)

In a heuristic informed pedagogy, students construct meaning through successive stages of a “problem-posing dialogue” with the tutor (Shor, 1992, p:31) and/or with him/herself (Wolfe and Alexander, 2008). By encouraging students to reason and argue about ideas (the ‘predicting and inferring process’ – see Figure 2.5) they are stimulated into adopting the habits that lead to a critically enquiring mind (“verifying, testing and evaluating” – see Figure 2.5).

In this sense the pedagogy is different from a teaching method in which the conversational techniques of recapitulation, elicitation and repetition only, are used. It is only when the problem or idea is reformed or reframed (“summarising and restructuring” – see Figure 2.5) and there is a sense of moving forward (Wolfe and Alexander, 2008, p:7) that the notion of developing an enquiring mind can be fully engaged. In this context, how Y160 Tutors engage in dialogic teaching is explored, given that in particular the perceived ‘conversational’ medium of the telephone is the delivery approach used in Y160.

Working with students via the telephone offers tutors the potential for a more personalised pedagogy than that perhaps implied by the notion of learning as simply acquiring new skills. As more intimate background knowledge of students might be revealed through dialogue (see, Chapters 2 and 5), emphasis can be placed on the ‘analysis stage’ (see Figure 2.5) where Tutors can draw on students’ past experiences, knowledge and understanding to identify ‘relationships and patterns’ (see Figure 2.5). Nevertheless, re-forming the idea, ‘meta-processing’ (Eraut, 2000), is important to the generic learning activity which, as will be seen in the data (see, Chapter 4), is stimulated by Tutors through the notion of “*contexts*” generating a reflection on the potential for other perspectives (see, Chapter 5).

There are a number of characteristics for recognising critical thinkers, one of which is the action of identifying suppositions that might lie in the foundations of an idea and then considering the accuracy or validity of those assumptions (Brookfield, 1987). This would not only apply to new ideas but also to an individual’s internalised assumptions about an idea. For example, a student’s negative reaction to a poem or work of art might prevent the student from engaging in the process of analysis or interpretation.

In this respect, an important aspect identified by Brookfield (1987) is that confidence and a willingness to be open to receiving new ideas is needed in order to discard previously held beliefs or assumptions (p.7). Being open to new learning in particular relates to an individual's perception of their meta-cognition which can therefore subsequently impact on their commitment to and successful completion of, an academic task (Marzano, 1988). 'Will' it is argued is closely aligned with 'skill' (Paris and Cross, 1988) and the extent to which a student understands and has an awareness of their own ability to learn can be seen as being just as important in the learning process as developing academic skills.

### **2.5 Summary**

Exploring the emergence of widening participation in higher education, has relevance for all institutions but specifically those who have a particular focus on developing access courses. In a survey of 110 UK higher education institutions, Gerrard and Gerrard (2002) report on the 'exploitation of current technologies' and keeping up with 'shifts towards social inclusion' as being amongst the reasons cited by institutions for moving towards a distance learning model (p:380). Also on the list, reference was made to the accessibility which particularly in the introduction of access courses, is also informed by the social inclusion agenda (Lillis, 2001). How Tutors adapt their teaching therefore using a method that can contribute to a distance learning model has value for how HEIs address on-going changes in higher education. Similarly, under the current political administration increasing participation of those from lower income groups still appears to be a priority or at least will influence policy to improve social mobility. In this respect managing a student cohort from non-traditional higher education backgrounds to ensure their potential is maximised and standards maintained, will continue to be a challenge for institutions and in particular tutors.

The theory of frames of reference as posited by Mezirow and Associates (2000) and Habermas (2006) is especially relevant to the adult learner who in the past may have had negative experiences of education. Conversely drawing on students' past experiences as inferred by Knowles (1984) and Shor (1992), is pertinent to how adults engage with learning and has relevance for how tutors communicate with students, especially through the medium of telephone tutorials.

Similarly, the pedagogy of problem solving, Socratic questioning, and in particular the notion of teaching from the premise of asking students their own opinions (as posited by Baugh et al, 2006 and embedded in the *Study Diamond*) has the potential to dispel formally held barriers to learning and evoke notions that underpin the theory of transformative learning.

The concept of critical thinking whilst often seen as an element of the thinking process per se, can be seen as a life skill albeit there is some dichotomy over whether it is a skill or a process given its alignment with how the mind functions. In this sense, it has potential for emancipatory benefits embedded in the theory of transformation for example, Rice (1985) cited in Facione (2010) suggest:

*“Very few really seek knowledge in this world.  
.....few really ask. On the contrary, they try to wring  
from the unknown the answers they have already  
shaped in their own minds” (p:4).*

In other words, changing mind sets can be difficult for tutors and their students. Yet critical thinking is a “dominant discourse” in the context of adult learning (Brookfield, 2005 p:vii). In this sense, it should be taken seriously in that it can help individuals make sense of day to day frustrations and contradictions (Brookfield, 2005, p:vii).



The ability to think critically therefore is a vital capability for the 21<sup>st</sup> century – given the global capacity for information transmission (Halpern, 2003).

However, literature and experience suggests, there is a ‘fusion’ of the concepts of reason, argument analysis and everyday logic when authors attempt to define or devise programmes of learning for the development of critical thinking skills (McPeck, 1990, p:4). And, whilst there continues to be high emphasis placed on the concepts of *critical thinking* as an essential life as well as an academic competence, the complexities that underpin the topic will continue to create problems for Tutors teaching it and difficulties for students mastering it. Terms associated with critical thinking become interchangeable and the concept is often treated as “one homogeneous ball of wax” (McPeck, 1990, p:4).

Therefore when consulting the literature to explore the issues embedded in my research questions, as suggested, I was drawn to three distinctive areas (see Figure 2.1). My search has embraced notions of an interpretivist-orientated review whereby I have attempted to interpret and where appropriate offer ‘different ways of viewing or using’ dominant ideas in the light of findings that have emerged from the data (Eisenhart, 1998, p:395). In this sense my review contrasts with a systematic search which would have employed an explicit set of procedures in an attempt to synthesise evidence produced from studies conducted within what has come to be associated with the scientific paradigm (Oakley, 2007). That said, given that critical thinking is a dominant discourse for this study encapsulated by Research Question 3, I attempt to align theoretical understanding around the practical actions (embedded in Tutors’ experiences of using the *Study Diamond*) in order to untangle the pedagogical puzzles (Brookfield, 2005, p:ix) and in this sense have developed my own understanding of practice.

Key theoretical concepts drawn from associated literature:		Historical Context of HE		Models of Adult Learning		Critical Thinking	
		Historical Hierarchal Structures; Humanistic Ideology	Social & Cultural Orientation; Emancipation & Empowerment; Notions of Deficit & Disadvantage	Dialectic instruction v Dialogic pedagogy	Social Constructivist and Humanistic Philosophy; Learner Centeredness	Dominant Discourse in HE; Inconsistencies in Definition; Process v Skills Set	Notions of transformation leading to Emancipation & Empowerment
Author	Date						
Bourdieu	2000						
Brookfield	1987; 2005						
Freire	1993						
Habermas	1990; 2006						
Halpern	2003						
Kolb	1984						
Knowles	1984						
McPeck	1984; 1990						
Marzano et al	1988						
Mezirow	2000						
Shor	1992						

Figure 2.6 : Grid representing Key Theoretical Concepts and Authors

The above grid (Figure 2.6) offers a visual representation of where theoretical ideas might be synthesised and highlights the key theoretical concepts that I have drawn from the respective authors.

## Chapter 3

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

#### 3.1 Introduction

Informed by the three areas identified following my Literature Review, it is reasonable to assume that the way in which Tutors use and apply the *Study Diamond*, will be informed by the design and delivery model of Y160. In this sense the delivery context, characteristics of the Tutors and the students for whom the course is aimed (see, Chapter 1:1.4) are not simply background to this study but rather are integral to the rationale and study design.

To this end, whilst there is much critical debate in educational research over the interpretivist verses positivist paradigm, not least because of the many variables upon which successful pedagogy depends (Bassegy, 2007), it was reasonable to deduce that the pedagogical elements of the *Study Diamond* which underpin my three research questions:

1. *“How do Y160 Tutors modify and adapt the Study Diamond to identify and articulate the skills and competences that are central to critical thinking?”*
2. *“How do Y160 Tutors use and modify the Study Diamond to connect across and with the three disciplines of the Y160 course?”*
3. *“How does the unique delivery model of the course and the Widening Participation agenda, impact on the way in which Y160 Tutors model their teaching in relation to critical thinking”.*

.....would best be understood by a qualitative examination of the social exchanges and interactions that Tutors construct with their students.

As I was seeking to explore the professional experiences and teaching approaches of fellow practitioners, rather than evaluating or measuring the *Study Diamond* process itself, more positivist-orientated methodologies that do not allow for such social interaction were rejected.

A qualitative case study approach provided the optimum way of capturing Tutors perceptions as it is often seen as the preferred way of answering questions centred around practice-orientated fields when judgments are context-dependent on a given practice (Yin, 2003; Elliott, 2007). However, whilst I acknowledge that research into the effects of the *Study Diamond* could be explored through the student's perspective, nevertheless I assert, as previously inferred, that my interest lies not in the instrumental effectiveness of the process in bringing about certain learning outcomes, but rather in seeking to deconstruct some of the issues associated with teaching critical thinking. It is for this reason therefore that I position this study within the context of *Teacher Development and Professional Learning*, one of the identified research categories in the Open University Doctorate in Education Programme.

Further, since the notion of criticality is an essential part of the Y160 course and research concerned with the concept seldom explores what it actually means to think critically (McPeck, 1990), exploring with Tutors how they use the *Study Diamond* framework has the potential to contribute to the broader body of knowledge on critical thinking. Case studies are especially suited to 'real life' settings (Yin, 2003) and given that the *Study Diamond* is exclusive to the course, an exploration of its application would by default bound the study to the Y160 Tutor population and teaching context. Similarly, it is argued, case studies are particularly suited to addressing the 'how' and 'why' questions (Yin, 2003). In this sense, exploring with Y160 Tutors the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond*, would be too complex to unravel through a survey or experimental strategy alone (Yin, 2003).

A quantitative data collection approach I reasoned would not offer the depth needed to examine the pedagogical origins and application of the *Study Diamond* nor would quantitative data reveal the way in which Tutors work with and apply the *Study Diamond*.

By contrast however, qualitative instruments such as one-to-one semi-structured interviews following an e-survey with open-ended questions, would give me insights into real teaching experiences and situations (Yin, 2003) which could then be synthesised with the literature and my own experiences.

However, a frequent objection to case studies centres around issues of representation (Yin, 2003; Cohen et al, 2005) and how far one can generalise beyond that of the case being explored. It is the very fact that the research is situated within a specific and perhaps unique environment that deems generalisations to be rare (Burgess et al, 2006). Nevertheless whilst, and as previously inferred, I am not seeking to evaluate or test the effectiveness of the *Study Diamond* as a study skills tool (see also Chapter 1:1.6), I am in the sense implied in evaluative research, seeking to arrive at generalisations which, although interpreted from evidence from a single bounded case, can be broadly considered and reflected upon by practitioners tutoring on Arts related programmes and within a WP context. In this sense this study design has 'construct validity' (Yin, 2003 p:19) exploring a particular target population and 'external validity' (Yin, 2003, p:19) given that Y160 is a multi-disciplinary course, and therefore has the potential for generalisation across introductory courses in the three arts disciplines.

However, interpreting or theorising behaviour from respondents' own constructs, without the verification of observation, has its limitations in that espoused theories are not always congruent with theories-in-action (Argyris and Schön, 1974).

That is to say, individuals do not always do as they say they do, albeit they may be unaware of acting or behaving differently from the practice they purported to have designed or say they have acted upon. I acknowledge therefore that with this approach there is the potential for the reliability of the data to be undermined.

However, in drawing readers' attention to such potential limitations I also assert that the notion of the tacit knowledge of the professional should be taken into consideration. That is, whether an individual does what they purport to do does not diminish an existence of the idea or theory in the first place (Argyris and Schön, 1974). I suggest that the extent to which findings and recommendations might be generalised will be determined by the reader's own connectivity with, and interest in, the ideas expressed.

In this respect therefore, in designing the study, I considered the potential reader. I wanted findings and outcomes to be accessible and beneficial to colleagues, fellow practitioners and researchers. Therefore, working with Tutors has helped to ensure responses are context-specific, relevant to practice and policy (Burgess et al, 2006). Added to which, as previously suggested, as a practitioner I have provided an insider orientation to the interpretation and analysis by balancing 'the powerful work of the theorists discussed' in order that their voices are not in any sense diminished (Brookfield, 2005, p:xi) but are critically applied and synthesised with this study's findings.

Nevertheless, as a practicing tutor on Y160, my role reflects an insider-researcher perspective (Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Elliott, 1988; Hellawell, 2006). There has been, and continues to be, much debate on the advantages and disadvantages of insider research. Considerations range from evidence-based practice issues to ethical and political concerns that have resulted from a broadening of the research styles that are employed (Elliott, 1988).

As my research questions are essentially centred in Tutors perceptions and the aim of this enquiry is to support Tutors in developing critical thinking in their students, I assert that it is the practitioner-researcher who is best placed to develop and extend pedagogical understanding and thereby influence curriculum design.

I agree with Elliott (2001) who argues there is a fundamental relationship between the aims of education and educational practice that is inherent in the concept of education. In this sense, understanding what it means to be educated stems from the notion of learning as having both intrinsic as well as extrinsic value and purpose (Peters, 1973). In other words, it is important for educational research, 'as opposed to simply research *on* education', to involve practitioners in its 'construction and execution' rather than just 'applying its findings' (Elliott, 2001, p:77).

Taking this premise, I argue that it is the Tutors themselves who are best placed to describe and explain how they modify and adapt the *Study Diamond* in their teaching of critical thinking and how they do this across three discipline areas working within a delivery model that is essentially non-traditional. Mercer (2008) for example suggests it is important for teachers (educators) to have a "critical awareness of what they do" (p:64). Involving practitioners in a study with which the data suggests many obviously feel quite passionate, promotes the notion of shared understanding and goes some way to providing more than anecdotal evidence from my own personal perspective (Mercer, 2008). However, it can also be argued that as an insider, such an intimate association can impact on the detachment and objectivity of the research and on the validity and reliability of the data collection process. Researchers coming from a more positivistic position would argue for 'procedural objectivity', using research methods that aim to eliminate the degree to which data has to be interpreted and judgments made (Eisner, 1992).

Conversely, as active participants, 'insiders' possess knowledge that can offer a better understanding of the distinctive nature of human interaction that may be individual and integral to the study. In this sense the insider researcher can present ontological objectivity, seeing things the way they are that "reveals their actual features" and offers a veridical perspective on the findings (Eisner, 1992, p:10).

Such an argument is therefore the basis upon which I designed and conducted the data collection for this study and subsequently analysed and interpreted the information. In the on-going debate of what constitutes evidence-based practice, a case can be made for practitioners to follow their own line of enquiry around a perceived 'problem' whilst also engaging with fellow practitioners to draw on their experience to capture their critical and reflective evaluation thus, collectively, making a valuable contribution to learning (Schön, 1987). So whilst I acknowledge that care needs to be taken when making *generalisations* about 'what works' and 'what does not work' (Hammersley, 2007 p.62), I bring to my interpretation a contextual experience that has an awareness of and is sympathetic to the pedagogical complexities of the delivery model and client group, thereby situating findings from an experiential perspective.

In such a consideration can be seen the theory of 'participant objectivation' (Bourdieu, 2003). That is, when enquiries are practitioner-led, the lived experiences of the participants are not distanced from the social and shared beliefs and habits of the field (Bourdieu, 2003) but rather the researcher has the capacity to draw on his/her knowledge of the subject to address questions that cannot be solved by instrumental technologies (Schön, 1987). This notion, as with this study, is especially pertinent to research that employs a qualitative data collection method where the researcher is actively involved in the construction of meaning through social interaction (Elliott, 1988).



Connecting thus with practice can also be seen to represent 'strategic action' that is responding to 'present, immediate and problematic action context' (Kemmis, 2003 p:182) and which offers the potential to inform pedagogy and design considerations around, in this instance, widening access to higher education. An example of this can be seen in my personal journey throughout this research which afforded peripheral opportunities to discuss with colleagues my specific research area, the experiences of which have contributed to the knowledge transfer embedded in this report. In particular I had an opportunity to present a workshop on the *Study Diamond* to non-Openings Tutors which is briefly reported on in Chapter 7.

But whilst characteristics in respect to case study approaches can vary from study to study limiting the generalisability, I reasoned that by employing an inductive, reflexive process offered by a small scale enquiry and using initially an e-survey followed by semi-structured interviews, a phenomenological perspective would emerge (Ray, 1994). That is to say, coupled with the Husserlian research tradition of valuing experience, which places emphasis on the intuitive and reflective abilities of the researcher (Ray, 1994) and the advantages of having an insider orientation (Elliott, 1988), I would be best placed to interpret the data within the context of my research questions and my own practice.

With this in mind, I designed the e-survey and the interviews with opportunities for open ended qualitative written and oral responses. In this way emergent patterns of words and phrases were brought together across two data sources to generate key points of interest. This gave me a structure for the collection and analysis process.

However, the First Stage of this iterative four stage data collection process, consisted of an interview with the Course Authors.

Reflecting on the notion that an important starting point would be to elicit the Authors' motivational and aspirational intentions for their design and authorship of Y160, I reasoned this would give me a base-line from which I could compare, through my research questions, the perceptions of Y160 Tutors.

To this end a face-to-face interview with the three authors within a workplace setting, was organised and subsequent results used to inform the design and development of the instruments for the second and third stages of the data collection process. Each design stage is reported on under the respective headings below.

### **3.2 First Stage**

#### *Initial Study*

As intimated above, in education research the approach a researcher takes is not always clearly defined by the issues explored and therefore positioning a study in terms of methodological philosophies can be problematic and sometimes will only emerge as the study unfolds (Bassegy, 2007). As previously advised, an important starting point was to understand the authors' intentions for the *Study Diamond* and to explore the tacit reasoning behind its design. I decided therefore to conduct a non-directive group interview (Cohen et al, 2005) with the Course Authors; in particular I felt it would be useful to align the authors' perspectives of the *Study Diamond* with how the Tutors were using and applying it in the field.

Using the principle of non-direction I nevertheless exerted some control over the content of the discussion, having already arrived at the hypothesis that the *Study Diamond* was a useful tool and worthy of wider application. However, the respondents were involved in initiating the direction and to some extent led the discussion. This enabled their attitudes and perceptions of both the Course and in particular the *Study Diamond* to emerge generating insights into how they collectively worked together on devising the Course.

This was of particular benefit given that each Author was representing their own subject specialism and spoke from their perception of how the *Study Diamond* would work within their respective subjects.

The interview took place in September 2007 at the Open University's offices in Bristol. The discussion was recorded and a transcript produced. All participants were formally briefed on the topic and purpose and agreed to the interview being recorded. I observed that throughout there was a general consensus of opinion which suggested participants had formed a good working relationship during their co-construction of the course. All contributed equally during the discussion and unprompted, pro-actively sought common agreement from each other.

### **3.3 Second Stage**

#### *e-Survey*

In order to capture the qualitative data necessary to address my research questions, I reasoned that field observation or face-to-face interviews as a main instrument would be complex and costly to organise given the vast geographical spread of the respondents. Further, close observation (in the sense that might be employed by an ethnographer) of even a sample of Tutors would be labour intensive (Boyle, 1994) and, given the intimacy and immediacy of telephone tutoring, could have ethical considerations for the tutor/student relationship. I therefore rejected field observation in favour of an e-survey and telephone interviews, both of which could be conducted remotely. An e-survey was advantageous in terms of providing access to the full cohort of over 70 Y160 Tutors across the UK. It kept costs to a minimum (as compared to a paper-based design) and when uploaded onto a website, required minimal intervention (see Appendix 3). Data was stored electronically thereby easily retrievable.

However, it is argued that Internet research relies heavily on voluntary participation and depends upon users spontaneously coming across the survey or questionnaire (Hewson et al, 2003). Taking this into account and conscious of the plethora of emails sent to Open University Tutors which, as many tutors have commented, seems like information overload, I chose the November presentation of the Course in the belief that over the Christmas period Tutors may have more time to respond. In November 2008, the Open University had recruited 74 Tutors to teach on Y160. Each tutor was individually emailed with the web link address and an invitation to participate. A notice was also posted on the main University Tutor intranet site. Modern technology has changed the efficiency, scale and scope of research capability and therefore it could be argued that the use of technology for data collection incurs risks in terms of the speed of change in technological advancement and the perceived differences in on-line behaviour which can skew norms in data analysis.

