

**A Qualifying Research Paper
Submitted for the Degree of
Master of Education**

*Integrating the
Curriculum:
A Story of Three Teachers*

Lilja M. Jónsdóttir

OISE no. 009443621

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

Summer 1995

Table of Contents

Preface	4
Chapter 1	
Introduction	5
1.1 Outline of the Master's Research Paper	5
1.2 Selection of Topic	6
Chapter 2	
Conceptions of Integrated Curriculum	9
2.1 Terms Used for Integrative Approaches to Teaching and Learning	9
2.2 What Is Integration? - Toward a Definition of Concepts	10
2.3 Why Integrate the Curriculum	15
2.4 Scepticism about Curriculum Integration	18
2.5 Models of Curriculum Integration	21
2.6 Conclusion	24
Chapter 3	
Research Methods	27
3.1 Selection of Research Method	27
3.2 Selection of Teachers	28
3.3 The Interviews	30
Chapter 4	
Stories of Three Teachers	34
4.1 Childhood Stories	35
4.1.1 Some Comments	39
4.2 Three Young Women	39
4.2.1 Some Comments	43
4.3 Three Teachers	43
4.4 Good Teachers – Conclusions	45
Chapter 5	
Major Findings	49
5.1 Why they started	49
5.2 What does integration mean to you?	51
5.3 How	52
5.4 The Process	62
5.5 Problems and Concerns	64
5.6 Evaluation	66
5.7 Reflections	67
Chapter 6	
Discussion	71
Chapter 7	
Conclusions	76
References	81
Appendix	84

This paer is dedicated to my sisters
and my very good friends,
Dagbjört and Arnheiður

*“You never know that you're
learning it, but then you walk out at
the end of the year and you know you
learned it!”¹*

¹ A remark made by a student experiencing integration.

Preface

This paper describes an interview based study of how and why three middle school teachers integrate the curriculum. Two of the teachers are Canadian and one, the author, is Icelandic. The study, which is exploratory and self-reflective in nature, is also seen as a pilot study for research I plan to undertake in Iceland in the near future.

I would like to thank Dr. Jack Miller, my supervisor, for his understanding and encouragement and Dr. Susan Drake for all her inspirations. I would also like to thank my second reader, Dr. Joel Weiss, for undertaking this role with such short notice.

My gratitude goes to the two teachers who participated in this study, Selma and Laura, who so generously gave me insight into their personal practical knowledge.

My very good friends at OISE, Tracey, Gary and Jason, thank you for your heartfelt friendship, good humour and your steadfast support. I owe Jason special thanks for his many constructive remarks while editing an earlier draft of this paper.

Last but not least, my very deep gratitude goes to my husband, Ingvar, who has given me so much support and encouragement throughout the work on this paper; thank you for your caring and understanding. And my two sons, Ragnar Freyr and Kjartan Þór, thank you for your way of helping me during this time in Canada.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This introductory chapter provides an outline of the project, its purpose and scope. The study was done in the spring of 1995. The proposal for this project was submitted at the beginning of April 1995, and the collection of data was then carried out in May.

1.1 Outline of the Master's Research Paper

In this master's research paper I will deal with an educational practice which is very close to my heart. Good & Brophy (1987) say that “...when teachers are enthusiastic about their subject matter, students are likely to pay attention and develop enthusiasm of their own... they are also more likely to achieve at higher levels” (p. 478). I would like to add that these teachers will also find *time-and-ways* to practice what they are enthusiastic about.

The focus of my enthusiasm in education for over a decade has been project work; theme studies; curriculum integration. In my mind all these three terms have meant the same thing; that the teacher is engaging the students in active learning where all the students can be involved and successful, and which is geared against the fragmentation of discipline studies. Instead of just reading about things, students also get the opportunity to experience them. They learn how to seek knowledge themselves, as well as what to do with it and how to share it with others.