However, I suggest that utilising the internet as a tool for data collection is inherently no more risky than the traditional observational or survey methods; the risks are just different and subject to change as technology changes (Banaji et al, 2003). Importantly, network communication is ubiquitous at the Open University. At the recruitment stage Tutors are required to demonstrate they have access to, and can competently use, information and communication technology for teaching and supporting students. Further, they need to demonstrate their commitment to communicating with other areas of the Open University network (conference forums, information generating and sharing sites) throughout the life of their course (Open University – Teaching with the OU, 2010).

Nevertheless, whilst an e-Survey was an appropriate instrument for this target audience, I was concerned just how proactive Tutors would be in participating therefore, during the course of the November presentation, regular reminders were sent out and notices placed on the Tutor-to-Tutor e-Forum (see Reminder Notice Appendix 3).

Modelled on the notion of e-tivities (Salmon, 2004), the questionnaire was designed to encourage Tutors to interact with the research questions and reflect on their own personal experiences (see Appendix 3). Salmon (2004) offers a five-stage framework for active and interactive e-learning which she identifies as 'e-tivities' (p:1). The principles draw on the theory of scaffolding learning through a programme of asynchronised e-learning activities. However, drawing from elements of the five stage framework has been useful in terms of aiding the construction of the e-Survey questionnaire. For example, key to participation is an awareness of access and motivational issues (Stage 1) – which in this context relates to ease of access, direct contact with participants and an awareness of the time constraints of the participants; the Information Exchange (Stage 3) highlights the need to, in the design and language, embrace the notion of the survey as a way of 'exchanging' information, thereby including an opportunity for participants to make a contribution and not just respond to the researchers questions; and 'knowledge construction' (Stage 4), that is to say injecting into the survey template an awareness of the collaborative nature of the survey, building on the notion of an 'exchange' of information with other participants and a sense of collaborative interaction (adapted from Salmon, 2004). In this regard, in my introduction to Tutors I emphasised the importance of their involvement in the study, particularly in terms of their contribution to determining the extent to which the *Study Diamond* as a framework has the potential to be used in other contexts.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts (Part B being the Consent Form). Part A contained an initial five questions to capture respondent demographics – how long they have been tutoring with the Open University, how long they have worked on *Openings* and in particular Y160, whether or not they have been a marker for the examinable component; and if they taught on the earlier course (Y152) which took a different approach to supporting students with study skills. In this way I was able to contextualise responses in terms of respondents' familiarity with the course and with distance tutoring.

The national survey itself consisted of ten multiple-choice and open-ended questions which allowed for some quantifiable as well as qualitative data to be captured. Underpinned by my three main research areas - how tutors adapt and modify the *Study Diamond*; how tutors use the *Study Diamond* across three different disciplines; and the extent to which the audience and delivery model impacts on Tutors' teaching of critical thinking - I formulated questions around the following themes:-

- adapting and modifying the *Study Diamond* in the context of three disciplines;
- using the *Study Diamond* to teach critical thinking;
- Tutors' perceptions of what it means to apply a critical perspective in academic writing;
- pedagogical difficulties, if any, of teaching on a multi-disciplinary course;
- Tutors' perceptions of teaching on a course essentially aimed at a WP audience;
- and Tutors' perceptions of working with what is essentially a non-traditional delivery approach.

A Pilot Study was undertaken with a sample of Tutors from one of the thirteen Regional Open University Centres to test the ease with which Tutors could access the website and the length of time it would take to complete. The initial response to the pilot was good (N=15, 73%) therefore no major changes were made other than to move the proposed timing of its distribution to mirror the start of one of the four Y160 presentations following a comment made during the Pilot:

*“comments might be sharper on the problems of applying the diamond ...if I was teaching Openings at the moment!”*

(Extract from Pilot Tutor Questionnaire – see Appendix 3)

A Tutor also made the point that:

*“one or two of the questions seem to require rather long answers – could put people off answering?”*

(Extract from Pilot Tutor Questionnaire , 2008)

This last comment may be a contributing factor to the rather low response to the national survey (N=74, approx 20%); nevertheless, the qualitative comments were especially thoughtful and informative. In March 09 I posted a much reduced questionnaire on the Tutor-to-Tutor e-Forum which consisted of a series of statements drawn from responses to the main survey. This was an attempt to extend the population range and further validate findings but also to scope the extent to which there was consensus with the opinions expressed by respondents (see Appendix 4). Disappointingly, I received only one response. On reflection the lack of response to this scoping survey may have been due to timing once again (March is the beginning of a new Y160 presentation and therefore tutors are busy contacting their students) and as previously mentioned whilst e-technology is a form of communication with which all tutors regularly engage, many have full time careers outside of the Open University and therefore managing workload may have been an issue. Nevertheless, this one participant was an additional 'voice' in the data.

As reported earlier, in the national survey, I included an invitation for Tutors to take part in a follow up telephone interview. My intention originally was to use the interviews to re-affirm my interpretation of qualitative responses and to follow up on any additional emerging themes. However, the data proved rich and this third stage in the data collection process has been central to informing the Findings and Discussion (see Chapters 4 and 5).

### **3.4 Third Stage:**

#### *Telephone Interviews*

From my analysis of the e-survey data, a relationship began to emerge between recurring key points in the data and the themes identified in the Literature. See Figure 3.1:



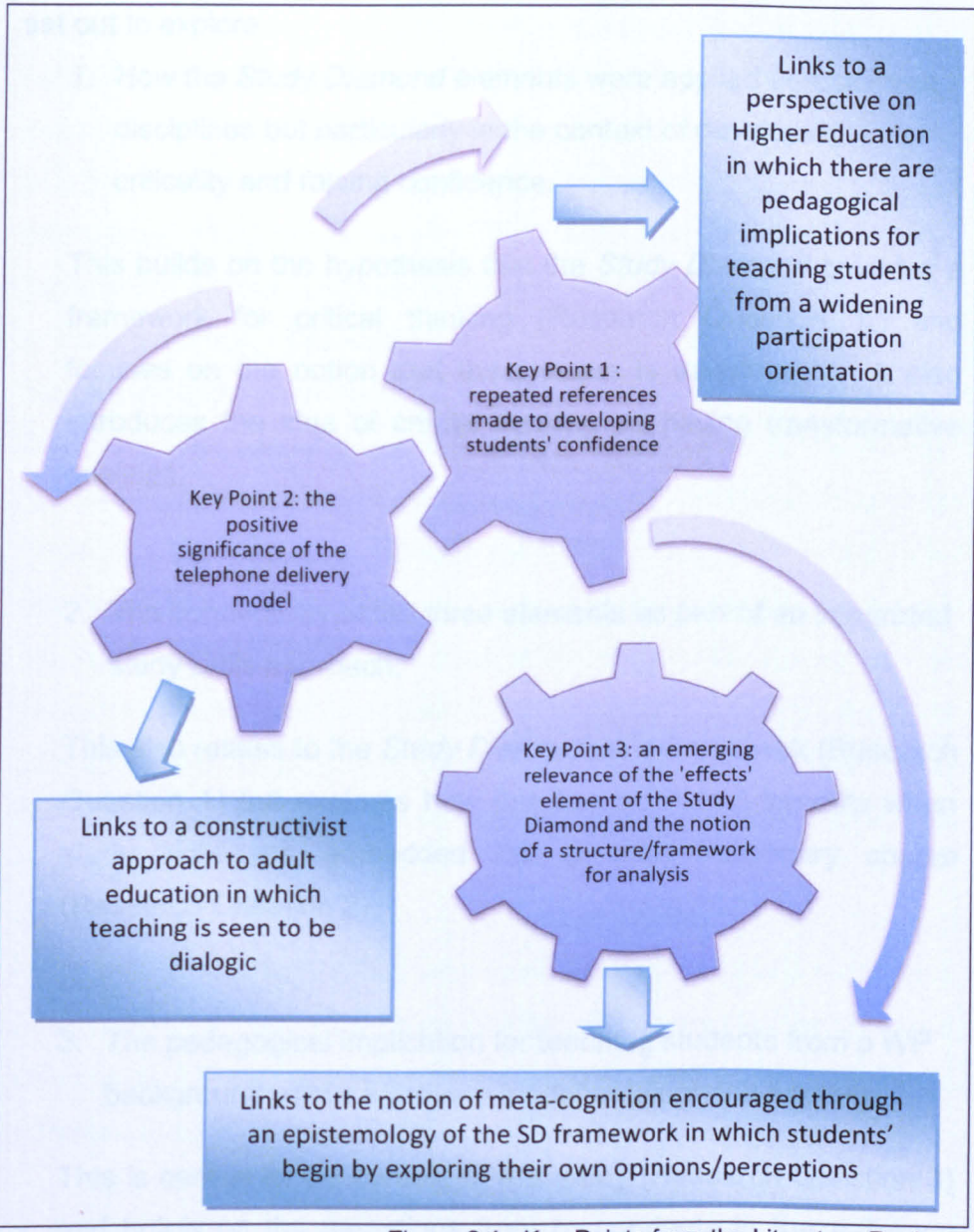


Figure 3.1: Key Points from the Literature Review

The above, using the notion of interconnected gears, is a visual representation that infers the interlocking dependency of each 'gear', given that one might be the driving force of the other. For example KP 1 can be seen as being 'driven' by KP 2; both KP 1 & KP 2 could be 'driven' by the main or principle 'driver' KP 3. The text that appears in each of the rectangles suggests the theoretical concepts that emerged in the literature and which have significance for each of the 'drivers'. (See also Analysing the Data, Chapter 3:3.6).

Taking these Key Points as themes for the Interviews with Tutors, I set out to explore :

1. How the *Study Diamond* elements were applied across three disciplines but particularly in the context of developing criticality and raising confidence.

This builds on the hypothesis that the *Study Diamond* provides a framework for critical thinking (Research Question 1.) and focuses on the notion that the process is transferable. It also introduces the idea of critical thinking as having transformative qualities.

2. The connectivity of the three elements as part of an integrated study skills approach.

This also relates to the *Study Diamond* as a framework (Research Question 1) but explores how this has additional benefits when study skills are embedded into a multi-disciplinary course (Research Question 2).

3. The pedagogical implication for teaching students from a WP background within a delivery model of telephone tutoring;

This is central to the context of this study (Research Question 3) and builds on the assertions from respondents in the e-Survey that it is working with the client group and the delivery model that draws them to teaching on Y160.

The five one-to-one telephone interviews took place during April 2009. All took the form of a semi-structured discussion that followed the topics outlined in the prompt paper (see Appendix 5). I rationalised that using the telephone rather than face-to-face would logistically be more economical as participants were once again geographically dispersed throughout the UK.

But more importantly, this approach mirrored the Y160 teaching model, therefore many of the issues that impact on the validity and reliability of telephone interviewing were reduced. For example the necessary reliance on auditory sensory cues and issues of retention of information because of the lack of non-verbal cues which can affect pace (Miller and Cannell, 1997), were less of a concern as all participants were conversant with employing and using the telephone in their teaching. The setting was therefore 'natural' as they were conversant with speaking without the benefit of visual cues (see also Chapters 2 and 5) and the discussion evolved into a friendly but purposeful exchange between two colleagues. Such an orientation draws on the notion expressed by Elliott (1988) that meaningful studies should be grounded in an understanding of the context in which the study is situated. That is, the researcher should not be viewed as the 'expert', detached from the practice in which the study is taking place but rather as 'insider' experience (Elliott, 1988) which in this context facilitated the non-threatening, friendly exchange that took place (Yin, 2003).

However, as with the Initial Study, I endeavoured to adopt the stance of an active listener rather than participant as personal theories and ideas of how Tutors understood and worked with the *Study Diamond* emerged through the exchanges (see Appendix 6).

Throughout the Findings and Discussion Chapters additional qualitative comments have been included from monitored discussions elicited from the Y160 Tutor-to-Tutor on-line asynchronous forum (data collection Stage 4). As mentioned previously, given the distance tutoring orientation of the Open University, Tutors are encouraged to feel part of the Open University community and to participate in Tutor on-line discussions with fellow tutors teaching on the same course (Openings-Induction, 2010). In this sense the Tutor e-Forum has parallels with social networking sites (SNS) such as MySpace, Facebook, and Bebo.

This form of communication has become an integrated aspect of the daily lives of many people (Boyd & Elson, 2007). SNSs however are not necessarily for individuals just seeking networking opportunities with the intention of making new acquaintances but are primarily concerned with individuals wanting to communicate with people who are already part of their established social network (Boyd & Elson, 2007). That is to say a group emerges drawn together perhaps by a common language or purpose (in this case tutoring on Y160) and who perhaps also are conversant with contributing to SNSs. In this sense, and based on my experience of monitoring the Y160 Tutor e-Forum over the period of this three year study, I would argue that meaningful exchanges can occur on the Forum, albeit limited to the small percentage of the potential 70+ tutors that are at any one time involved in discussions. Therefore whilst this source as a means of collecting additional data was limited, comments were captured that had relevance for and have contributed to my overall interpretation and triangulation of data.

Finally, in order to provide a historical context to the case study, I have drawn on a range of material and literature that informed my interpretation of the data. For example, archive material from the Open University, documents its conception and in particular the development of the Centre for Widening Participation and *Openings*. In this sense such evidence could be loosely described as archival or documentary records (Yin, 2003) that corroborate aspects of the literature with the purpose of understanding widening participation in the context of distance learning.

The four sources of data identified have therefore helped to validate findings through triangulation. In this sense I also position the study in the context of an investigation into one's own practice. Educational research can be undertaken as a form of self-reflection within the social and educational context of the practitioner (Kemmis,

2007). Because of the fundamental relationship between practice, reflection and implementation of change, research into own-practice can be viewed as a platform from which practitioners can present a case for change, not necessarily in the sense of policy or institutional change, but in terms of praxis, in which a practical application of research findings can be drawn from a situational enquiry (Kemmis, 2007). Reflecting on my own position as the Researcher but also as a Tutor on Y160 is especially pertinent since, as a 'non-traditional student' myself (the first in my family to attend a university), I have some empathy with the widening participation agenda. Therefore I suggest this study has some affinity with the notion of 'action research' (AR) in respect to the motivational aspect for undertaking the enquiry and the self-reflective spiral linked to its planning, and importantly the drive to effect change in praxis (Kemmis, 2007). However, I am not claiming this enquiry to be action research. It does not employ the collective and collaborative approaches and methods traditionally associated with AR but rather, draws on the descriptive and interpretative tradition of the phenomenological researcher which can often emerge from single case studies.

Whilst Yin (2003) cautions researchers to exercise care in design and execution of case studies due in part to criticisms in terms of generalisation beyond the bounding of the study, he acknowledges the 'case study' is often the preferred method of researchers when the "investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context" (p:1) both of which firmly position this enquiry as a small scale context-bound case study.

### ***3.5 Additional Ethical Considerations***

As suggested above, logistical considerations were taken into account in the study design both in terms of the effects on participants and the financial and time constraints.

In this respect, permission to conduct the study with Open University staff members and tutors was obtained from the University's Ethics Committee and the Centre for Widening Participation. Also the support of the CWP was enlisted so that contact with participants could be made utilising the University's data-base and intranet. In this way email addresses remained confidential.

All participants were issued with an informed consent form and advised they could withdraw at any time prior to the date set for commencing the data analysis. In the case of the Initial Study and the telephone Interviews with Tutors, participants agreed to the conversations being recorded and to their contribution being assigned a code for identification in the analysis. All respondents agreed to be identified in the final report as course authors or Y160 Tutors respectively.

### **3.6 Analysing the data**

#### *First Stage (Interview with Course Authors)*

I conducted a linguistic analysis of the transcript. This involved mapping key phrases from the dialogue, which was transcribed from the recording, to theoretical ideas and hypotheses that had been drawn from my original interview questions on how the *Study Diamond* was conceived and how the process might encourage critical thinking (see Appendix 2). Nevertheless, as with all interview transcripts, there remains a notion of 'selectivity' given that accounts will be de-contextualised from non-verbal behaviour no matter how detailed the transcription (Cohen et al, 2005). However, when all three participants nodded or voiced their agreement this was duly noted in the transcription strengthening my interpretation of collective decision-making about particular points.

Information was then entered onto a 'contact summary sheet' (see Appendix 2a,) and cross related with emerging conceptual ideas from the initial literature search. Analysis of the interview together with my initial exploration of the literature led me to reflect on:

- the extent to which the *Study Diamond* might have a wider relevance for teaching students new to higher education and within a widening participation orientation;
- whilst I adapt the way in which I apply the *Study Diamond* across the three different disciplines in my own teaching, I was aware, and the data confirmed, some tutors felt it was not so useful with the History Module;
- finally, the notion of criticality was considered by the Authors to be an important aspect of the learning journey and as the *Study Diamond* was designed as part of an integrated Study Skills approach, I therefore wanted to explore the extent to which the *Study Diamond* supported Tutors with this aspect of pedagogy.

And from the above reflections, the following questions emerged which were used as a basis for my exploration with Tutors:-

- How do Tutors adapt and modify the *Study Diamond* to take account of the three disciplines;
- How do Tutors use the *Study Diamond* to teach critical thinking;
- What are Tutors' perceptions of what it means to apply a critical perspective to academic writing;
- What are, if any, the pedagogical difficulties of teaching on a multi-disciplinary course;
- What are Tutors' perceptions of teaching on a course essentially aimed at a WP audience;
- and what are Tutors' perceptions of working with what is essentially a non-traditional delivery approach.

### *Second Stage (e-survey with Tutors)*

To analyse the e-survey data, I produced an excel spreadsheet in which tutor responses from the questionnaires were brought together under the respective headings of the survey questions. The data was then separated into quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data was used to present background demographic information on participants to aid the verification of my interpretation of responses. The qualitative responses were highlighted and given an identifier that corresponded to key points (KP). These key points were generated from the original three themes that emerged from the literature (see Figure 2.1) together with recurring words and phrases used in the qualitative responses and which I considered to be important in relation to the research questions around which the survey questions were originally framed. Key Points were eventually honed down to five descriptors.



Figure 3.2 indicates where descriptors were mapped against my original three Research Questions:-

No. assigned to the Key Point (KP) emerging from the e-Survey	Descriptor of Key Point	Original Research Question (RQ) for which KP has relevance
KP1	CONFIDENCE	RQ3: Impact of the WP target group on Tutors' pedagogical approach
KP2	DELIVERY MODEL	RQ3: Impact of telephone tutoring on Tutors' pedagogical approach
KP3	STUDY DIAMOND	RQ1 and 2: How Tutors adapt, modify and apply the language of the <i>Study Diamond</i>
KP4	CRITICAL THINKING	RQ1 and 2: The extent to which the <i>Study Diamond</i> process connects with and aids the teaching of critical thinking
KP5	INTERDISCIPLINARY	RQ2: How the framework is modified and adapted by Tutors to take account of the three disciplines

Figure 3.2: Key Points (emerging from the e-Survey analysis) mapped to the Research Questions

The coded data was analysed and responses that related to a common theme were grouped together. Allan (2003) refers to this "higher order commonality" as being a *concept* (p:3). See Figure 3.3 which illustrates an abridge version of the process:

Abridged version of KEY POINTS from Tutor Survey (2008)				
KP1 : Confidence	KP2 : Delivery Model	KP3 : The Study Diamond	KP 4 : Critical Thinking	KP 5 : Inter-disciplinary
By showing respect for the individual's opinion, the approach helps to build confidence; scaffold learning; boost self-esteem; they develop quickly as learners and considerably gain in confidence as a result.	personalised tutoring; understanding students as individuals; a personal relationship, students feel safe to ask questions, discuss, talk; it's a dialogue, I ask questions, it's not just me going on and on; as a tutor you can actually value the response students give which will transform the way they react to them;	They get 'pleasure' from being able to express their feelings about a text (using 'effects'); something that never happened to them at school; makes it more meaningful to them; gets students beyond their immediate emotional reaction; but crucially doesn't leave out that reaction structure/framework; linking together; the inter-relationship between the four corners	Argumentation; critical thinking; evidence; structure/framework/process/focus/plan = aids analysis /deconstructs; elements link together; the course isn't to learn 'stuff' rather to learn an analytical approach; they appreciate the significance and value of learning about techniques in terms of generating the effects that they feel; some Students do describe rather than analyse; A good point in using the SD is for evidence; with 'context' there is a clear sense of attempting to broaden students' perspectives	Problems with History; works differently with History, for history the emphasis is slightly different (effects are not quite so personal perhaps) but the framework gives a sound model for a methodical approach to historical analysis
<b>CONCEPTS</b>				
<b>WP ORIENTATION</b>	<b>DIALOGIC PEDAGOGY</b>	Confidence building through meta-cognition and the connectivity of the Study Diamond	Transferability within Art Disciplines	

Figure 3.3 An Abridged Version of e-Survey analysis process

### Third Stage (Telephone Interviews with Tutors)

As reported, in-depth telephone interviews with five Tutors followed. The concepts identified above were used to inform a prompt sheet for use during the interviews (see Appendix 5) and a transcript was made from the recording of each interview. Once again each recording was transcribed with any verbal intonations that significantly emphasised a point, being also noted.

A thematic analysis (Ray, 1994) was conducted on each transcript and the dialogue assigned to a respective theme. Each participant was assigned a colour and a letter of the alphabet so that dialogue could be highlighted and easily attributed to the corresponding colour/letter. Dialogue was then entered into a table under one of the emerging themes or concepts that correlated with the e-survey analysis process. The themes were identified from linguistic cues in the dialogue, expanding upon those identified in the e-survey. It can be seen therefore that the analysis was an iterative process in which the themes as they emerged from the data and around which there was a common thread, were aligned with the original key points (KPs) and concepts (Allan, 2003). In this way data could be understood and contextualised within the boundaries of the research questions and findings collated under the headings identified in Chapter 4.

However, additionally embedded in the interview data were quite lengthy accounts in which Tutors described actual teaching experiences. These accounts take the form of short narratives or reflections on tutoring. In this sense there is a suggestion of 'oral history' (Lawrenson, 1994). That is, the narratives that emerged represent Tutors' individual recall of their teaching practices, some of which is presented as illustrations of the perceived spoken dialogue Tutors have with their students. Whilst questions can be raised in terms of validity, particularly with regard to the reliability of respondents' espoused theories (Argyris and Schön, 1974) discussed previously, and the extent to which memories might be shaped by subsequent events or the conscious or unconscious desire to embellish recall (Lawrenson, 1994), nevertheless, I would argue there is a sense in which 'universal agreement is possible' (Habermas, cited in Lawrenson, 1994, p:265) as ideas have been aligned with other data and/or the literature to strengthen my interpretation.

In this sense a deeper insight into tutors' pedagogical experiences of telephone tutoring has been revealed, mirroring aspects of interpretative phenomenological analysis (Stern, 1994).

However, whilst there are theoretical concerns in applying a phenomenological perspective, particularly in terms of its credibility as a method for generalisation, the richness stems from an understanding that the accounts reveal truthful insights into human experience (Ray, 2003). Accepting there are theoretic concerns, the strength of the narrative model stems from the commonality in the use of language and expression revealed, in this instance, through the tutors' accounts of their teaching experiences. That is to say, if an experience is reflected upon and interpreted by the experiencing person, it is not necessarily only representative of the individual experiencing it at the time (Ray, 1994). The experience is something others might choose to give a "phenomenological nod" to, recognising it is something that they have practiced or might practice in the future (van Manen, cited in Ray, 1994, p:131). The narratives therefore can evoke meaning, belongingness and/or interconnectivity to which universal generalisations may be applied (Ray, 1994).

The notion of generalising beyond the existing case study draws on the principle of what Bassey (2007) calls 'fuzzy generalisations'. That is to say, in Chapters 4 and 5, I have taken these personal theories and experiences and merged them with aspects of constructivist learning theory and theories of motivation and social dynamics (Bassey, 2007). However, Educational research, as with research in other social science contexts, acknowledges that all human beings are individuals. In this sense therefore whilst I do not make generalisations based upon statistical predictions in the sense embedded in the scientific paradigm, I have evoked the principle of 'fuzziness' to inform my decision-making if not necessarily to determine it (Bassey, 2001).

This process also loosely reflects a version of Grounded Theory (GT) as I have endeavoured to generate concepts from patterns and categories which are interrelated and through which comparisons have been made with a range of data (Glaser, 2002). However, I would argue that my approach differs from GT in that coding has not been solely conceived in the field (Stern, 1994) but is reflexive in character and takes an emic perspective (Boyle, 1994) informed by an insider's view. It could therefore be said that overall this study embraces a mixed-methodology drawing on the principles of phenomenology through the reported lived experiences of the Tutors and grounded theory, in that interactionism has played an essential part in the progressive focussing of the approach and data analysis led by the participants and their responses (Stern, 1994).

It is acknowledged however that, as inferred previously, the very fact this study is bound in a single case, limits the extent to which generalisations can be made – the unique delivery model it could be argued, restricts the way in which links can be made to more traditional teaching contexts and binds the ideas elicited by the participants to their specific teaching context. Similarly, as previously mentioned, constructing assumptions about behaviour from the reported actions of the Tutors is open to claims of unreliability – how do we know that the actions they champion, 'theories in use' (Argyris and Schön, 1974), are consistent with the actions they purport to practice, 'theories of action' (Argyris and Schön, 1974). Further, given the size of the research sample, it arguably may not be a true representation of Tutors' perceptions, specifically (on Y160) and generally (on Arts Level One access courses). The notion of generalising to other contexts irrespective of the number of participants however should not be considered an issue, given that single case studies when aligned to 'theory', have the capacity to broaden the field of enquiry, drawing on concepts that influence and reflect the bounded case (Yin, 2003).

I argue therefore that it is in this sense, findings can have significance for enriching and contributing to a growing bank of knowledge.

Tutors' responses reported on in this study (which are based on their professional judgments and my interpretation of those judgments) should be seen as a reflective insight that expresses 'the meaning of a particular life-world experience' but which is also able to 'enhance, develop, and advance the discipline under study' by seeing the meaning of 'the human experience as a universal' (Ray, 1994, p:124).

## Chapter 4

### 4. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this Chapter, I set out the findings from my exploration with Y160 Tutors which includes extracts from the interview with the Course authors, the National e-survey to Y160 Tutors and the Y160 Tutor telephone interviews. I describe, with illustrative references to the data, how emerging ideas relate to my three original Research Questions (see Chapter 1:P.11) but also how these merge with the Key Points from the Literature Review (see Figure 3.1; Figure 3.2). A detailed exploration of meanings drawn from the findings is reported on in Chapter 5 utilising a phenomenological approach that arose out of the data from the Tutor Interviews. However, in this Chapter, I offer a summative account which, for clarity, aligns with Figure 2.6 (Key Theoretical Concepts and Authors) and follows the progressive and interconnected themes that emerged from the Key Points referenced in Figure 3.1.

#### 4.2 Implications of the WP agenda

Links to a perspective on Higher Education in which there are pedagogical implications for teaching students from a widening participation orientation

A consistent theme in the data centres around how the pedagogy of Y160 was especially designed and geared towards building confidence and developing skills, acknowledging that the Course was designed to attract a student cohort from a WP orientation. This relates in particular to Research Question 3 (see p:11) in which I explore the impact on Tutors of working with what could essentially be a WP cohort. How Tutors respond to and engage with the WP agenda can have significance for the planning and delivery of learning.

How Tutors engage with the Y160 delivery model and in particular the *Study Diamond* as a pedagogical tool to support learning, is crucial for interpreting Tutors' responses to the research questions on how they adapt and modify the *Study Diamond*. For example, limited understanding of the nature of the Y160 student population could impact on any judgements Tutors make about the pedagogical components of the tool.

However, I begin by reporting on findings from my interview with Course authors in which the original intentions for the *Study Diamond* are revealed and it will be seen that when aligned with the data from the e-Survey and the Interviews, Tutors have a considerable affinity for the client group with whom they are working.

The Course authors devised the *Study Diamond* on the premise of celebrating students' starting points. They saw the four elements (see Figure 1.1) as representing "specific tasks which together form a useful approach for interpreting works", Baugh et al (2006). Starting with "effects", it is suggested that students are encouraged to acknowledge their own viewpoints inferring a non-hierarchical approach to teaching and learning. This was illustrated by a comment from Author C during a discussion around subject-choice for the Art History Module:

*"They (students) are starting from where they are - starting with effects acknowledges that their feelings count. {For example} using the Turner-prize Art was a big risk... because a lot of people are very negative about it but allowing them to say OK you have been using the Study Diamond let's start with the effects part... write down what effect this art has on you the first time you look at it – and they could say well I think it's a lot of rubbish ... that's an appropriate starting point..."*

(Interview Authors, 2007).



The authors saw this as a deliberate *challenge* to the notion of a hierarchical status that might be associated with higher academic study. By 'inviting' students to give their opinion through the 'effects' element of the *Study Diamond* they introduce the idea of alternative perspectives but importantly the student's own viewpoint is given credibility even if the reaction is a negative one. In this sense there is a clear acknowledgement that students may be starting from a less confident stance, as from for example, a widening participation orientation. It also acknowledges the potential for bringing with them a hierarchal perspective of higher education which may be inherent in their approach to learning. The suggestion of a hierarchical status associated with university study is a theme that emerged from the data and is explored further (see Chapter 5) in terms of how Tutors build confidence and motivation and in particular how they apply the *Study Diamond*; but it is appropriate to note here that Tutors expressed empathy for the orientation from which learners may have evolved. For example, in the e-Survey a Tutor explained:

*"I was drawn to {teach on} the course having taken a similar introductory course {myself} with the National Extension College, as a way of getting back into study before taking a degree.... My course was an excellent way of re-building confidence and skills and so I wanted to teach on Openings ... I got so much from doing my own degree".*

(E-survey with Y160 tutors, 2008)

In the data there is a clear sense that all respondents have a connection with the student cohort which appears to be a principle reason for wanting to teach on Y160. A further example can be seen in this extract in response to a question about why tutors choose to teach on *Openings*:

*"I like working with adult learners - I enjoy the course content..{but a}... more important aspect of the course .... is the way in which it helps students to learn how to learn. I am passionate about enabling learners to become autonomous learners who acquire a set of transferable skills".*

(E-survey with Y160 tutors, 2008)

In the comment above, reference is made to what could be broadly termed as study skills – as suggested by the phrase '*learn how to learn*' - thereby acknowledging that students may be coming to Y160 with less experience of higher education study than the more traditional student. The implication of this suggests high importance needs to be placed on study skills, not least when designing and delivering access courses, in order to bridge the perceived gap in skills that is often seen to be associated with a WP client group (see also Chapter 1:1.4). Reference is also made to the importance of autonomy and it could be inferred that when skills are transferable and combined with the notion of autonomy, they are skills for life. The transferability of learning and the notion of critical thinking as an important life skill is discussed later (see Chapter 5) but as this extract suggests, Tutors do have an awareness of their responsibility for delivering more than just subject knowledge on this course.

This is further supported (see Figure 4.1. below) in that the two most popular reasons for Tutors choosing to teach on *Openings* were, interest in the course content but also a desire to work with the client group.

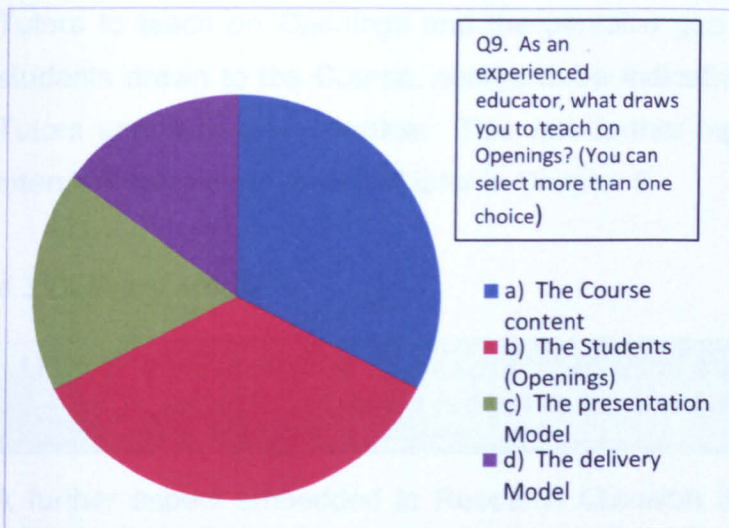


Figure 4.1: Tutors' orientation, Y160 e-survey, 2008

Of least concern or influence were the short duration of the presentations and the flexibility of the telephone delivery model which, one might have assumed, would have been an equally popular incentive.

Nevertheless, as Tutor E remarked:

*"I actually support the University being open and that students can just register. I like the way that Openings is promoted **first**, students are advised to take Openings before going on to a level 1 course"*

(Interviews, 2009).

This echoes an increasing emphasis that is placed on student-centred learning around which distance education has evolved (Beaudoin, 1990) – see also Chapter 2. It also re-emphasises how study skills programmes need to be designed to complement introductory and access courses, taking account of the perceived diversity in the skills-base from which students entering HE might be coming.

However, importantly for this study, the motivation that drives Y160 Tutors to teach on *Openings* and the perceived gap in the skills of students drawn to the Course, seems to be indicative of how Y160 Tutors approach their practice. This was further highlighted in the interview narratives discussed later in Chapter 5.

### 4.3 Delivery Model

Links to a constructivist approach to models of adult learning in which teaching is seen to be dialogic

A further aspect embedded in Research Question 3 relates to the impact the delivery model might have on the how Tutors use and apply the *Study Diamond*. For example, in the interview with Course authors it was revealed that the *Study Diamond* was designed to be repeated, to encourage re-engagement and reflection. Its iterative nature, as opposed to a linear structure, was aimed at: “*stopping them feeling stuck or giving up at the first hurdle*” (Author A, Interview, Authors, 2007).

The thinking behind this approach was to dispel barriers to learning which, as previously discussed, is often associated with a WP client group. In particular, the aim was not to focus on getting ‘right answers’ but for students to recognise there may be several interpretations of a phenomenon. Author A, explains:

*“...so often students think, now how should I be reading this and they immediately doubt their own responses which the poet or artist has been busy trying to provoke through their texts and so it is literally a dysfunctional way of approaching it; but it is hard to break the habit especially for those new to the academic stuff.*”

*They see them (academic writers of the course) as having minds greater than theirs which is why we want to encourage several interpretations; but I find that undergraduate students right up to the highest level find this hard to get”.*

(Interview, Authors, 2007)

This alludes to the notion of an academic hierarchy which learners new to study may perceive as intimidating. Such a perception can operate as a barrier to full engagement with the learning experience and have implications for the design, delivery and assessment of courses (see, also Chapter 5).

However, the opportunity for dialogic discussion afforded through the telephone teaching model was seen as influential in promoting a more equal relationship between tutor and student. It was observed that the scope offered by the design of the *Study Diamond* could be used to prompt discussion, as Author C noted:

*“It (the Study Diamond) facilitates the telephone discussion – it allows for a shared understanding”.*

(Author C, Interview, 2007)

The emphasis here is on the telephone medium helping to lessen hierarchical barriers (in particular when using the *Study Diamond* to generate discussion). This was also reported on in the e-Survey as well as in the Tutor Interviews (see Chapter 5), for example:

*“With a good practitioner it {telephone tutoring} is a great confidence booster for unconfident students - ones that have not had much prior educational experience, who may feel nervous about other students. It {the Study Diamond} also helps practitioners to give really focussed discussion and feedback”.*

(e-Survey, 2008)

Tutors infer a clear sense of 'difference' in the tutor/student relationship when tutoring over the telephone, as opposed to the relationship that emerges from face-to-face tutoring:

*"Telephone tuition works well creating a personal relationship, students feel safe to ask questions and discuss, talk - it's a satisfying way to teach".*

(e-Survey, Tutors, 2008)

The frequency of such comments in the data signals the benefits of telephone tutoring (see also Chapter 2 : 2.3.3) as being particularly pertinent for students from a WP orientation, studying at a distance, perhaps struggling with the unknown world of academia and external pressures of work and family life. A personalised approach to tutoring is therefore even more relevant to a WP student, for example:

*"{You}Can concentrate on one student at a time, their particular needs and interpretations. {You} Can pick up on difficulties that emerge .... and they are usually honest if they don't understand".*

(e-Survey, Tutors, 2008)

However, there was some acknowledgement that such individualised teaching can be demanding and through the interview narratives there is the suggestion that Tutors sometimes take on the mantle of a counsellor rather than that of a tutor (see, Chapter 5 : 5.6). In this sense it is interesting that the quotation above highlights the question of 'honesty', alluding to what in psychoanalytical terms might be associated with the concept of 'positive transference'.

Identified in the context of counselling, it is suggested that telephone counselling increases the likelihood of the receiver (or in this case learner) unconsciously transferring positive feelings and emotions to the counsellor (or tutor), (McLeod, 2004) and thereby is more likely to be honest and truthful. In particular the regularity of the telephone contact and the fact it is also one-to-one (see also Chapter 1) is seen here as facilitating positive relationships. In both the e-Survey and the Interview data there was the suggestion of a less hierarchal relationship emerging as a result of a more 'personalised' interaction but which is also reflective of the personal qualities and presence of the tutor and perhaps (as suggested above) their affinity with the client group, for example:

*“By showing respect for the individual's opinion, the approach helps to build confidence. It's possible to respond to a student's own expressed needs promptly and directly”.* (e-Survey, 2008)

Whilst the above quotation highlights the individual nature of tutoring, there is also a sense of respecting and valuing what adult learners bring with them on the learning journey. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, but essentially, the data supports the view the delivery model allows Tutors to, *“differentiate approaches to respond to a 'range' of students”* (e-Survey, 2008). From the Tutor's perspective they *“can use the same materials in different approaches allowing for {different} levels of students' learning, background, etc.”* (e-Survey, 2008) - alluding to how Tutors adapt the *Study Diamond* to respond to the differing needs of the student cohort (a notion that is especially evident in the interview narratives, see Chapter 5).

Given that Y160 Tutors, as previously discussed, are experienced Lecturers, often holding other teaching posts with other Universities, it is significant this model remains atypical especially as the data and the literature suggests telephone communication has a number of significant advantages. The faceless nature of the contact and the 'increased intimacy' (Grumet, 1979 p:440) that comes from the absence of visual barriers is highlighted in the following observation:

*"...we can under-estimate the extent to which you can deduce things from the voice; it is quite remarkable how much you can tell about the students, not just from how they speak but from the pauses when they are not speaking {which} can give you a lot of information over the phone".*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009).

Reference was also made to the practical advantages of telephone tutoring which has the potential to positively impact on student motivation and retention. For example:

*"I have always enjoyed the flexibility and humanity of this form of teaching. Have taught face-2-face for years mostly working class, sometimes disadvantaged women who have difficulty attending classes regularly; if students are coming in after a day's work they don't always want to go out again!"*

(e-Survey, 2008)

It can be seen therefore that whilst there was some reference in the data to the disadvantages of telephone tutoring which cite the possibility of students being isolated and devoid of interaction with their peers (and possibly therefore developing an over reliance on tutor support), overwhelmingly Tutors point to the advantages telephone tutoring can afford.



In particular Tutors cite the *Study Diamond* as a framework around which a dialogic discussion can be generated which, when coupled with the positive tutor/student relationship (inspired through telephone tutoring), can reduce the perceived hierarchical barriers that can stem from a less affirmative relationship. This suggests a further example of how Tutors are modifying and using the *Study Diamond* in their practice.

#### **4.4 The Pedagogy of the Study Diamond**

Links to the notion of meta-cognition encouraged through the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond*; in particular how 'effects' and 'techniques' lead to a critical perspective

As I am primarily interested in the cultural and pedagogical orientation of the *Study Diamond* rather than exploring the notion of whether it works or not, in my analysis of the interview with Course authors, I separated understanding of the process from its application (Gitlin et al, 1989). In this way the data from the interview with authors gave me a base line from which I could compare and contrast Tutors' responses to questions around how they pedagogically modify and adapt the *Study Diamond* in their practice (relates specifically to Research Questions 1 and 2, see p:11).

As previously inferred, linguistic clues in the authors' responses revealed that significant emphasis at the design stage was placed on:-

- understanding the intended WP audience – for example:  
*"We wrote the course assuming the student has no level of experience, they are possibly going to be at a lower level of confidence; they are starting from where they are"* (Author B, Interview, 2007);

- pedagogical structures to support delivery – for example:  
*“The Study Diamond works in a constructivist sense in that students and tutors are collaborative researchers”*  
 (Author C, Interview, 2007);
  
- integration of study skills – for example:  
*“it {study skills} was integrated into the course but we felt as a course team that study skills were too important and in fact the course material was too important to try and integrate them in an artificial way”*  
 (Author A, Interview, 2007).