Susan Drake (1993) offers “...the metaphor of a journey as a guide for the process ...”. (p. 6) Our lives are seen as a spiral of which each winding can be identified as one journey. The plot which is characteristic of most adventures is used as the basis for “The Journey of the Hero”. My journey as a teacher who has been striving for years to integrate the curriculum, has definitely been an adventure, –several adventures, with the separations, the demons and the dragons, the magic helpers, the new beginnings and the returns to services. This paper will describe the integration adventures of three teachers.

The structure of this Master's Research Paper is as follows: This *introductory chapter* presents the framework for the paper, discusses the reasons for the selection of the research topic and the purpose of this research. *Chapter 2* reviews the literature on integrated curriculum, discusses what it is, why it is considered important, and the scepticism that integration encounters. *Chapter 3* describes the methodology adopted, research techniques, and the main methods applied in the analyses of the data. *Chapter 5* describes the major findings, forming the major part of this paper. *Chapter 6* discusses further some of the issues raised, and *chapter 7* presents some concluding remarks and links it with future plans.

1.2 Selection of Topic

The motivation for doing my master's research on integrated curriculum originated from my experience in carrying out integrated studies with my students, and with my experience from working as an advisor and a facilitator with practising teachers in Iceland. I have been using integrated curriculum studies with my students for over a decade and I wanted to gain a better understanding of how teachers implement integrated studies in the classroom.

Also, I felt the need to reflect on my experiences in concert with other teachers.

The intention of my master's research is to find out why and how teachers integrate curriculum, when they started integrating the curriculum, which disciplines they integrate and why. I also wanted to learn how they plan, carry out and evaluate the integrated curriculum in order to compare what teachers are doing with my own experience.

I have given in-service training courses for teachers which dealt in part with integrated curriculum. I have also worked with small groups of teachers as a consultant. But I have felt that somehow change within the classroom does not take place that easily. My work within the educational field left me with the feeling that I did not have the right “tools” to work with teachers on educational development. I wanted to learn about and obtain practical training in research methods, and to search for ways in which one can, *in co-operation with teachers*, bring about school-wide improvement in the spirit of creative and active learning.

Throughout the six courses I have taken at OISE two themes have emerged; narrative inquiry with personal practical knowledge, and holistic integrated curriculum with the notion of educating for the 21st century. Glesne and Peskhin (1992) say that “It is your passion for your chosen topic that will be a motivating factor... You tap into your subjectivity, of which passion is a part, to find topics appropriate to your interests” (p. 14). And these are, at this time and place, my true “passions” in research and education.

I have chosen the topic for my master's research in light of the fact that I feel it is necessary to acquire a better understanding of why teachers integrate the curriculum, what their understanding is of integration and how they carry

it out in their classrooms. Since “Qualitative inquiry... generally searches for understanding of some phenomenon” (Glesne, C. & Peskin, A.,1992:16), it seems to combine what I want to study with the method I want to use to probe into the chosen topic.

It is my intention to do research on this topic in the future with the participation of Icelandic teachers, thus this research can be viewed as a pilot study. Further, it was my hope that by doing this research it would provide me with the experience and understanding necessary for working with teachers and my students in Iceland, and for future development in this field.

Chapter 2

Conceptions of Integrated Curriculum –A Review of the Literature–

Since life is “interdisciplinary” at least some portion of the school curriculum should also be interdisciplinary if it is to help young people relate to life.

(Vars, 1987:75)

This chapter reviews some of the literature concerning integrative approaches to teaching and learning. When actually reviewing the literature, I soon found the need to answer four questions in order to get a broad scope, and to really understand what is being *said* about curriculum integration, as opposed to what is *being* done about it in classrooms. Consequently the review will be presented under the following headings: *2.1 Terms Used for Integrative Approaches to Teaching and Learning*, *2.2 What Is Integration? - Toward a Definition of Concepts*, *2.3. Why Integrate the Curriculum*, *2.4. Scepticism about Curriculum Integration*. and *2.5 Models of Curriculum Integration*. Finally, there is a conclusive section.