In terms of applied strategies, as revealed above, embedded in the Course and in particular the *Study Diamond* was the notion of a constructivist approach in which emphasis was placed on:-

- learners examining their own meta-cognition – for example:  
*“from the word go, this Diamond requires the students to look at their own thinking, it requires them to be critically self-aware of what is happening to them, what effect the poem or the historical question, or painting or installation has on them”* ;  
 (Author B, Interview, 2007);
  
- a learning process that encourages a ‘change of mind’ – for example:  
*“It was an idea as well that when you have processed your way through all the different points of the Study Diamond quite a few times... your perception of the effects changes as a result of a better understanding...”* (Author A, Interview, 2007).

In this sense the authors clearly saw the *Study Diamond* as a repetitive process.

Whilst the Y160 guidance does point students towards starting with 'effects', the authors' agreed the aim was to promote reflection and a re-examination of ideas. This was explained as being notably the one thing that was different about the *Study Diamond* compared to other pedagogical devices. The concept of processing information or ideas in a non-linear fashion through the four elements a number of times was clarified as 'problematizing' the questions (Interview, Authors, 2007) – see also Chapter 5.

Multiple interpretations or meanings and acknowledging the existence of other perspectives, notably sought to steer students away from seeking the 'right answer' and, as Author A explained:

*"Thus you move closer to an academic viewpoint so that you would actually make progression".*

(Author A, Interviews, 2007)

The 'you' referenced in the above quotation refers to how the authors anticipated and had evidence of Tutors working with the *Study Diamond* and how it aims to effect a transformation in students' thinking. However, there is also a suggestion that an 'academic way of thinking' was not necessarily what the authors set out to achieve. For example Author A went on to say:

*"...but actually I really don't like that because it's doing something that really we tried not to do! However, there is a sense in which this has to be true – for a start if it gives students more than one interpretation they are already starting to think about it in a more academic way, you give them this very liberal way of exploring their feelings ....."*

(Author A, Interviews, 2007)

Inferred in these statements, as discussed previously, is that the 'academic style' can sometimes be viewed negatively (see also Chapter 5) but it is interesting that the authors seem to also associate such a 'style' with the notion of alternative perspectives (achieved through the pedagogy of 'context') and a 'liberalising' of thinking (see also Chapters 2 and 5). Describing the development process of such skills or mindsets, Author D spoke of the distinction between simple "structured {learning} domains and complex structured {learning} domains":

*"...you build up your knowledge on a case by case basis, you don't start with the application of rules like in mathematics and then apply them on any new cases... its built on a case by case and you build up knowledge and so with the Study Diamond it allows you a framework in which to house each new case... so there is an element of security there and you can gradually build up a bigger range of knowledge but still within that framework .... we were working on looking at how that cognitive process and the process of reflection can work together in acknowledging the fact that meanings will change and your impact on it will change – you will never feel the same as the first time when you first encountered any of these texts..."*

(Author D, Interview, 2007)

As well as the notion of scaffolding learning (Vygotsky, 1978), there is some correlation here with Habermas's (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) notion of instrumental and communicative learning discussed in more detail in Chapter 5. Essentially, 'instrumental' and 'communicative' learning domains see learning as a means of developing skills that lead to an awareness of alternative perspectives through which is achieved the third domain, 'emancipation' (p:10).

In the interview narratives, Tutors refer to a clear sense of using the element of *'effects'* to generate students' enquiry into the technical elements of meaning. That is, the 'structured' or 'instrumental' skills needed to create a phenomenon and further how they use the element of *'context'* to introduce more complex thinking about a phenomenon that can lead to generating different and therefore more critical perspectives (see, Chapter 5).

In response to the e-Survey questions about how Tutors explain the elements of the *Study Diamond* to their students (relates specifically to Research Question 1, see p:11), the following was an interesting response in which the distinctiveness of the *'effects'* element of the *Study Diamond* is highlighted:

*"...most courses bypass the 'effects' area which is a huge advantage of the Study Diamond; gives students a tool for linking and testing their own responses and contextual knowledge before arriving at an interpretation"*

(e-Survey, 2008)

In the data, Tutors commented on how *'effects'* prompted the notion of students' analysing their own ideas but the above comment alludes also to an emergent suggestion this was not the norm in arts focussed courses, students are not often given the space or opportunity to reflect on their own opinions. Also inferred was the notion that the element of *'effects'* is symbiotic with the way in which Tutors teach a critical perspective starting, initially, from the confident stance of students' own opinions then progressing to consideration of alternative perspectives. This was especially evident through the interview narratives and illustrates how Tutors differentiate and adapt their interpretation of *'effects'* to connect with the individual characteristics of their students (see, Chapter 5).

#### **4.5 The Study Diamond as a Framework**

As inferred previously, in the data can be seen repeated references to the *Study Diamond* as a framework. Comments were made in connection with its structure or seeing it as a process and how it helps to organise thinking (see, Chapter 5). In particular, the four elements were seen as a structured approach which then translates into a writing frame. For example, on the Tutor-to-Tutor e-Forum, a Tutor reported on how one of his/her students had found the *Study Diamond* useful for writing essays. The dialogue thread was continued by another Tutor who commented:

*"I'm finding the same thing with my A103 students. Members of the group, who have studied Y160, and thus the diamond, have been leading the others. I must say too that I have myself slipped into thinking in terms of the categories, when involved in art history or poetry".*

Similarly...

*"I've used the diamond concept for several years in A103 tutorials and it works well for art history, literature, music and architecture, giving students a framework within which to build their analyses".*

(Extracts from the Tutor e-Forum archive, 2007-2010)

The reference to A103 relates to the Open University's 'Introduction to Humanities' Course which at the time was a suitable progression course for students who had completed Y160. A103 has since been discontinued and replaced with AA100 'Arts Past and Present' (<http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/a103/text/index.html>). The inference in both extracts underpins the purpose of Research Question 2 (see, p:11).

Understanding how Tutors modify or adapt the *Study Diamond* to connect with the three disciplines builds on the notion that it has potential to be used beyond the confines of Y160 and across other arts disciplines. The Tutor reported here, asserts that the framework has become embedded in his/her teaching of Arts and Humanities, reaffirming the *Study Diamond* as a teaching framework but also inferring its potential for cross-discipline study. But as suggested above, there are frequent references in the data that specifically highlight its usefulness for organising writing:

*“It gives a framework to students’ responses to poetry and art and enables them to structure assignments clearly”.* (e-Survey, 2008)

Introducing the notion of the framework as having benefits for structuring academic writing (see also Chapter 5, 5.9).

In response to questions directly relating to how Tutors teach ‘*techniques*’ and ‘*context*’ (relates to Research Question 1, see p:11), all reported ‘*techniques*’ as being in some way the identification of the technical aspects of how phenomena is produced thereby students gaining an understanding of the literary, painterly and for history, the research skills of an historian. In terms of ‘*context*’, most tutors reported on directing students to the contextual orientation of the phenomenon thereby raising awareness of potential bias or prior assumptions made by the producer. In this way Tutors use the element of ‘*context*’ to introduce the notion of criticality. However, clear references were made to how Tutors modify or adapt the concepts when moving through the different disciplines of the course:

*“I use it in different ways for different disciplines. With the poetry I find it much easier as a learning tool to start with but also as a sort of “ice breaker...”*

(Tutor E, Interviews 2009)

This was particularly evident when discussing how they use the framework in History. For example, it was suggested that the concepts embedded in 'effects' are more accessible in poetry and art history than they are when thinking about history. That is, it is easier to have an opinion about a poem or painting than it is to have a reaction to the complex political, cultural and social historical position of Burma (Tutor A, Interviews, 2009).

Nevertheless in the Interview data it can be seen how Tutors use a dialogic approach to discuss the evaluative skills of an historian and in doing so change the concepts of 'techniques' and 'effects' to represent the differences in disciplines - in this case the pedagogies of History.

Essentially however, permeating the data, was the notion that all four elements, working iteratively, are important to the framework and that they can be accessed at any point in the enquiry.

Importantly too, Tutors identified the connectivity of each element as relating to the different perspectives needed for structuring an argument. This was especially evident in the Tutor interview narratives (see Chapter 5) and can be seen as having underpinned the original design, as Author A explained:

*"Part of what informed the bit of teaching strategy that I brought to it {the Study Diamond} was teaching philosophy because when philosophy is taught well it teaches students not only to produce a better argument but also to be able to see more than just one position and to articulate those as well - that definitely informed the nature of the Study Diamond, particularly starting with effects and then looking for other elements of what is going on"*

(Author A, Interview, 2007)



The link here to philosophy, another discipline taught in the Open University Arts faculty, has particular relevance for students moving on from *Openings* to other arts courses. Philosophy is included in AA100, a popular multi-disciplinary course onto which, as mentioned earlier, many Y160 students progress.

Similarly:

*“It {the Study Diamond} helps students think carefully about poetry and art works and approach them analytically. {It} Helps them to see the connections between the four corners {elements} and that taking a range of approaches {perspectives} leads to a richer analysis and understanding”.*

(e-Survey, 2008)

The notion of ‘a richer analysis’ when the principles of the four elements are considered together, offers some insight into how Tutors’ interpret and understand the concept of criticality. It also strengthens the idea of the *Study Diamond* as a ‘language’ for articulating the skills and processes embedded in critical thinking. This is discussed further in Chapter 5 but for now, it supports the view that the *Study Diamond* is a useful teaching tool for introducing the component skills of analysis.

In summary, emerging from the data is the assertion there are a number of ways in which the *Study Diamond* framework can be used pedagogically. Key points repeatedly emphasised by Tutors draw attention to how they work with each element as an independent concept but also that the recursive nature allows for progressive learning if students ‘get struck’ at any one point – an important concept in terms of developing confidence and removing potential barriers to learning. Conversely, Tutors use the framework as a whole, emphasising the connectivity of each element as a way of working through and analysing a phenomenon.

Ultimately, Tutors use the language of the *Study Diamond* for articulating what is needed in order to critically analyse phenomena. Out of the four elements, 'effects' can be seen as being important meta-cognitively, and 'context' in terms of developing a critical perspective.

## Chapter 5

### 5. DISCUSSION

#### 5.1 Introduction

From the data it is clear Tutors modify and adapt the *Study Diamond* to connect with the three disciplines of Y160. This is principally achieved through its pedagogical approach but is enhanced and to some extent made possible because of its design and importantly the delivery model of Y160. In their modification and adaptation of the *Study Diamond*, they draw on the known characteristics and prior learning of their students thereby situating the learning within a context that has relevance and meaning.

When reflecting on findings therefore it is important to take account of the background and teaching context of this study (see Chapter 1). Y160 is an Arts access course aimed primarily at students new to higher education and/or who may be approaching a discipline for the first time. In this sense, findings will be of most interest to practitioners involved in HE access or foundation teaching in the faculties of Arts and Humanities and whose practice is informed by the influences of widening participation. This discussion will also be relevant to practitioners interested in the concept of critical thinking or in teaching approaches that support distance learning, given that Tutors' experiences stem from what I consider to be an under-exploited medium for delivering learning. Therefore the peripheral themes of telephone tutoring as well as the concepts of transformative learning and integration of study skills - which emerged from the richness of the data elicited during the Tutor interviews - will also contribute to the overall discussion in this Chapter.

In presenting my analysis of the Tutor interview narratives in the following account, I have used lengthy and sometimes complete extracts from the interviews to enable the reader to hear the voices of the Tutors in the context of how their teaching experiences were described to me in the interviews. These extracts have been boxed and highlighted to distinguish the narratives from other reported qualitative data.

Further, in the discussion, and as a process of refinement, I have drawn on common structures and ideas within the reported narratives and grouped them together under relevant headings to synthesise findings with other data, literature themes, and my own teaching experiences. In this respect a phenomenological reflection is offered.

### ***5.2 Models of Adult Learning : The Theory of Transformation***

Given that the *Study Diamond* represents an approach to analysis and interpretation (Baugh et al, 2006) for which in academic terms a critical awareness is required, I asked Tutors during the interviews how they used the four elements of the *Study Diamond* in their teaching of critical analysis. Tutors alluded to the dialectic discussions they have with their students which, when framed around the *Study Diamond*, enables them to introduce the subject matter of the tutorial. For example:

*“..it (the Study Diamond) enables me to talk about the poetry and draw people in who perhaps haven’t looked at poetry since they were at school or who don’t even remember looking at poetry at all; so the very first ‘effects’ I think is a super way, most people can say something about a poem”.*

(Tutor E, Interviews, 2009).

Here the Tutor is alluding to how he/she encourages students to reflect on what they may already know about a phenomenon or what their first impressions might be, signaling that the experience and understanding they bring with them is valued. In this way the importance of the 'effects' element is significant in building students' confidence. The notion of 'inviting' students to voice their opinion draws on the concept of empowerment suggesting a democratic and participatory pedagogy in which the tutor values the student's contribution (Shor, 1992). However, it is to be noted that the Tutor needs to provide the stimuli or develop activities that will bring to the learner's recall, the ideas and knowledge that will inform new thinking or help address a perceived problem (Knowles, 2005), see also Chapter 2.

In this respect Tutors point to applying the *Study Diamond* to introduce critical awareness, signposting to the concepts embedded in the elements of 'techniques' and in particular 'contexts'. For example:

*"It (the Study Diamond) encapsulates the critical appraisal process for poetry and art, leading students to view this as a process of refinement from initial personal response (which all art aims for) through a deconstruction of techniques and context to an 'objective' interpretation based on those techniques. For history the emphasis is slightly different (effects are not quite so personal perhaps) but the framework gives a sound model for a methodical approach to historical analysis".*

(e-Survey, 2008)

Here reference is made not only to applying the framework as a whole but also to the repetitive nature of the analysis process.

The Tutor uses the structure of the *Study Diamond* to encourage students to review and refine their initial reaction. There is an inference here that students need to do this in part themselves but as seen in the reported narratives, this process is stimulated and developed through dialogic discourse. Reformation of the perceived 'problem' does not in itself constitute dialogic teaching but requires meta-reflection, discussion and even 'arguing about' (Wolfe and Alexander, 2008) before true transformation can occur.

The element of 'techniques', posed as a question (see Chapter 6 : Figure 6.1) encourages the learner to engage with the Y160 course materials thereby discovering the discipline-specific techniques that are used by the producer of the poem, text or work of art. An example of this can be seen in Tutor B's explanation of how by working with the *Study Diamond* (and in particular providing additional information to enhance the 'context') students really engaged with the topic:

*"I start off by reading the Ted Hughes poem, but they (then) find it a revelation when you use the Study Diamond with them; they say to me that they didn't realise there was so much in it; I give them biographical information about how he {Ted Hughes} was on the farm with his second wife etc. etc. and his second wife's father was the farm manager and the fact that he was in Devon in the West of England, I even suggest that the cows might have been brown that's why they look like blood in the sun set or the dusk. They say to me that they didn't realise there was so much, it's packed full of meaning, far more than they thought at first".*

(Tutor B, Interviews, 2009)

This illustrates how the Tutor uses a dialectic approach to teaching 'context' (the biographical information about the poet) and 'techniques' (the use of figurative or metaphorical language) to enhance meaning.

Identifying the different 'techniques' used to develop a phenomenon could be considered to be 'concept formation', or the hook on which to hang a range of ideas associated with literary techniques. For example, in the extract above the tutor alludes to the potential use of allegory by the poet to generate specific effects on the reader. In this sense the 'concept' can be seen as a way of organising information about a particular event, idea or procedure which is brought together under a particular label or term (Marzano et al, 1988) – in this example the term is 'techniques' of which one concept could be allegorical or figurative language.

Specialist words used to describe a specific technique or process could be considered to be part of an individual's vocabulary and can be seen as an outward demonstration of that individual's 'store of concepts' (Marzano et al, 1988). Subsequently, the store of concepts can then be used and/or applied to access a poem, text or work of art which in the past has perhaps been inaccessible. Such an analogy is inferred in the following explanation in which the Tutor alludes to how the *Study Diamond* is a framework that can be used to house a 'store of concepts':

*"I liken it {the Study Diamond} to the scientific method, if you are studying science there is an approach that you take, it's called the scientific method, it has historical validity and all of your science courses will use this particular experiential model; in studying the arts, in my background, historically there has been no framework to hang things onto in the same way as the scientific method. The Study Diamond is perfect as an approach and I encourage students to latch on to this, try it out and you will see it works in all sorts of circumstances"*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)

This interesting comparison to the scientific method of analysis is useful in terms of highlighting the structured approach to enquiry that pervades the science disciplines but also the perceived lack of such a dominant framework in the arts. In particular the notion of 'hooks' on which learners can hang information is reflective of the concepts structure identified by Marzano et al (1988) and which is seen as an essential aspect of the thinking process for organising information.

In the previous quotation, Tutor B's use of the expression 'a *revelation*' hints at the sense of fulfilment learners' gain from a greater understanding of the poem. Significantly, it is the act of connecting how the literary techniques achieve the perceived effects on the reader that leads to greater understanding and enjoyment. In this sense the Tutor is actively engaging in the construction of meaning through the fusion of the elements of '*techniques*', '*context*' and '*effects*' to generate a critical interpretation or '*meaning*'.



Simultaneously, there is a sense the learner is experiencing a developing realisation of their own learning (meta-cognition) through progressive engagement in the thinking process that underpins deep learning (Entwistle, 2000; Lea and Street, 1998; Puxley, 2008). Interestingly, threaded throughout the data is the suggestion of a link between the change that occurs and the development of a critical perspective. The inference is that Y160 has a significant impact on learners, the like of which *“isn't as visible so dramatically in other courses”* (e-survey, 2008). Such an outcome of learning highlights the “transforming quality of education” as posited by Peters (1973 p:19) and Mezirow and Associates (2000) which, it could be argued, is generated by the notion of deep learning that is associated with higher academic discourse and which embraces a more sceptical and questioning way of thinking.

### **5.3 Barriers to Learning**

As previously inferred, Tutors use the pedagogy of ‘effects’ to change mind sets about a topic or activity. For example, Tutors spoke of the perceived uniqueness of asking students for their initial responses:

*“...I have had a number of students who have said how lovely it was to be asked their opinion for the poetry; they have had negative experiences of poetry at school largely because they were just told to analyse it and nobody ever said “well what do you think about it. Do you like it”? They generally said “it doesn't matter what you think about it ...you just have to analyse it” and of course that would have turned them off. But fortunately because the Study Diamond starts with effects from the very beginning, they can actually value the response which they give to the poems which transforms the way they react to them”.*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)

This example draws on a model of learning where educators attempt to move students from what I would suggest is 'familiar' ground to 'unfamiliar' ground. That is, starting from a basis of 'inviting' students through participatory dialogue to talk about or comment on something with which they are familiar and which is often centred around everyday activity. Throughout the data Tutors inferred that often past experiences affect students' will or desire to engage with a topic and that they can feel disempowered because of their lack of the necessary skills to articulate or indeed write about their reaction to a phenomenon (e-Survey, 2008; Tutor Interviews, 2009). Whilst in adult education, a student's past experience can be considered of value to educators to enhance the learning experience (Brookfield, 2005; Shor, 1992) there is no guarantee that past experiences always leave positive memories. Formally held beliefs and ideas can be deep rooted in previous negative experiences of education (Hanson, 1996) and can impact on student confidence and their perceptions of their own capabilities.

The following narrative illustrates how one Tutor uses a model of learning embedded in the pedagogy of 'effects' to help students overcome barriers to essay writing:

*"At the early stage if they are not certain about their writing abilities I say to them write to me about your job or hobby, write about what you know about very well. I don't always do that but if they express the feeling that they are not up to it, before they start the TMAs {tutor marked assignments} I ask them to do me a little bit of writing.... for example, one of my students was a retired gilder (hymn books, prayer books and the like) and he wrote a detailed description of gilding; it had a beginning, a middle and an end and he didn't even have to be told about it (the structure).*

*Another man was working for a mobile phone company in London. His job was customer services. He hated them, he had these city people coming in buying mobile phones and he wrote the most brilliant piece about these people being rather cocky and treating him as a sales assistant and with contempt”.*

*(Tutor B, Interviews, 2009)*

This example illustrates how the Tutor has used a dialogic approach (Shor, 1992) by initiating and directing a discussion around a subject with which the student feels confident. Drawing on the student's lifeworld experience (Habermas, 2006) of gilding the Tutor was able to steer the student into thinking about the subject rather than the action of writing which was proving to be the barrier. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the student drew on his existing writing skills to write about something with which he was familiar. This enabled the Tutor to identify areas for development but importantly to increase or even restore confidence.

Similarly, as with the second student (who worked for the mobile phone company), writing about something that stirred emotions stimulated 'creative self-expression' (Lillis, 2001. p:164) and situated the task in a context with which the student felt secure and was therefore more likely to succeed.

Further, linking the writing task to something that was relevant seems to be key to generating motivation and engagement. A number of tutors identified the notion of relevance, for example:

*“most university courses in Literature and Art History simply bypass the initial reaction stage and thus lay themselves wide open to charges of irrelevance”*

*(e-Survey, 2008).*

Subsequently, in the example of the writing task, the Tutor was able to gain a sense of each student's starting point and give formative feedback on their writing capabilities prior to the submission of the first marked assignment. This enabled key areas to be worked on so that students approached their first assignment more confidently given, in particular, that the first essay was seen to be the biggest hurdle for students to overcome (e-Survey, 2008).

In this illustration can be seen an established teaching philosophy that builds confidence by acknowledging what adult learners bring with them on their learning journey (Knowles, 1983) and importantly, recognising learners 'starting points' (Baugh et al, 2006). Such a philosophy can be seen as being embedded in the element of 'effects' which Tutors appear to use interchangeably throughout their teaching on Y160.

However, within the pedagogy of 'effects' is something more than just drawing on students' real world experiences (Knowles, 1983). It embraces a less hierarchical pedagogy than that which is more traditionally associated with higher education (Shor, 1992, see also Chapter 2) and is more egalitarian in nature realised, as suggested, through the one-to-one telephone communication (e-Survey 2008; Interviews, 2009).

So whilst Tutors may use the 'effects' element of the *Study Diamond* as a 'way-in' to a previously barred or unreachable topic, it is through 'context' and 'techniques' that they introduce the concept of critical thinking.

#### **5.4 Critical Thinking and the pedagogy of the Study Diamond**

In the data there is the suggestion that Tutors use the pedagogy of 'context' to steer students towards asking the 'why' and 'when' questions.

In this sense too there is further indication that the teaching approach employed is moving away from a lecture-based, knowledge transmission model to one in which knowledge is collectively constructed by the tutor and student (Mercer, 2008).

'Context' is explained as a way of exposing the assumptions and influences that may be embedded in or have contributed to the development of the phenomenon, raising awareness of the potential for other perspectives. As one Tutor explained:

*".. {I} stress the importance of context as part of the overall whole but {that its} not the whole story; ... I ask them {students} questions related to production and consumption, to relate poems to time and place, when, where, why and for whom; ... information concerning the events in question - people, place, time politics, artistic movements, cultural events".*

(e-survey, 2008)

In this way Tutors encourage students to adopt a critical perspective as exemplified in the following narrative in which the Tutor is explaining the concept of reliability of historical sources:

*"I say "Let's use the Study Diamond with an individual source say, a film clip from the Pilger documentary, and let's think about what effect this has on you when you watch the clip; then think about the film techniques that are used in order to create those effects; (the course book talks about that anyway) and then we talk about context in terms of what we know about Pilger, his reputation; and then the meaning is "what do you think is the message that Pilger is aiming to get across to you as the viewer of the film"; "who produced the film and why" ...."was it in order to put a particular line or message across about the situation in Burma"?"*

*Most students are very happy with this approach because it makes a lot of sense and is straight forward. However, Learning Outcomes 1 and 2 (are about) reliability of sources and students' understanding of that notion and if they can apply it. ....So I now move away from talking about individual sources and instead talk about sources in more general terms in the sense of thinking about techniques as being the way in which a source is put together or are written (if a written source) in terms of the vocabulary used to achieve a particular effect. In the case of Pilger it would be the choice of particular film shots in order to create a specific affect I try to get them to think about the issue of reliability of that technique in more general terms.*

*It is one of the more trickier aspects in getting students to realise the importance of the reliability... difficult mainly because they tend to assume as they are given high quality materials to work from, why should they question their reliability anyway!"*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)

This example clearly illustrates a didactic discourse between tutor and student. There is a sense from the tone that the exchange is conducted in a non-threatening manner. Although probing questions are used, this appears to be managed as a conversation, cultivating a participatory pedagogy that evokes peripheral participation and collective construction of knowledge (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Mercer, 2008). As ideas start to build, there is a clear sense of the Tutor asking questions and engaging in a 'problem-posing' dialogue (Shor, 1992 p:237) which to some extent is to elicit knowledge from the student but not in the context of looking for right answers (Mercer, 2008). Rather, in the sense of the Tutor adapting the elements of the *Study Diamond* to a different subject area, in this case History.

In this way, the Tutor employs the notion of 'end coding' to help student "recall" and therefore "rehearsal" of the links (Marzano et al, 1988, p:90) between the *Study Diamond* elements. The repetitiveness of the *Study Diamond* also acts as reinforcement of understanding of the concepts.

Such a pedagogy originates from the work of Dewey and Piaget who promoted an 'inquiring education' which is student-centred and a learning approach in which meaning is *constructed* (Shor, 1992 p:237). Further there is a clear sense of how the Tutor has modified the concepts of the *Study Diamond* to fit with History. That is, seeing '*techniques*' as the enquiring skills of an historian but carrying forward the 'hooks' embedded in literary techniques to critically evaluate historical texts which, in this example, is also adapted to the visual imagery of film.

Whilst this was not a recording of an actual conversation between Tutor and Student, and consideration needs to be given to its perceived limitation as an 'espoused theory' (Argyris and Schön, 1974 – see also, Chapter 3:3.3; 3.4 and Chapter 6) nevertheless, the detailed recall and the suggestion of actual dialogue, provides a realistic indication of the kind of regular exchange this tutor has with his/her students.

Interestingly, the Tutor also points to a perceived acceptance by students that course materials will always be accurate and reliable and therefore not open to question. Relating to what Brookfield (2005) calls 'reflective emancipation' (see Figure 2.3 Component 4: Reflection Intrinsically and Extrinsically). This is seen in the context of having a healthy questioning approach and not assuming all information is necessarily factual because of its perceived hierarchical academic status/source (see also Chapter 2).

An essential component of Y160 is to see things in a different way so whilst students start with exploring 'effects' in relation to their own feelings, they are also encouraged to consider and reflect on other viewpoints by "trying to think how it might have different effects on other people", (Baugh et al, 2006 p:20). In order to do this Tutors, as well as using the individual components of the *Study Diamond*, also apply the framework holistically as a process. Working through all the elements of the *Study Diamond* leads to an awareness of other perspectives, as a Tutor explained:

*"... unprepared, I ask the student to 'pick a haiku, any haiku' from the resource booklet and we discuss it in terms of the Study Diamond - much as we did at the original Course Briefing. I'm able to encourage the student to value their personal, immediate response as 'effects', {then} to use their recent study to explore 'techniques', I generally have the advantage with 'context' at this point; then we come to 'meaning' together not necessarily agreeing!"*

*(Extract from Tutor e-Forum archive, 2007-2010).*

In this way the Tutor is introducing the possibility of different interpretations resulting from the different 'effect' a poetic technique might have on the reader (and/or in the case of Haiku, the way in which the poem has been translated). Significant, as exemplified in the last line, is the part 'context' (in this case Buddhism) can play in generating alternative perspectives.

Whilst it could be said that a sense of increased confidence results from students seeing the value of their own opinions as in 'effects', 'context' can be seen to play a vital part in prompting comparison to or consideration of other interpretations.



Having the vision as well as the capacity to consider different ways of viewing existing ideas and practices, frees up an individual's capacity for reflection (Brookfield, 1987). Being aware of different contexts, for example what might seem the norm to one person, would not necessarily be viewed as normal to another, demands the capacity to move beyond a previously held belief system and embrace a different perspective (Brookfield, 1987). Similarly, awareness of influences that can impact on the development of an idea and mould the thought process but also impact on interpretation and meaning (Brookfield, 1987), is what constitutes a broad understanding of context. An awareness of context therefore can be seen as an underpinning component of what it means to think critically (see Figure 2.3, Component 3 – Awareness of Dominant Domains that influence thinking).

Whilst, as previously discussed, the 'effects' element of the *Study Diamond* invites an initial reaction, Tutors point to how they then apply 'techniques' and 'context' together, which is key in providing the understanding that moves students from writing descriptively to writing which is more analytical. For example Tutor A, in describing how the *Study Diamond* works as an analytical tool, explains that:

*"The main reason it works so well (in poetry and art history) is that it forces students to look at their reaction to a work of art, the effects of the visual image; but also to connect with that and bring that along to their analysis. That is what is so often lacking amongst professional art historians (they) describe rather than analyse ... but the thing, the specific thing that the Study Diamond really does it encourages the student to analyse their own reactions, that's where I think it really counts"*

(Tutor A, Interviews, 2009).

By starting with their own reaction and analysing how that reaction was formed, students are able to contextualise the learning at a very personal level. Using their own reaction to a phenomenon, in order to understand '*techniques*' and '*context*', they have a more obvious and logical connection with the concepts. This process is reflective of a cognitive constructivist model of learning in which the focus shifts from knowledge that is *given* (albeit may be representative of a learner's own environment) to knowledge that is actively *constructed* individually by the learner (Trusting and Barton, 2006).

In this sense the *Study Diamond* can be seen as an iterative model. Facilitated by a dialectic discourse with the Tutor, the student moves through the elements revisiting, reflecting and reassessing previously held assumptions based on new knowledge or experiences (see Figure 2.3, Component 1: Challenges Assumptions; Is Open to New Ideas).

If a student cannot identify any '*effects*' or ideas for the meaning of for example a Haiku poem, the tutor will guide the student towards starting with '*techniques*' – exploring the 9 Rules of Haiku construction – or with '*context*' – looking at the 4 key concepts of Buddhism - therefore any of the four elements can be used as a starting point (e-Survey 2008; Interviews 2009). An example of this can be seen in the following in which a Tutor is speaking about his/her own use of the process:

*"I use the Study Diamond myself when I go to galleries, I have found myself using it even in front of pieces of art I am familiar with and if I do it with 'Full Moon and Little Frieda' (Hughes,1995) which I know very well, each time I can pick up something new by applying the Study Diamond. It works in an iterative cycle and you go round and round and round in the same way you do with reflective practice"*

(Tutor C, Interviews, 2009)

Interestingly, in this extract the *Study Diamond* is compared to reflective practice and the cyclical process of reframing the problem (Schön, 1987). In this sense it can be seen there is an analogy with how reflection-on-action allows for the practitioner to make mistakes or get something wrong (Schön, 1987) and the element of ‘effects’, in which learners are encouraged to change their mind about a phenomenon as new understanding is generated.

However, Tutors also noted the elements of the *Study Diamond* are not in themselves evidence of understanding. Using the terms without synthesising the concepts would not demonstrate understanding. As a tutor explained:

*“The techniques are tools used by the poet to create meaning and effect - I suggest {to students} there is only a point in mentioning them in the essay if they {the students} link them to the effects and meaning of the poem”*

(Tutor e-Survey, 2009)

The Tutor is inferring here to what I also frequently experience in teaching. Students will use terminology and language from the course materials without explanation or obvious demonstration of understanding.

However, in the following narrative it can be seen how a Tutor again relates learning to an everyday context in order to generate understanding of the theoretical components of the specialist terms:

*"When I am trying to explain the effects and techniques I say 'have you seen the movie Jaws (98% say OK).... so you are sitting at home or in the cinema, you can see this man swimming in the water you, the audience, can also see a white mechanical shark under the water the man cannot see it ... then the music starts; it cuts backwards and forwards between the man swimming, the shark and the people on the beach - what is the effect of that? ...it's frightening even though you know you are in a dry comfortable theatre or sitting room ... that is because the Director is pulling your strings... if he had played the Blue Danube Waltz the effect would not have been the same .. it's the music, the visual cutting and the irony of you knowing something that the character in the movie doesn't know. So I am not talking here about poetry, history or art I am saying this {the Study Diamond} is applicable here ... listen to a piece of music, watch a play on television,{consider} what effect it has on you"*

*(Tutor C, Interviews, 2009)*

In this example, the Tutor is demystifying the academic concepts of *effects* and *techniques*. Illustrating to the student how 'effects' are created through the 'techniques' used in the film, situates the learning within a familiar context. Conversely, this example illustrates how analytical skills, embedded in the concepts can be applied to and have relevance for thinking beyond the context of the course. So whilst in this sense learning can occur by drawing on and enlarging upon existing frames of reference to introduce new ideas (Mezirow and Associates, 2000), the concept of applying critical thinking to an everyday context supports the view that it can become integral to the thinking process itself (McPeck, 1990).

### **5.5 Informative and transformative learning**

As suggested above, Tutors illustrate or analogue the four elements with everyday examples, modifying and adapting the process as they progress through the three different subject areas. For example:

*"When I talk about it {the Study Diamond} first of all – I sometimes say 'have you got a car.. what effects does that car give you when you see it outside of your house, car park etc., why does it give you that feeling, those thoughts, that impression – is it the design, the age, and so on' – the Tutor then describes how together they analysed the background to the design of the car, "Italy, narrow streets, cheap petrol... not {designed} for long distance journeys ", and conclude that by analysing the brand and design reveals its purpose. Conversely, the Tutor explains, "if it was a huge Mercedes, this gives the impression of power, importance' and the techniques used here are 'weight, size, wealth" .... "I also try to explain to them that if a person is playing guitar music very fast, like Spanish dancing, it's exciting the brain, the technique is its fast rhythm and up-beat melody which has one effect but if it is slow, sad, reflective music like in the Deer Hunter and you feel sad, quiet or reflective, the 'technique' used here is still rhythm – that seems to make the point otherwise they can't separate effect from technique".*

(Tutor B, Interviews, 2009).

As with the earlier narrative, the Tutor draws on a concept with which the student is familiar. Using once again an 'instrumental' approach (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) - problem-posing and questioning – as the student is encouraged to think more deeply about the purpose, motivation and assumptions behind the manufacture and design of vehicles. In this way, using and more importantly *applying*, the concepts embedded in the *Study Diamond*.

The learning that takes place has the potential to then be recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner (Kolb & Kolb, 2005) utilising the learner's existing frame of reference (Mezirow and Associates, 2000). This reflects a 'situated' pedagogy (Shor, 1992, p:106) which draws on the concept of, teachers as facilitators of person-centred learning (Rogers, 1957).

But also, given that as the student is not just learning about information but is actually seeing it applied in different contexts, this increases the potential for transformational learning in its truest sense, to occur (Kegan, 2000). It is argued there are two kinds of learning, 'informative and transformative' (Kegan, 2000, p:50). Informative results in 'changes in what we know', whilst transformative affects 'changes to how we know' (p:50). It is perceived that genuine transformation will involve changes to the way in which an individual responds to and absorbs knowledge, as perhaps suggested by the above example. That is, seeing or applying new knowledge in a context that is outside the course materials. In this illustration it could be argued that the Tutor is not just increasing the student's bank of knowledge about '*affects*' and '*techniques*' which could be viewed as being at an instrumental level but rather, by applying academic concepts to a non-academic context, the Tutor is encouraging a critical reflective process in which learning is transferred, combining what is perceived to be instrumental learning with the more complex notion of communicative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000; see also Chapter 2).

Taking the premise that critical thinking is an element of the thinking process, it can be seen that when ways of knowing are changed from what could be considered non-critical and accepting, to a critical, sceptical perspective, a transformation in the thinking process, as posited by Kegan (2000), Brookfield (1987) and Mezirow and Associates (2000), can occur.

The comment below is a further example of Tutors' perceiving a change in students, this time in relation to Haiku poetry:

*"I have had quite a few who were not very keen but, particularly when they have done the Haiku, they say that they have found it very interesting and want to write their own Haiku – I can't say that happens to everybody but it happens sufficiently often on a lot of presentations I have taught to be able to say that I am convinced that the Study Diamond can unlock the student's interest and enthusiasm and not having that tool it might not have happened".*

*(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)*

In this example the learning is not seen as being applied to a different context as such, but the notion of transformational learning is inferred by the suggestion that students want to write their own Haiku so in this sense learning is applied outside the original context in which it was gained, evidencing a broadening of the frame of reference (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) around which the student will now perceive poetry.

In relation to History, as previously inferred, there is a need to adapt the *Study Diamond* to fit with the discipline, and in particular 'effects' is seemingly problematic, requiring a more dialectic discourse. Nevertheless, an interesting thread on the topic of using the *Study Diamond* in the context of History was captured on the Tutor e-Forum:

*"On the subject of the study diamond fitting less well with history, that is certainly the case and the 'effects' point of the diamond is the particular weakness. Nevertheless, I think that the difference highlights how history is different from poetry or art. In the main this is that historians deal with significant groups of sources, rather than single texts (or poems/art installations)".*

*“There is a danger if the diamond were to be used for individual sources rather than for historical study as a whole, the sense that history is an investigation of the past, rather than simply an investigation of sources, would be weakened. And there is the danger also of confusing students if they are recommended to use it in both ways i.e. for the study as a whole as well as for individual sources... Having said that I really can't see a problem if it is employed in a variety of ways by tutors, in individual discussion with students. Arguably the 'effort' to apply the diamond to history is worth it because 1) it fits sufficiently well to be usable and 2) it provides us with an opportunity to discuss with students' similarities and differences between arts disciplines”.*

(Extract from the Tutor e-Forum archive, 2006-2010)

In the first section of this thread the Tutor is discussing a recurring theme in the data in which applying 'effects' to history as a whole is seen as complex. Not all students for example will have an opinion about, in this case Burma, and therefore the potential empowering benefits of this concept in terms of placing value on a student's own opinion may be lost and could even draw attention to the student's potential lack of wider knowledge.

However, in the second contribution, attention is drawn to applying the *Study Diamond* to the historical sources rather than to the topic as a whole, thereby adapting the use of the framework to evaluate the texts/artefacts for their reliability. In this way, the effectiveness and adaptability of the *Study Diamond* as a framework for analysis is emphasised. It is also interesting that reference is made to the individual discussions reinforcing the suggestion of a less formal more dialogic pedagogy.



However, importantly it illustrates how Tutors use the *Study Diamond* to articulate the differences between the different subject domains. In this sense therefore tutors apply the *Study Diamond* flexibly, based on their knowledge and understanding of the student and the learning outcome(s) they are seeking to address.

Furthermore, the notion of learning as a continual process of making sense of new knowledge in the light of existing knowledge (Knowles, 1984), can be seen as being exemplified in its structure. The following example in particular illustrates how a tutor uses a student's *professional* context as an analogy for explaining the four elements:

*'I had one (student) for example, who was a chef and I explained it (the Study Diamond) in terms of cookery... 'effects' equalled the appearance and smell of food; 'techniques' equalled the ingredients and processes used in preparing food; 'context' equalled the traditions, the country, the culture, and season; 'meaning' equalled the taste and effect again'.*

*(e-Survey, 2008)*

Here the emphasis is placed on utilising the store of knowledge the student already possesses, creating a sense of familiarity and establishing the 'hooks' on which the student can hang new knowledge, in this sense moving from informational learning to transformational learning (Kegan, 2000) as the student applies understanding in a new context.

In the narratives it can be seen that the dialogic pedagogy, the vehicle through which new learning is delivered, is not prescriptive but rather that it evolves as the relationship between tutor and student develops and therefore has implications for the skills and professional characteristics of the tutor.

Shor (1992) suggests it takes on the 'unique profile of the teachers, students, subject matter and setting it belongs to" (p:237). In this sense therefore each teaching encounter for Y160 Tutors is individual and unique.

### **5.6 Tutor/Student Relationship**

The notion of building relationships and trust becomes an important contributory factor when Tutors modify and adapt the *Study Diamond*. If essential background information about the student is not known, this will limit the extent to which Tutors will be able to draw on contextual information to inform and bring relevance to the learning experience. As can be seen from the narratives, tutors need to understand their students' existing ways of knowing. They need to be able to value and interpret the knowledge and experience students bring with them to the learning environment (Shor, 1992) in order to effectively adapt and modify the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond*. This is particularly so with respect to ensuring the existing knowledge base of students is not undermined (Kegan, 2000) thus potentially damaging the motivation, self-esteem and confidence levels (especially pertinent for those students from a WP orientation).

In developing an effective relationship, as previously suggested, some analogy with the professional role of a telephone counsellor can be seen. My own experience suggests that working with students over the telephone can increase the likelihood of personal internalised issues being discussed or revealed which require the tutor to engage in emotional support as well as giving course specific guidance.

Similarly, Tutors interviewed offered a number of illustrations where their role in the past has merged with that of an academic advisor or guidance counsellor, challenging the skills and pedagogy of the Tutor.