2.1 Terms Used for Integrative Approaches to Teaching and Learning

One problem in discussing curriculum integration is the multiplicity of terms used in relation to this concept. Some of the literature (Fogarty, 1991, Jacobs,

1989, Vars, 1993), attempts to clarify the meaning that lies behind the variety of terms used. Others (Gardner, 1993, Stevenson, 1992), do not discuss this variety of terms. While many simply talk about curriculum integration, integrating the curriculum or just integration, others use for example terms like theme studies (Gamberg et.al., 1988), thematic studies (Bell & Fifield, 1990), exploratory studies, themes or inquiry (Stevenson, 1992), projects (Waters, 1982), the project method (Gardner, 1993) or interdisciplinary instruction (Lounsbury, 1992). In my opinion all these terms have a similar meaning given their context. The reason somebody chooses a particular term at a given moment may simply have something to do with taste or with what people have grown used to using. I am accustomed to using the terms integration, theme studies or project work more or less equally. In this paper, all these terms will be used, depending on what I will see fit, or to whom I may be referring.

2.2 What Is Integration? - Toward a Definition of Concepts

In the literature that I have examined, an attempt to clearly define the concept “integration”, or the other terms commonly used, is not made as often as one would expect. It is as if some authors almost avoid defining the concept or perhaps they feel that in this time and age teachers are already so familiar with the concept that a definition is not necessary. However, characteristics of integration are frequently mentioned and in various contexts (Gardner, 1991, 1993, Drake, 1992, 1993, Stevenson, 1992, Lounsbury et. al., 1992, for example). Even in a chapter labelled as “Toward a Definition of Theme Study” (Gamberg et.al., 1988) no clear definition can be found, but several characteristics or criteria that must be fulfilled for a theme to qualify as deserving of study, can be teased out:

Theme study ...defines what is to be the centre of attention, incorporates many traditional subject areas within it, and develops over a long period of time. ...it involves ...both a focused study and an in-depth study. ...Theme study incorporates processes that involve focusing on meaning to make sense of the world and relying on one's intelligence to solve problems and discover relationships. (p.12)

Miller (1990), as so many others, feels that one of the main contemporary problems, both in education and our society, is fragmentation. He is an advocate for integrated studies as a means to approach this problem. Integrated studies, he says, "...implies a holistic approach to learning and to curriculum since both terms "integrated" and "holistic" imply the notion of connectedness" (p. 2). Hence, the definition he offers is as follows:

The focus of holistic education is on relationships – the relationship between linear thinking and intuition, the relationship between mind and body, the relationships between various domains of knowledge, the relationship between the individual and community, and the relationship between self and Self. In the holistic curriculum the student examines these relationships so that he/she gains both an awareness of them and the skills necessary to transform the relationships where it is appropriate. (Miller, 1988:3)

While some give in-depth definitions like Miller, others just state that most if not all integrated-interdisciplinary units are "...topics of interest to young adolescents [which] can be organized and pursued from multiple points of view" (Stevenson, 1992:178).

The definitions below are from different times and countries, and besides wanting to reflect that, I also wanted them to reflect the diversity of how people have understood this concept. In his book, *Projects in the Primary School*, Kent (1968) says that teachers in Britain have been using projects, under a number of different names, for great many years without really knowing, and he claims that:

A project in the primary school is simply a scheme of work upon which children embark, either singly or in groups, for varying periods of time, based

on a topic which interests each child to such an extent that he or she wants to discover more about it. (p. 9)

Kent also says that projects help breaking down the barriers between subjects.