However, developing a personalised relationship can have wider benefits than just the effective application of the *Study Diamond*, as a respondent explained when answering a question about the benefits of telephone tutoring:

*“..{you can give} individual support tailored to individual needs; build a rapport with each student thus tutors gain awareness and understanding of them as individuals, their study processes, their time and often outside commitments which might impinge on their studies. {You have} flexibility, in terms of when they {telephone tutorials} are arranged, extending some when significant points are being discussed”.*

(e-Survey, 2008).

The flexibility is significant and draws on the notion of access and control advantages when compared to face-to-face exchanges, as reported on in the context of telephone counselling (McLeod, 2004). When applied to a tutoring context it can be seen in the light of equalising the power-base of the relationship (linked to the rights of students and tutors in respect to the frequency and regularity of the contact) and to the positive Tutor/Student relationship that evolves. For example, the student is more likely to pick up the telephone and call the tutor if he/she is experiencing a problem given that the medium of tutoring is via the telephone and as suggested above, the Tutor is more likely to know aspects of the student's personal background given that telephone tutorials are mutually arranged to fit in with external commitments.

In more traditional teaching environments students may be more reluctant to call their tutor (or indeed may not even be given their tutor's telephone contact details), therefore will be less likely to pro-actively make contact when the telephone is not seen as being integral to the course.

Nevertheless, managing the relationship is a key aspect of a tutor's role and whilst it would appear that the delivery model can be more demanding in terms of finding the right balance between professional responsibility and propriety, tutors on the whole reported on how they valued the opportunity to get to know their students, further strengthening the notion of Y160 Tutors having a particular affinity for working with the *Openings* student cohort:

*"I get a lot of rewards from (tutoring) over the telephone; I feel more involved with the students as people over the phone. If there is a problem with a student I am more likely to think about it and think of ways of solving it and be pro-active over the telephone than I would be if it was in a group situation and that might be I think because if it is a face to face situation and I know the student concerned is one that is coming along to the group then I know it's going to be easy to have a chat with them but when they don't come to the tutorials (which of course a lot don't), it actually is quite hard to know how to help them; if you phone them up on spec they think "why am I being phoned" but because it is part of the structure of Openings that you phone them anyway, they expect it (and it also says in the materials that they will be phoned) and are quite receptive to it. Over the course of several calls they are quite relaxed about it and so if they are having problems it's easy to give them an extra call."*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009).

As this example suggests, being pro-active in communicating problems or course related difficulties can be mutually significant in the relationship. Again inspired by the notion that the telephone is integral to the course delivery model, some of the usual reticence tutors might feel in phoning students for fear of intrusion is overcome.

However, whilst it is not to say that such a relationship cannot be developed over time in more traditional face-to-face environments, I would suggest the telephone approach, and the fact that contact is one-to-one, appears to speed up the time it takes to develop an effective relationship.

There was also a suggestion that students can become over dependent on the tutor: "*Students can rely on the tutor's knowledge and experience and not develop independence*" (e-Survey, 2008), in this sense hampering the essential aim of cultivating independent autonomous learners. Nevertheless, building a personal relationship between those supporting students and the students' themselves, is seen as central to promoting belongingness and a motivation to learn (Holmberg, 2006). Further it is argued that such feelings are generated by a 'problem-orientated, conversation-like' teaching model that is anchored in students' "existing knowledge" (p:47). So whilst as previously discussed existing frames of references can be seen as a barrier to engagement, nevertheless it is interesting that the dialogic pedagogy reflected in the *Study Diamond* appears to be especially pertinent to generating a positive tutor/student relationship that is of particular value and relevance for distance teaching and learning.

However, the following extract offers a further insight into the kind of reflective discussions Tutors have with their students and in some respect offers a deeper insight into the kind of relationship that evolves. Tutor D is speaking initially about the importance of the iterative nature of the *Study Diamond* process but then goes on reveal how he/she speaks to students about its iconic shape and design, indicative of a more informal, philosophical association:

*"What they haven't always got is the importance of the link between the four points. The great value of the actual diagram of the diamond is (that) because it has these four lines going round and linking up it says that they are connected. I know this is obvious but by actually saying and pointing that out helps students to realise it and start to look harder for the connections between the points... that's where the visual image is so useful. I say {to them} after all this is a diamond, a really valuable jewel and what you have there is something you can treasure and it will be a precious thing for you. I think the actual word diamond is quite in keeping with what it is developing and that's why the students like it because you can't have a more powerful concept than the diamond".*

*(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)*

In this dialogue is reflected the importance of connecting each of the four elements of the *Study Diamond* (as discussed previously) and there is a clear reference to the iterative nature of the four elements which often requires facilitation by the tutor. However, the visual representation of the *Study Diamond* is especially significant and draws on what I suggest are the ideas embedded in mnemonic techniques for end-coding where information is linked together through visual and/or semantic connections, thereby supporting memory (Marzano et al, 1988). In this sense too, as inferred by Tutor D, the symbolic messaging associated with a diamond can act as further reinforcement of the pedagogical functioning of the *Study Diamond*.

## 5.7 Study Skills

As previously alluded to, in the data there is a clear sense Tutors use the *Study Diamond* as a process or framework for developing the skills necessary for essay writing. For example they report on how it:

*“Gives a framework to students’ responses  
....enables them to structure assignments clearly.....  
has a clear scaffolding (structure)..... it’s a very  
useful tool in preparing essays and other written  
work..... it gives them a structure for interpreting a  
text..... a framework for analysis”*

(e-Survey, 2008)

In this sense it could argued the *Study Diamond* supports the development of students’ study skills, that the ‘process’ or ‘framework’ is significant to how students develop competencies for writing in what is traditionally accepted as an academic style (Northedge, 2005).

Many tutors spoke of the benefits of the integrated teaching of study skills (as presented in Y160). As Tutor A, notes:

*“Courses don’t integrate study skills as much as Y160 - when we switched from having a separate book, I think that was right. I don’t actually believe in teaching generic study skills; I think once you have taught a lot of courses you do see that teaching them {study skills} in a vacuum just doesn’t work.....what I most value is that it {the Study Diamond} allows, encourages and causes students to examine their own reaction – it is quite different from anything else I have seen – it’s different because it integrates – they have to give evidence ... the link between effects and techniques is the real value of the whole thing ... you have to stop and think well how does this make me feel and ask yourself why does it make me feel that way?”*

(Tutor A, Interviews, 2009).

This raises an interesting question about the nature of study skills and the basis upon which study skills programmes and courses are usually devised. As previously discussed, support programmes often stem from a perceived 'problem' located within students' writing rather than out of any broader issues that might emanate from the characteristics of the learners and/or the contexts in which they are studying (Lillis, 2001). In an attempt to solve the 'problem' therefore, support is often seen to be outside of the main context of the discipline. Y160 endeavours to address this by introducing exercises embedded in the study materials that aim to develop generic skills which go beyond reading and writing and which encompass guidance on skills such as time management and organisation. In this sense there is a holistic approach to skills development, the emphasis of which is centred around transferability and at the heart of which is the *Study Diamond* (Baugh et al, 2006).

However, as inferred in the extract above, study skills guidance is often presented separately from the main core text or can even take the form of a set book or guidance notes. With respect to the Open University, "The Arts Good Study Guide" (Chambers and Northedge, 1998) following its publication became the accompaniment for most Open University Arts-based courses. This has traditionally been the approach the Open University has taken with other disciplines in that whilst the course itself maybe interdisciplinary, the study skills support is not generally integrated but comes in the form of separate guidance. When guidance is not integrated, it is, to some extent, reliant on students themselves making the connection across the disciplines. In Y160, different generic study skills (such as note taking, active reading, assignment writing) are introduced at different points throughout the course, they are not studied in isolation of the subject content. In this sense it can aid how information is remembered and recalled.



It is suggested that 'remembering skills' (such as mnemonics and rehearsal) are associated with memory but it has also been argued that remembering is a thinking activity (Marzano et al 1988). Through the process of 'encoding', information can be linked together for storage and then systematically retrieved when required (Marzano et al 1988, p:90). However, when the *Openings* programme first introduced an Arts course (Y152) it was accompanied by a separate study skills guide. This was considered to be rather unwieldy and not an appropriate accompaniment for Y160 given the duration of the course and the target audience (Interview, Authors, 2008). The Course authors felt a more student-focussed approach would be to embed activities across the three discipline areas which, together with the *Study Diamond* model, kept the approach "*elegant and ...simple to operate*", and learning would be progressive (Interview, Authors, 2008).

Many tutors, especially those who had taught on the earlier course (Y152), agreed with Tutor A and commented on how they "*preferred*" the integrated design rather than skills were studied in a "*vacuum*" (Interviews, 2009). The notion of progressive learning can be seen as contributing to the thinking process. Taking, for example the study skills as identified in Y160 and the thinking process as posited by Marzano et al (1998), it is evident there is a correlation between the study skills and the thinking process needed to activate such skills. For example, Table 5.1 maps the study skills in Y160 to the thinking process and the potential action required as proposed by Marzano et al (1998):

Study Skills (Y160)	Thinking Skills taken from Marzano et al (1988)	Interpretation of actions in the thinking process (Marzano et al, 1988)
1. Reading	Information gathering skills	Senses a problem; lacks meaning or understanding
2. Reflection	Focussing skills	Brings to consciousness and formulates questions
3. Note taking	Remembering Skills & Organisational Skills	Organises information matching similarities and noticing differences
4. Analysing	Identifies the main ideas, patterns, relationships between ideas	Examines the parts and components, claims and assumptions
5. Interpreting	Generating Skills of inferring, predicting and elaborating	Uses prior knowledge (schema) to construct connections with new ideas
6. Using evidence, building arguments	Integrating Skills, opposite to analysing, the bringing together of all relevant aspects	New information and prior knowledge are connected
7. Assignment writing	Evaluating Skills, assessing the reasonableness and quality of ideas, verifying	Metacognitive monitoring and evaluation takes place to internalise the learning

Table 5.1. Y160 Study Skills/Thinking Skills  
 Column 1 - Adapted from Baugh et al (2006);  
 Columns 2 and 3 Adapted from Marzano et al (1988)

Marzano et al (1988) usefully offer a comprehensive exploration of the thinking process as a whole which, when elements are aligned to the skills component of Y160 reveal some of the ways in which a critical approach to thinking can be employed. For example, Study Skills 4 (Analysing) requires the main ideas or points in a text to be identified. It is thus reliant on the learner's competency in applying what McPeck (1990) might refer to as a 'fusion' of the concepts of reason, argument analysis and everyday logic (p:4). But it requires a close examination of the parts or components that make up the idea and crucially calls for an exploration of any *assumptions* that might be presumed within the idea. In this sense a questioning element is introduced.

Similarly, with Study Skills 5 (Interpreting) learners draw on their frames of reference (schema) to make meaning or sense of the new concepts (Mezirow and Associates, 2000, Brookfield, 1987; Shor, 1992). If existing knowledge does not fit with the new ideas, the learner becomes critically reflective of their existing 'frames of reference' (Mezirow and Associates, 2000) and potentially of the new ideas.

Additionally, in the e-Survey I asked tutors the extent to which the *Study Diamond* aided students' ability to structure arguments. All respondents confirmed that for "some" or "most" (e-Survey, 2008) the *Study Diamond* played a significant part in developing the notion of 'argumentation' (Andrews, 2010). Taking this as the premise and building on Table 5.1, Table 5.2 shows where the components of the *Study Diamond* might support the actions for each study skill identified:

Study Skills (Y160)	Thinking Skills taken from Marzano et al (1988)	Interpretation of actions in the thinking process (Marzano et al, 1988)	
1. Reading	Information gathering skills	Senses a problem; lacks meaning or understanding	Reflects on Effects
2. Reflection	Focussing skills	Brings to consciousness and formulates questions	Formulates questions about Techniques and Context
3. Note taking	Remembering Skills & Organisational Skills	Organises information matching similarities and noticing differences	Organises Notes under the 4 elements of the Study Diamond
4. Analysing	Identifies the main ideas, patterns, relationships between ideas	Examines the parts and components, claims and assumptions	Considers Context
5. Interpreting	Generating Skills of inferring, predicting and elaborating	Uses prior knowledge (schema) to construct connections with new ideas	
6. Using evidence, building arguments	Integrating Skills, opposite to analysing, the bringing together of all relevant aspects	New information and prior knowledge are connected	Links Techniques and Context
7. Assignment writing	Evaluating Skills, assessing the reasonableness and quality of ideas, verifying	Metacognitive monitoring and evaluation takes place to internalise the learning	Uses framework to structure essay

Table 5.2. Adapted from Table 5.2 to incorporate The Study Diamond Concepts

It can be seen that Study Skill 1 could be one way in which information is gathered. Using the 'effects' pedagogy the learner relates the information to their own store of knowledge and understanding ("what does this mean to me?"). For example during the interview with the Course authors there was a discussion that focussed on their pedagogical vision for the 'effects' element of the *Study Diamond* and how they saw this working:

*"what I like about this Diamond is the way it starts with a very loose kind of idea of your initial reaction to something and then steadily you work through the 'technical' side of it and then into the 'context' and then into the 'meaning' "*

(Author B, Interview, 2007).

As suggested previously Tutors point to the meta-cognitive properties of the 'effects' element but also stress that the course is not just about content. Speaking about how the course is assessed through the model of Learning Outcomes, Tutor D, noted:

*"Two possibly three of the 8 Learning Outcomes are specifically about poetry, art, history .. the rest are about students' ability to use academic conventions. You have 8 weightings ... two or three say "what do you know about poetry" (etc.) the others are to do with study skills, note taking, sticking to the question ..."*

(Tutor D, Interviews, 2009)

In this way students can say something about the 'effect' of a phenomenon and at the outset achieve one or more of the Learning Outcomes even if at the initial stage of starting the course they have not yet acquired all the technical skills.

If the learner is unsure or cannot interpret the meaning they move on to Study Skill 2 as suggested above and reflect on the *'techniques'* that have been used or the *'context'* in which the text was produced. In this respect the one-to-one teaching model enables Tutors to do this through dialectic/dialogic discussion, providing a much individualised approach to learning, as Tutor B explains:

*"...my teaching on Openings, it's a dialogue.... What my students have with the OU is the lectures in a book format and my role is to guide them through it, check they have read it understood it, made notes about it and any aspect of the course they don't understand all they need to do is to ask me and hopefully I will be able to guide them through the areas they struggle with"*

(Tutor B, Interviews, 2009).

Whilst in this extract there is the suggestion of a separation of the tutor and the learner which, it has been argued, is at the "heart of distance education" (Simonson, et al, 2006 p:122), there is also an acknowledgement of a blended pedagogy discussed earlier in which teaching is seen as a balance between instructional strategies and the notion of communicative learning (Mezirow and Associates, 2000).

Similarly, taking the premise critical thinking as one part of the broader dimension of the thinking process (McPeck, 1990), it could be argued the concept can play a significant part in the holistic development of the individual (Brookfield, 1987, Mezirow and Associates, 2000, Shor, 1992). For example when asked about the notion of changing an individual's cognitive perspective on learning, Tutors generally drew on issues around confidence-building:

*"Using the Study Diamond will build people's confidence and if you then look at their whole learning experience, Kolb's psychology {here the tutor is referring to Kolb's Learning Cycle and Experiential Learning Theory} would come into play". (Tutor C, Interviews, 2009)*

In this respect the learning experience is not seen as a set of skills to be taught but rather a framework around which the capacity to think beyond simple surface level learning is encouraged.

In the data, recurring references were made to the structure, framework, process, focus or plan, afforded by the *Study Diamond* through which Tutors deconstruct the tasks or processes required for a constructivist view of learning where "social knowledge is created and recreated in the personal knowledge of the learner" (Kolb & Kolb, 2005, p:194) or as Tutors suggest a critical, analytical approach for responding to information is stimulated (Tutor e-Survey, 2008; Interviews, 2009).

However, just as the modular multi-disciplinary aspect of Y160 builds on the notion of actively experimenting with new ideas (Kolb and Kolb, 2005), so the integration of study skills allows for the learning that has occurred in Module 1 (Poetry) to be conceptualised and experimented with in a different context in Module 2 (History) and further in Module 3 (Art History).

Further, the respondent quoted above went on to explain that abstract conceptualisation (Kolb and Kolb, 2005 p:194) of the learning that has taken place is facilitated through the process of students completing an end of course Learning Review.

That is, Tutors encourage students to “*consider the experience they have had*” and to “*reflect on it in a structured way {and} consider what they will do differently next time*” (Tutor C, Interviews , 2009). In this sense the pedagogy embedded in the notion of Kolb's (c1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is promoted.

### **5.8 Modifying and Adapting the Study Diamond**

In the e-Survey nearly half of the respondents identified that when applying the *Study Diamond* to History there were issues. The following can be seen as a typical comment:

*“Fits less well for history .... there is not a clear parallel as with the other subjects”* (e-Survey, 2008).

Similarly, Tutors who were interviewed also commented that it was either “*more complex*” or that they “*worked differently*” or that “*they didn't use it all*” when it came to the history module (Interviews, 2009). However, Tutors' understanding of different categories of skills development may be “bound by their own individual, disciplinary perspective” (Lea and Street, 1998, p:6) and could raise issues for how the *Study Diamond* might transfer across different disciplines. An example of this can be seen in the following comment from Tutor E, who was talking about modifying the framework for History:

*“...but for history I emphasise the techniques aspects more and go back to Arthur Marwick's techniques of using and working through historical documents and so (in that way) I am adapting it. For some reason it is very similar in use when I am guiding my students to read a poem and look at a painting.....we apply the Study Diamond in a similar way because they both have this emotive thing about them, but with history it is slightly different; history is much drier. There is a school of thought that suggests that history should not be in the arts faculty at all!”*

(Tutor E, Interviews, 2009)



The reference to Arthur Marwick alludes to the debate in relation to the different perspectives academics take in teaching and engaging with history (see Chapter 2). In this sense therefore the subject specialism knowledge of the tutor may impact on the way in which they use and apply the framework.

Nevertheless, there is further evidence for viewing the concept of critical thinking, in the context of ELT (Kolb and Kolb, 2005), as a life skill. This notion is reflected in Tutors' responses to questions about how they apply the *Study Diamond* across the three disciplines. In History most, in some way, link 'techniques' to the methods used by an historian to test the reliability and validity of sources, for example an:

*"historian's craft skills - primary & secondary sources and their reliability"; "methodology, sources (primary & secondary), timelines, evidence/interviews etc."; "reliability and purpose of the evidence";*

(e-Survey, 2008).

thereby directing students to the specialist terms. Similarly, 'context' was seen as questioning, adding the critical element, encouraging reflection on the circumstances in which the sources were produced, for example, it is:

*"about the source of materials"; "how articles relate to time, place and other texts - when, where, why and for whom" ; "info concerning the events in question - people, place, time, politics"*

(e-Survey, 2008).

In this sense, given the multiple sources an historian might be expected to analyse (Beck & Jeffery, 2009), the discipline of history could be seen as an appropriate vehicle for actively engaging students in the practice of critical enquiry and further, encouraging the principles embedded in healthy scepticism (Brookfield, 2005).

However, in the following extract, whilst the Tutor appears to be reporting that the *Study Diamond* does not 'work' as well with History, the respondent could actually be describing how elements *can* be modified (in particular 'techniques') to match the respective genre:

*"For History, I get the student to look at individual pieces of evidence rather than an historical approach, if they are looking at something I get them to consider what effect it has on them, then the techniques of the writer or the journalist or the film maker or whatever it is and then context and how that can add to meaning. But it is fitting a square peg into a round hole with the History. It just does not work. I mean with the John Pilger film, it is clear that the effect it would have on you is created by Pilger as the film maker, he's pulling your strings, he is pushing the buttons to get you to believe a particular thing so when you think in terms of the relevance of something or the reliability of something you can use the Study Diamond, but it works less well for some of the other aspects of the History course. I am fairly directive, I say that it works for the poetry, it will work when we come to the art history but it is less easy to use in history and therefore I emphasise things like reliability, relevance and balance rather than trying to shoe horn the history section into the Study Diamond approach. If I am directive when we begin the history then I don't have people coming to me saying it doesn't work because I know it doesn't work. If it doesn't work for me I cannot convince people otherwise".*

*(Tutor C, Interviews, 2009)*

Although once again not actual dialogue with a student, the above example illustrates how the tutor draws attention to the notion of potential bias of the 'author'/'producer' of the source (in this case a documentary film made by John Pilger on the political situation in Burma, Pilger, 2007); in other words the '*techniques*' used in its production. This is also evidence of what appears to be a fairly didactic pedagogical approach which it would seem, needs to be used here in order to explain the different application of the *Study Diamond* terms.

Whilst in this example, it could be said that the specialist body of knowledge is being delivered by the expert to the non-expert (Shor, 1992), I suggest that such an action is actually the instructional part of a dialogic dialogue the Tutor could have with the student, steering the student towards a different way of applying and working with the *Study Diamond* concepts. In this sense, through a common language (the Study Diamond), the Tutor can stimulate "reflective action" (Shor, 1992, p:86; Kolb and Kolb, 2005).

These two examples illustrate that some Tutors adapt and modify the process in a less conscious way in History than with perhaps other disciplines although, as was also evident in the e-Survey, some remained sceptical. For example, a small number of respondents when talking about the History Module prefaced their responses with:

*"potentially a problem"; "but I don't use this tool in history"; "I don't talk explicitly about context in relation to the Study Diamond"; "more difficult"; "less easy"; "there is not a clear parallel as with the other subjects"*

(e-Survey, 2008).

A contributory factor to Tutors actually using the *Study Diamond* in all three disciplines, could be the prescriptiveness of the assessment criteria in which the Learning Outcomes (LO) de-construct the tasks against specific descriptors (in particular LO1 'specialist terms' & LO4 'reasoned answer'); so whilst the *Study Diamond* is not referred to specifically in the assessment criteria, there is a requirement to identify key terminology ('*techniques*') and also give a reasoned answer (links to '*context*'). Tutors appear to be honed into using the *Study Diamond* and therefore sub-consciously are using the terms to reinforce and guide students through the assessment criteria. In this way the four elements are used as a structure for their teaching of analysis and importantly become a common language for articulating the requirements of analysis which are transferable, with modification, across the disciplines.

Further, in the data there was a sense the History Module was not just about Burmese history – as one Tutor commented:

*"I explain the purpose of the course unit isn't to learn 'stuff', rather (it is) to learn an analytical approach to historical issues by 'evaluating' sources"*

(e-Survey, 2008).

Seeing History as a vehicle for engaging with a critical perspective supports Booth's (2008) contention of fostering "new solutions that can engage new student populations in historical study {and} promote depth of understanding" (p:8) and I would suggest provides a practical basis upon which students are introduced to the concept of critical thinking.

The context in which a phenomenon is produced can relate to time and place or anything that might be known about the writer or artist, and is especially relevant to the deconstruction process when '*techniques*' and '*context*' are brought together.

It is by considering alternative perspectives and examining different contexts and then considering their relationship to each other (relates to Study Skills 5 & 6 of Table 5.2) that develops a critical perspective. As one tutor explained when talking about the *Study Diamond* as a whole:

*"{You} Can come into it at any point ... which validates any thoughts {students} have on the poem, painting etc. and it produces workable links between all of the elements"* (e-Survey, 2008)

It can be seen therefore that when the seven study skills identified in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 are employed with the *Study Diamond* process, a structured approach for information-gathering emerges and the 'evidence' collected can be used to construct an argument in the sense posited by McPeck (1984) and Andrews (2010) - (see also Chapter 2). If additionally, learners evaluate the relationship between propositions, or in this case the relationship between *techniques* and *contexts*, an element of criticality emerges whereby ideas are situated within different orientations moving the learning process beyond a simple gathering of facts and information, into an activity in which a deeper level of thinking and reflection is undertaken.

### **5.9 Academic Writing**

Over half of the Tutors surveyed reported that "*completing the first assignment*" (a Poetry question) was the most problematic. Similarly, "*writing an essay*" for the History assignment was also reported as being an issue for students (e-Survey, 2008). The essay, in particular, has long been regarded as a useful way of assessing learning and conceptualising knowledge (Campbell et al 1998).

Whilst there may be many aspects with which students struggle when embarking on their first assignment, if faced with a piece of writing, this will undoubtedly be the one that causes most consternation. Acknowledging that essay writing can be challenging (Interview, Authors, 2008), the first Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA) in Y160 was designed as a series of questions rather than the more traditional task of a titled essay question. The assignment has a sequential approach to structuring a critical examination of a Haiku poem in order to find meaning and draws on the four elements of the *Study Diamond* in the process. Table 5.4 identifies the tasks and shows the connectivity with the *Study Diamond*:

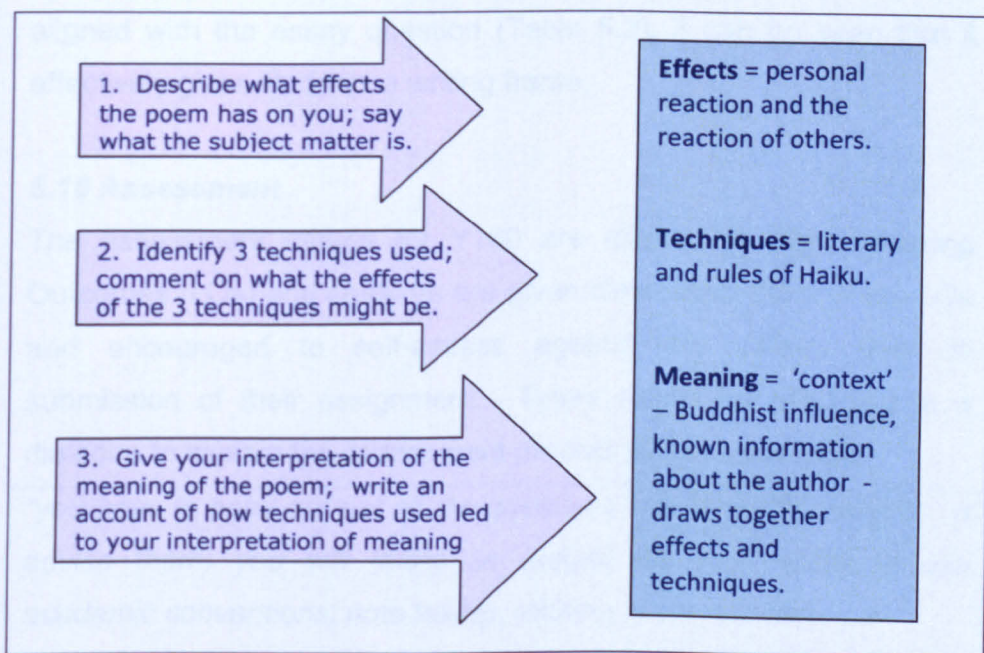


Table 5.3: TMA01 Adapted from Y160 Making Sense of the Arts Assignment Booklet March (C) 2009 presentation

Linked to the questions posed in the first assignment, it can be seen how this mirrors the four elements of the *Study Diamond*. As one tutor commented:

*"{TMA 1} encourages them {students} to focus on thinking and planning TMAs. Students from backgrounds outside of the Arts find the diagrammatical approach {of the Study Diamond} helpful. It is especially good that it begins with 'effects' {at} the point where they enter the course rather than assuming any prior knowledge"*

(e-Survey, 2008)

Reference here to the notion of 'planning', links to the suggestion the framework provides a structure for essay writing. Using the four headings (of the *Study Diamond*) as prompts, it signposts to what needs to go into supporting an argument for a particular interpretation. Further, when the *Study Diamond* elements are also aligned with the essay question (Table 5.3), it can be seen that it effectively gives students a writing frame.

### **5.10 Assessment**

The assessment criteria for Y160 are aligned to eight Learning Outcomes (LOs) and students are given clear descriptors of the LOs and encouraged to self-assess against the criteria prior to submission of their assignment. Tutors report on engaging in a dialogue to explain the assessment process but acknowledge:

*"you have to point out not all the questions will be on the subject. (I advise them) you will {also} be judged on your ability to use academic conventions; note taking, sticking to the question ...",*

(Tutor C, Interviews, 2009)

This alludes to the split in the Assessment Criteria, the first four LOs focus on the subject(s) of the course and the second four, on generic learning and study skills. However, criteria in the first four LOs, whilst subject specific, also help tutors unpick the skills needed for analysis and structuring an argument and here it can be seen there is a correlation with the *Study Diamond* framework (see, Appendix 7).

In this way Tutors are usually able to make some positive comments or identify achievement in some aspects of the criteria given the breadth and explicitness of the Learning Outcomes. As one tutor commented:

*".. there are {generally} 3 or 4 points linked to the assessment {criteria that means} students {can} generally receive some positive feedback since they will have demonstrated some understanding of some of the points"*

*(e-survey, 2008)*

In the e-Survey, Tutors were asked how they judge the achievement of Learning Outcome 2. Most opted for evidence of 'using course ideas'. This I suggest is significant in terms of measuring if students have read the course but in isolation, without the addition of specialist language correctly applied to a specific context for example, does not demonstrate sound understanding. However, indicative of the learning outcome assessment model is Tutors can reward student achievement at different stages of their learning; especially helpful in building confidence for students from a WP orientation. Using the language of the *Study Diamond*, Tutors are able to break down the assessment criteria and identify gaps in student understanding to clearly articulate the areas for development or where students have particularly achieved well.

Similarly, as previously inferred, one of the most difficult tasks for Tutors is to move students away from anecdotal, descriptive writing, towards a more academic discourse of which argumentation plays an essential part (Andrews, 2010). Such a writing style is embodied in the criteria for LO4 (see, Appendix 7) which measures the extent to which students have produced a 'reasoned' answer.



That is, how clearly they have demonstrated the linkage between the three elements of the *Study Diamond* ('effects', 'techniques' and 'context') to produce the fourth element 'meaning'.

Whilst it could be argued that aspects for successful writing can be readily articulated by Tutors, as previously discussed, there is uncertainty in Tutors' abilities and consistency in defining the meaning of terms such as 'critically analyse', 'evaluate', construct an 'academic argument' etc. (Lea and Street, 1998, p:6).

However, the *Study Diamond* appears to provide the diagnostic tools for this. Tutors can detect critical engagement if the argument draws on and cites course discussion but also, as indicated above, if the *techniques* used to produce the phenomenon have been identified and the potential *effects* these may have on the viewer/reader explained. A deeper critical perspective could also be detected if there is discussion on the contextual influences that can impact on the production of the phenomenon and if the 'effects' viewed in other contexts lead or contribute to different meanings.

As can be seen through the narratives discussed in this Chapter, the role of the tutor takes on a mediating perspective, one in which the tutor guides the student into formulating questions or constructing a representation of the perceived 'problem' (Marzano, et al, 1988). Similarly, the Tutor has also been seen to focus students' attention so that the linkage between the *Study Diamond* elements is clearly modelled. But a further role which is especially pertinent to distance learning where there is less frequent contact with the tutor and therefore less opportunity for the student to receive feedback on '*how they are doing*', is to encourage the student to be self-directing.

In this respect, all Y160 assignments also include a question in which students are asked to reflect on their learning journey mirroring the concept that “students need to be ‘knowing students’ in order to benefit from assessment arrangements that sustain complex learning” (Knight & York, 2006; QAA, 2006). This can be defined as having the ability to *self-manage* (a key skill for distance learning and one embedded in the Y160 study skills), *self-monitor* and *self-modify* (Costa and Kallick, 2004 p:6). The latter two pedagogies can be clearly seen as the goal of the assessment strategy used in Y160 which is underpinned by the notion that students become more self-directed when they are made aware of the “intended learning outcomes and receive constructive feedback” (Costa and Kallick, 2004, p:2).

In this way the *Study Diamond* provides a logical framework around which tutors can discuss and give detailed feedback. The assessment of higher order thinking, which it is argued can be complex and problematic (Knight & Yorke, 2006), if structured around the student's application and linkage of the *Study Diamond* elements, offers a transparent feedback format for both the tutor and the student.

Such a communicative approach to learning (and to some degree assessment), in the sense inferred by Mezirow and Associates, (2000), helps to move the notion of learning away from a curriculum driven by tasks and testing towards developing self-directed learners through a process of ‘feedback spirals’ (Costa and Kallick, 2004, p:8). That is, a recursive, cyclical process whereby the goals and purposes are identified and a series of actions are taken by the Tutor and the student that involve articulation, reflection, redefining, modification and further evaluation (Costa and Kallick, 2004). It can be seen that the personalised and individual nature of one-to-one interaction resulting from the telephone model lends itself to such pedagogy.

### 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Before introducing my recommendations, I summarise below key findings from this study which I have aligned with my three Research Questions.

1. *“How do Y160 Tutors modify and adapt the Study Diamond to identify and articulate the skills and competences that are central to critical thinking?”*

It has been shown that as a pedagogical framework, Tutors use the *Study Diamond* in their dialectic and dialogic discourse with students to deconstruct some of the complexities that are at the centre of what it means to ‘think critically’. In this context the *Study Diamond* has been shown to help tease apart what McPeck (1990) refers to as the “homogenous ball of wax” (p:4). That is, the fusion of semantics used interchangeably to understand, describe and measure critical thinking. Through the deconstruction process and linked to an assessment framework, Tutors use the language of the four *Study Diamond* elements to give some degree of clarity and consistency to their articulation of critical thinking and how argumentation and critical awareness is identified and subsequently assessed in a piece of written work. It has been shown that through the notion of encoding (Marzano et al 1988, p:90), the terminology of the *Study Diamond* and its iconic symbolism can be used mnemonically as a strategy for teaching the skills associated with deep learning and the concepts embedded in the thinking process as posited by Brookfield (2005), Halpern (2003) and Marzano et al (1988).

Similarly, the narratives presented, have exposed how Tutors use students' past experiences or 'everyday' contexts to explain the notion of academic discourse. This has illustrated how criticality, embedded in what is perceived to be academic discourse, is also rooted in the broader activities and actions of everyday life. Therefore, in the context of an educator's role being one in which the holistic development of the individual is the essential aim of learning (Dewey, 2009), critical thinking can be seen not just as an academic skill in the sense often implied in study skills programmes but as an essential part of and deep rooted in the thinking process itself which when embraced offers transformative and/or emancipatory qualities (Brookfield, 2005, Mezirow and Associates, 2000, Freire, 1993).

2. "How do Y160 Tutors use and modify the *Study Diamond* to connect across and with the three disciplines of the Y160 course?"

It has been revealed that in order to connect to the three different disciplines of Y160, Tutors modify and adapt the components of the *Study Diamond*. For example, the poetic, literary and painterly components are identified and considered under the semantic 'hook' of '*techniques*'. In this sense Tutors draw on the individual elements of the *Study Diamond* to elucidate the key components of the different disciplines but also use the framework holistically in a cyclical process to articulate the skills for analysis and argumentation. As the *Study Diamond* is a fundamental part of the Y160 Course, Tutors use the four elements iteratively across the three disciplines and in doing so reveal the transferability of the process.

3. "How does the unique delivery model of the course and the *Widening Participation* agenda, impact on the way in which Y160 Tutors model their teaching in relation to critical thinking".

Tutors have revealed an affinity for the student cohort for whom Y160 was essentially designed. This has been especially shown through the interview narratives in which Tutors give insightful examples of their dialectic and dialogic discourse with their students. There is a clear sense that Tutors' pedagogical approach is different when working with Y160 students in that there appears to be a concerted effort to get to know students in a more personal way than in traditional teaching environments. It could be argued this is borne out of the intimacy of the telephone tutoring model (McLeod, 2004) but it also could be inferred that the pedagogical effects of the *Study Diamond* framework will be influenced by the relationship that evolves between the tutor and the student.

Overall, findings suggest the flexibility and adaptability of the *Study Diamond* has application beyond the context of Y160. With this in mind, I propose a Model (adapted from the original) that gives pointers for how Tutors can generate questions for each of the four elements – see Figure 6.1 below:

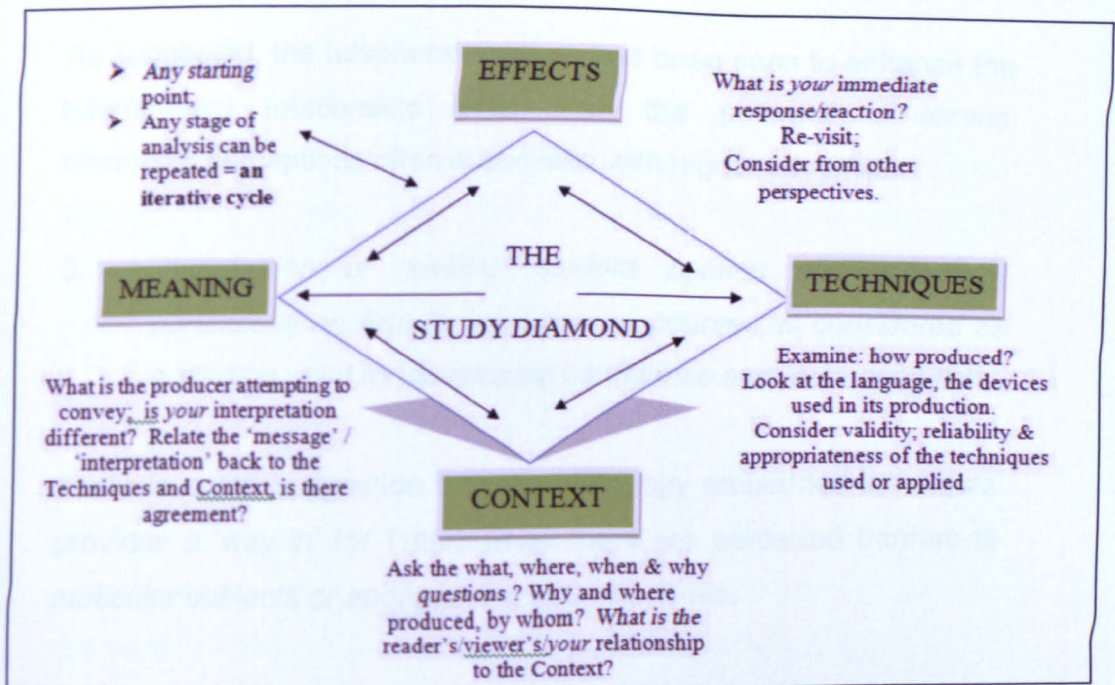


Figure 6.1 The Study Diamond: Adaptation (3) (Baugh et al, 2006)

The proposed Model builds on the notion of a Socratic approach that can be used in dialogic discussion and which draws on the example reveal through this study of Tutors modifying and adapting their use of the framework to take account of the teaching context and importantly the diversity of the student cohort. Similarly, it can be seen how the 'pointers' can be adapted to reflect the specific terms associated with the subject specialism.

In the light of the above findings, I recommend that:

1. *further consideration is given to the concept of critical thinking as a holistic element of the thinking process.*

As identified in its broader context, the notion of criticality as an embedded way of thinking opens up opportunities for tutors to relate and show relevance to everyday activities.

2. *further consideration is given to the use of the telephone as part of a blended delivery approach, especially in the context of distance learning and with students new to higher education.*

As suggested, the telephone medium has been seen to enhance the tutor/student relationship which has the potential to lessen hierarchal perceptions often associated with higher education.

3. *the notion of 'inviting' student opinion and reflection, particularly on Arts focused access courses, is considered as a starting point for developing confidence and meta-cognition.*

There is some suggestion that the pedagogy embedded in 'effects' provides a 'way in' for Tutors when there are perceived barriers to particular subjects or engagement with new ideas;

4. *therefore, that consideration be given to using the concepts embedded in the Study Diamond framework as a teaching tool for:-*

- *deconstructing the analysis of texts and other art forms;*
- *structuring and presenting an argument;*
- *and as an etymological structure to aid clarity in feedback and assessment.*

I sense from the data there was a general 'buzz' amongst Tutors who have used the *Study Diamond* many of whom were excited about its potential usefulness and transferability. This can also be seen particularly at the start of each new Y160 presentation on the Tutor e-forum, a flavour of which is revealed in this extract:

*"But what really interests me, which I never would have found out without teaching Y160, is how people can actually get a strong emotional charge, which seems like the right emotional charge if you see what I mean, from a poem or a picture even if they have pretty thoroughly misinterpreted or misunderstood the image, through lack of 'context'.*

(Extract from Y160 Tutor e-Forum archive 2007-2010)

This Tutor went on to recount a story in which a “profound emotional truth” (Y160 Tutor e-Forum, 2007-2010) about a work of art was expressed by a viewer by simply voicing the effect that it had on her thereby illustrating the powerful pedagogy that is embedded in the notion of ‘effects’ to encourage students to acknowledge and explore their own ideas.

Further evidence of Tutor interest in the *Study Diamond* was seen at an Open University Staff Development event in April 2010 in which I presented findings from this research. The presentation was to an audience of tutors from the University’s Faculty of Education and Languages none of whom had experience of teaching on Y160 or were familiar with the *Openings* Programme. Following a brief introduction on the possible uses of the *Study Diamond*, the twelve tutors who attended the Workshop indicated both through their responsive comments during the presentation and in their evaluations, they were interested in knowing more about the framework as a pedagogical tool. Many could see opportunities for how they could adapt and modify the concepts to fit with their own subject specialism. Taking account of the complex nature of articulating the potential capability of the *Study Diamond* so that it could be easily understood during a short workshop presentation, I reflected on ideas for re-modelling it as an interactive tool. To this end, I would like to explore ways in which the process could be digitised so it could be used inter-actively as web-based tool (on the lines of the proposed Model in Figure 6.1). One of the themes to emerge from the study, as suggested above, was the visual impact of the *Study Diamond*. In this sense I feel a web-based application would be more accessible and would offer the opportunity to show how the different elements can be adapted to signpost to the key concepts embedded in the range of techniques and contexts that are employed in the Arts and Humanities disciplines.



However, as a next phase for this enquiry I will be conducting a small-scale study with *Openings* students to explore the degree to which there is correlation between critical thinking (as used and applied in a academic context, and as illuminated in the pedagogy of the *Study Diamond*) and a noticeable or recognisable transference or connectivity with everyday behaviour (as posited by Brookfield, 2005; and Mezirow and Associates, 2000). This further explores the notion of critical thinking as a life skill but from the perspective of the student rather than the perception of tutors, whilst at the same time building on the ideas that underpin Research Question 1 which was concerned with identifying the skills and competences that are central to critical thinking.

## Chapter 7

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## APPENDIX 1

### Screen grab extract from Monitoring of Y160 Tutor e-Forum

2007-2010

23	Extracts from On-line Tutor Conference. Monitored from June 2006 to January 2010	
24	I see that the general feeling from tutors and students is one of enjoyment - I'd like to echo that resoundingly. My students' voice repeated pleasure at the innovative subject-matter and satisfaction with the way that study-skills are integrated. The quality of my students' TMAs so far seems to bear this out. I wonder if anyone else feels that the guidance notes for assignment 1, p13, could be phrased more clearly. '[N]eed to distinguish clearly between what the poem is about [ . . . ] and what it means' suggests to students that they need to explain this in their answer, whereas I believe it is intended to mean that students need simply to be aware of the distinction.	20/04/2006
25	I take your point here. I think that 'what the poem is about' is intended to be something of an off the cuff response. The Tutor Guide calls it a response that is 'in terms of a narrative content,' and possibly expressed 'in a single sentence.' (p28). 'What it means' on the other hand is the response that is possible after the effects of the techniques have been taken into account. The Tutor Guide explains it as, 'what has been discovered about the meaning of the poem' at a deeper level than that of its narrative content'. The students do need to distinguish clearly between the two to make sure that they answer question 1b in relation to 'what the poem is about' rather than as 'what the poem means', which is called for in question 3. Perhaps it could have been spelled out a little more clearly.	
26	It's all praise from my students for Y160. They have found Haiku fascinating and those studying history, have expressed how interesting the topic is. All have said the course materials are well-written with heaps of praise for the Study Diamond. I too am thoroughly enjoying tutoring and studying the course.	24/04/2006
27	It had to be said: Diamonds are a student's best friend. I found it useful for laying out my poetry tutorial.	
28	I've spoken to 10 of my students now and even unprompted they are already really enthusiastic about the Study Diamond, and clearly see its use in valuing their own responses and helping them analyse texts.	
29	I've used the diamond concept for several years in A103 tutorials and it works similarly well for art history, literature, music and architecture, giving students a framework within which to build their analyses.	
30	I hope all's going well and that you're enjoying using the material. Thanks Nina for your comment about the study diamond. We found it useful ourselves in the course team meetings, when we were discussing the different parts of the course. It enabled us to see more clearly the similarities and differences across the three disciplines. Pete	
31	Hello all! I'm on the June presentation, and I just thought I'd pipe up with the enormously positive response the materials have had from my students so far. Several of them volunteered the view that the Study Diamond made literary analysis make sense for them in a way that A-level literature hadn't.	13/07/2006
32	The history section has produced equally enthusiastic reviews - especially from one journalist who'd been a BBC Europe correspondent for 20 years. He incidentally had amusingly snide comments to make about Pilger's reputation inside the industry (he's apparently always absolutely factual, but is famous for lots of extra emotive interjections).	

## Appendix 2

### Question Prompts For Y160 Course Team Interview

<p>How did you formulate your original ideas for the new programme Y160?</p>	<p>How did this differ from 'Living Arts' (Y152)            What were the intended learning outcomes/how does this sit within the framework of the Openings Programme</p>
<p>What was the original inspiration for the Study Diamond?</p>	<p>Did you have any concerns about differences/applications working across three disciplines.            What were your original intentions for the Study Diamond            How did you see this process enhancing students' learning on the course            Has this changed – if so how            Do you think there are any issues using the process across three disciplines            If so, what? Can these be overcome? If so, how?</p>
<p>Do you see any other applications for the Study Diamond?</p>	<p>In devising the Study Diamond, did you reflect beyond Y160?</p>
<p>What is your understanding of critical analysis ?</p>	<p>In terms of the assignments?            In terms of writing in the academic genre?            In terms of HE study generically?            In terms of accessing the three disciplines?            In terms of developing students holistically            Definition????            Inconsistency of understanding – is this problematic?</p>
<p>What part/role/purpose does c.a. play in academic study?</p>	<p>In terms of study/learning            In terms of students' development            In terms of academic writing</p>
<p>Do you have any information on how the course was received during its first presentation?</p>	<p>Tutor feedback            Student feedback            Other            Any specific feedback on the Study Diamond</p>
<p>Are there any changes you would have made/would like to make?</p>	<p>In terms of the way in which the study skills have been integrated            In relations to the Study Diamond specifically            In the course in general</p>
<p>Do you see the study diamond approach/process having other applications?</p>	

## APPENDIX 2a

### Screen grab showing example of Contact Summary Sheet used in Analysis of Initial Study Data

CONTACT SUMMARY SHEET: INITIAL STUDY FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH COURSE AUTHORS		
Main issues/themes that emerged	Actual Dialogue taken from transcript	Concepts/Authors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written for WP cohort (no experience, low level of confidence - both academically &amp; emotionally).</li> <li>• Designed to celebrate the student's starting point - to acknowledge their own viewpoint ('effects').</li> <li>• Provides points at which students can re-engage if they get stuck because it was designed as a <b>process that could be repeated</b> - in no particular order.</li> <li>• It is acceptable to 'change your mind' - analysis/research is re-evaluating and reflective, thus once techniques and context is re-visited, meaning/interpretation and/or effects may change. This helps to break down the barrier to academic learning - i.e. there may be several interpretations/meanings - not necessarily a 'right answer'; it's important to recognise other viewpoints; confidence issues - minds greater than theirs - WP cohort</li> </ul>	<p>We wrote the course assuming the student has no level of experience, they are possibly going to be at a lower level of confidence; they are starting from where they are - starting with effects - acknowledging their feelings count.</p> <p>For example using the Turner-prize Art was a big risk... because a lot of people are very negative about it but allowing them to say 'OK you have been using the Study Diamond lets start with the 'effects' part as- write down what effect this art has on you the first time you look at it - and they could say well I think it's a lot of rubbish so they could say that and that's an appropriate starting point. Then they build up 'techniques' and 'context', especially if it's their first encounter with that type of art. But as a student's expertise grows it's entirely appropriate to start at any point. All agree</p> <p>The other feature of it that is important is the way its designed as a model to encourage repeat processing; if they feel stuck at any time, they have the four points to focus on. Also, one might think that one has got the meaning straight way, but once you have thought about it and been round the block as it were you might actually see it differently.</p> <p>I think the other important thing about it which I think we agree too is that so often students think now how should I be reading this and they immediately doubt their own responses which the poet or artist has been busy trying to provoke through their texts and so it is literally a dysfunctional way of approaching it but it is hard to break the habit new to academic stuff and there are minds greater than theirs which is why I try to get several interpretations like everyone else but I find that undergraduate students right up to the highest level find this hard to get.</p>	<p>Student Starting point - Kolb Learning Cycle; Halpern, Intro to Critical Thinking</p> <p>The Learning Society:- Raggatt, Edwards &amp; Small (1996) Lifelong Learning The Reflective Practitioner (Schon) /Learner; Assessment for Learning; Barriers to Adult Learning; Study skills (Northedge) Understanding Critical Thinking (Brookfield, Halpern);</p> <p>Habermas &amp; Domains of Learning; Empowerment - Mezirow, Shor, Freire</p> <p>Widening participation cohort; raising aspirations; notions of emancipator benefits through raised confidence levels.</p>

## Appendix 3

### Screen grab from on-line e-survey Questionnaire

#### **INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH STUDY**

##### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE STUDY**

This study sets out to enhance tutors understanding and inform their teaching of *critical analysis*. In order to do this the study will explore tutors perceptions of how students transfer and apply the concept of *thinking critically* across different disciplines using the Study Diamond framework. The Study Diamond was originally devised by Tim Baugh, Peter Brickley and Leigh-Ann Perryman for the Open University 'Making Sense of the Arts' (Y160) Course. Baugh et al (2006) suggest that :

*"The Study Diamond represents an approach to analysing and interpreting texts such as poems, works of art, pieces of music and works of literature. When used methodically ... (it) provides a reliable and reusable formula for arriving at well-argued conclusions" (P:18 'Making sense of the arts', The Open University).*

The study will explore its usefulness in the context of Y160 but also more generically if the framework could be the basis of a teaching tool for accessing the concept of *thinking critically*.

The main line of enquiry will consider:-

1. uncovering the difficulties students experience when applying a critical perspective to their academic writing;
2. whether or not the difficulties are the same in all three disciplines introduced in Y160 (namely Poetry, History and Art History);

3. Tutors' perceptions of the Study Diamond in terms of their applied teaching approach to Y160;

4. what are the essential pedagogical elements within the Study Diamond framework that could be harnessed for a wider application.

By agreeing to participate, your anonymity will be assured through the following procedures:

1. Collection and analysis of the data; 2. Storage and archiving of the data; 3. Dissemination of findings; 4. Data source/population will be identified as 'OU Tutors, tutoring on Y160'.

If you wish to withdraw the data you have submitted, your responses will be destroyed upon request up to the point at which the analysis will begin which will be December 2008. Responses will be analysed for the emergence of recurring themes and will contribute to a Final Report to be completed by September 2010. If the study is published it will not be possible to identify you other than as an OU Tutor, tutoring on Y160.

In accordance with Guideline 26. of the BERA Revised Ethical Guidelines for Education Research (2004), all collected data will be securely stored and 'any publication, including publication on the Internet' will not directly, or indirectly, lead to a breach of your agreed anonymity as stated in this Information. I will be pleased to make results available to you when I have completed the study. If you have read this information and you do not have any questions, please [follow the on-line instructions](#). If you have any concerns or would like to discuss your participation, please contact me, Gill Clifton, on: [meadowlandsassociates@gmail.com](mailto:meadowlandsassociates@gmail.com). If you wish to speak to someone other than myself about this study you can contact my Supervisor: Dr. John Butcher who is overseeing this work and who can be reached on [john.butcher@northampton.ac.uk](mailto:john.butcher@northampton.ac.uk). I am grateful to The Open University at Regional Office 13 and CWP, Milton Keynes who are aware of this study and have offered their support.

QUESTIONNAIRE  
(PART A)

**RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS:**

- HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING WITH THE OU? 1-3 yrs.  3-9 yrs.  over 8 yrs.  
 HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING ON OPENINGS? 1-3 yrs.  3-5 yrs.  over 5 yrs.  
 HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN TEACHING ON Y160? Since 2006  Since 2007  My first year   
 ARE YOU AN ECA MARKER? YES  NO   
 DID YOU TEACH ON LIVING ARTS (Y152)? YES  NO

1. To award **Achieved** for Learning Outcome 2 ("You have applied relevant ideas from the course") do you look for evidence of:-

students 'using' course ideas?

students 'citing' course material?

only if 'use' of both course ideas and 'citing' from the course is evident?

2. How do you explain 'techniques' in terms of using the Study Diamond to your students:-

For Poetry?

For History?

For Art History?

3. How do you describe 'context' in terms of using the Study Diamond to your students?

For Poetry?

For History?

For Art History?

4. What do students struggle with most:

In Poetry: Using the Study Diamond  Understanding Haiku  Completing TMA01

In History: Using the Study Diamond  Understanding the Resources  Writing the Essay

In Art History: Using the Study Diamond  Finding meaning in the art works  Using and citing References

5. Have you used the Study Diamond Framework with students on other courses? YES  NO

If YES please indicate which course  If NO, will you? YES  NO

6. Do you consider students' use of the Study Diamond plays a significant part in developing their ability to:

Express an opinion:  not generally  for some students  for most students

Offer an interpretation:  not generally  for some students  for most students

Formulate a structured argument:  not generally  for some students  for most students

7a What do you see are the benefits to students in using the Study Diamond framework?

9. As an experienced educator, what draws you to teach on Openings? (You can tick more than one choice).

- a) The Course content     YES  (I am passionate about the Arts/Humanities)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- b) The Students            YES  (I enjoy the diversity of Openings students and contributing  
                                      to the University's widening participation perspective)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- c) The presentation Model YES  (I wanted the flexibility of multiple short  
                                      presentations)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- d) The delivery Model     YES  (No face-to-face tutorials)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- e) Other

7b. What do you see are the disadvantages?

8a. In terms of 'open learning' as a pedagogical approach, what do you consider are the benefits of one-to-one telephone tutoring?

8b. What are the disadvantages?

9. As an experienced educator, what draws you to teach on Openings? (You can tick more than one choice).

- a) The Course content     YES  (I am passionate about the Arts/Humanities)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- b) The Students            YES  (I enjoy the diversity of Openings students and contributing  
                                      to the University's widening participation perspective)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- c) The presentation Model YES  (I wanted the flexibility of multiple short  
                                      presentations)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- d) The delivery Model     YES  (No face-to-face tutorials)  
                                      NO  (Not especially significant)
- e) Other

10. Additional comments you feel might be helpful to this study.

INFORMED CONSENT

(Part B)

1. I would be interested in taking part in a Focus Group  YES  NO
  2. I would be interested in taking part in a Telephone Interview  YES  NO
- My email is:
- My nearest OU Regional office is:
3. I would like to receive a copy of the final report:  YES  NO
  4. I am happy to take part in this survey but do not wish to participate further:

Reminder notice posted during November and December 2009

Study Diamond Survey - Y160

My thanks to all colleagues who have kindly taken the time to add their voices to this survey. For those of you who are still interested in taking part, this is just a gentle reminder of the website link - please go to [www.meadowlandsassociates.co.uk](http://www.meadowlandsassociates.co.uk) from where you can go straight to the questionnaire (it will take you approx. 10-15 mins to complete). The link will be live until the end of December so if you have a spare few minutes over the Xmas break please do log on...your input is valued and appreciated and will be incorporated into an evaluation as to how effective and useful this process is to tutors in guiding their students through the difficult concept of critical thinking.

Thank you for taking part and if it's not too early... have a great Christmas!

Best rgds: Gill Clifton

Tutor Y160 & E243

## APPENDIX 4

### Example of Scoping Instrument consisting of statements from initial findings.

EMERGING THEMES	STATEMENTS DRAWN FROM INITIAL ANALYSIS	AGRE E	D/AGREE	DON'T KNOW
The Study Diamond framework/ concepts	Effects help tutors to transform the way students react to texts and artefacts	x		
	Effects help students to value their own opinion and in doing so builds their confidence	x		
	The Study Diamond empowers students to see the link between effects and techniques	x		
	The visual imagery of the Study Diamond helps students see the links between each concept			x
	The Study Diamond also works as an iterative cycle - allows for change and development in interpretation and/or meaning	x		
	The Study Diamond does not work so well with History	x		
	I modify the Study Diamond to fit each of the three disciplines		x	
The unique delivery Model of Y160 and Openings generically	Encourages a closer Tutor/Student relationship	x		
	Telephone 1-2-1 requires Tutors to be intuitive, spontaneously responding to student needs	x		
	The integration of Study Skills in Y160 means this is not taught in a vacuum	xx		
	The Delivery Model is a more effective teaching method that face-2-face			
Widening Participation and Life Long Learning	The cohort is often diverse in their needs which can be challenging and means tutors have to be spontaneously responsive and	x		

	flexible			
	The Study Diamond approach can unlock students interests and enthusiasm, particular for the less able or confident student	x		
<b>For Tutors who also teach on AA100:-</b>	I can usually tell from the first TMA if an AA100 student has completed Y160			
	I use the principles of the Study Diamond with my AA100 students			
	I see evidence of AA100 students bringing with them the principles of the Study Diamond			



## APPENDIX 5

### Prompt sheet for Tutor Telephone Interviews

#### PROMPT SHEET FOR TUTOR TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS (May 2009)

#### Developing a new theoretical understanding of learning/teaching critical thinking using the Study Diamond and seeking possible transferability

1. The OU Tutor role is unusual in that it is part-time(?); how does this fit in with your full-time work?

2. Can you give examples of how you work with and/or use the SD in your teaching?

3. To what extent do you adapt/modify the SD to align with the three disciplines?

4. How do you view your role – i.e. one-2-one telephone tutoring with a diverse cohort; do you approach this role any differently to your other teaching? How, why?

5. Changing face of education; emphasis on diversity of students; OU and the notion of 'open entry': how do you accommodate the diversity of students in your teaching? What strategies do you draw on?

6. Given the diversity of students and the way in which study skills are embedded into Y160, to what extent does the SD support the pedagogy of an integrated approach to teaching study skills?

7. As the programme aligns with the WP rhetoric there is an argument (Peters 1973) that to be 'educated' goes beyond merely learning for the purpose of being economically self-sufficient and extends to seeing education as a means of enabling individuals to change (have confidence to change) their cognitive perspective (ideas/knowledge/learning/understanding) as a result of accumulating new and on-going knowledge. What is your experience of how students embrace the approach to learning as they progress through the course.

8. Do you have any experience of transformative learning (theory) occurring through the cognitive approach and/or subject content embedded in Y160 – example from my experience: students report they "will never read the newspaper, watch a TV programme in the same way again"?

## APPENDIX 6

### Screen grab from Telephone Interview data analysis

THEMES	DIALOGUE
	<p>Yellow Tutor D; Grey Tutor C; Blue Tutor B; Pink Tutor A; Green Tutor E</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pedagogy – blended learning</li> <li>• Having completed Y160, students are less likely to drop out</li> <li>• A few students use the SD on other OU courses</li> </ul>	<p>Is a blended learning approach;...not enough f2f, students need more support. I teach on AA100 – I would say I have noticed, the more able students on AA100 tend not to have done it (Y160) but I do know from earlier on in the Openings programme, that if they have done Openings and then go on they are less likely to drop out than other students.</p> <p>A few students...have found the SD useful in A103 and AA100 because I tend to ask them and generally you get one or two at most in your typical group of 15 on a level one arts course that have done Openings. I certainly do encourage them to particularly look at Techniques and Effects...and people who haven't done Y160 to do it as well but might not call it the SD. In AA100 there is a course companion which has study skills development. And I think some weaker students could probably do with it...because I actually include an essay writing session in the AA100 cluster f2f tutorial because I feel students need it so much. I also give them something to help them when they do the reflective assignment in AA100 and I suspect that people who have done Openings will feel less apprehensive about doing that than the students who haven't done Openings....that's another thing I like about Y160 – I like lots of things about Y160.</p> <p>Many students have said they really wish they have taken this course earlier – they have learnt stuff that would have helped them.</p> <p>AA100 is also blended learning – podcast, blogs etc. there are f-2-f but not so many + telephone tutorials.</p>

## APPENDIX 7

**(TMA01 Modified from "Tutor Marking Guidelines" (March, 2010))**

Performance Indicator for Learning Outcome 1-4	Evidence needed to achieve the learning outcome	Links to skills for analysis and argument embedded in the Study Diamond framework
1. Included are relevant specialist words and phrases from the course	Reference is made to subject-specific terminology used in the course	'Techniques', pertinent to each discipline are identified
2. Relevant ideas from the course are applied	Relevant concepts and approaches from the course are employed and appropriately applied	Ideas from the course are correctly linked to 'meaning' which could be one's own interpretation or interpretation discussed in the course
3. Relevant evidence, examples and/or information from the course are selected	Appropriate examples from the course are identified that are relevant to the question	Evidence, examples correctly relate to what is known about the 'context' of the question topic
4. Produced a relevant and reasoned answer	Ideas are linked and evidence produced to present a reasoned answer	'Techniques' are explained <i>in terms of their 'effects'</i> and linked with contextual information to evidence the response to the question