Jumping several years ahead and to another country, teachers in Iceland would in general recognize the following definition. It can be found in an Icelandic book by Sigurgeirsson (1981), which discusses learning and teaching in the open classroom. There, integration is said to be a natural component of such a classroom:

fiegar samflætt viðfangsefni er skipulagt er miðað við ákveðin markmið, áhuga og froska nemenda og aðstæður hverju sinni. Í stað floss að leggja stund á ákveðnar námsgreinar er ákveðið viðfangsefni tekið til athugunar og flá athugað frá mörgum hliðum; upplýsinga er aflað án tillits til floss hvernig hinar þmsu staðreyndir kunna að flokkast í náms-og fræðigreinar í hefðbundnum skilningi. (bls. 67)

When an integrated unit is planned, the focus is on the objectives, student's interest and developmental needs, and on other circumstances. In stead of focusing on certain subjects, an issue or topic is studied in-depth and from a variety of viewpoints and information is gathered without considering how it relates to the traditional subjects or disciplines. (p. 67, in my translation)

Sigurgeirsson stresses that it is not the integration per se that should be the centre of attention but that it is the logical outcome when the objectives and processes form the basis for the teaching and learning.

Vars (1990) talks about interdisciplinary teaching and says that it has been around in some form for a long time in the middle level education in the USA:

Interdisciplinary teaching ...is instruction that emphasizes the connections, the interrelations, among various areas of knowledge. In its broadest sense it is designed to help students to "to see life whole," to integrate and make sense out of the myriad experiences they have, both in school and in the world at large. (p. 1)

Vars maintains that since the first publication of this monograph, as he calls his book, "...the interest in interdisciplinary teaching and curriculum has increased exponentially" (ibid).

One author, Jacobs (1989), emphasizes that interdisciplinarity does not stress delineation but linkages. She defines the term interdisciplinary as:

A knowledge view and curriculum approach that consciously applies methodology and language from more than one discipline to examine a central theme, issue, problem, topic, or experience. (p. 8)

Jacobs feels that interdisciplinarity is a holistic approach in the spirit of Plato's ideal of unity, thus it has its place with a tradition in Western thought. And she goes on to say that "Interdisciplinarity nurtures a different perspective with focus on themes and problems of life experience" (ibid.).

The most recent definition that I came across is made by Beane (1995) who views curriculum integration as

...a way of thinking about what schools are for, about the sources of curriculum, and about the uses of knowledge. Curriculum integration begins with the idea that the sources of curriculum ought to be problems, issues, and concerns posed by life itself. (p. 616)

Beane claims that when taking this one step further it might be said that the central focus of curriculum integration is the search for self- and social meaning.

Now, what do these definitions have in common, one might ask? Is it possible to see a common thread that weaves itself through them? When comparing the above definitions I feel that they are a variation to the same theme or the same refrain. That refrain is composed of things like various kinds of relationships, connections between fields of disciplines, real life

issues, problem solving, in-depth study, – the interest component is important and so is the multiple points of view.

Finally, as the teachers in the study come from Canada and Iceland, I felt it was appropriate to probe into the curriculum guides of both Ontario and Iceland to see how the curriculum integration concept was presented there. The *Icelandic General Curriculum Guidelines* (1989) proclaim that the divisions of the learning into different subject areas in public schools is to a great extent built on tradition. This leads to fragmentations and the danger of unnecessary repetition or that some areas might be left out. It goes on to say that:

Sú málvenja hefur skapast a> kalla fla> samflættingu flegar vi>fangsefni í námi krefjast sjónarmi>a, flekkingar og færni sem sótt er til fleiri en einnar námsgreinar. Markviss samflætting... hefur í för me> sér a> hvert vi>fangsefni er athuga> frá mörgum hli>um og ætti flví a> stu>la a> dþpri skilningi og heildarsþn. (bls. 32)

When the learning requires the aspects, knowledge and skills from more than one discipline it is called integration. Integration means that each issue or topic is studied from many viewpoints which should lead to a deeper understanding and broader overview. (p. 32, in my translation)

It is added that an integrated curriculum usually revolves around a certain theme or an issue. In the *Icelandic General Curriculum Guidelines* teachers are encouraged to implement integration in their practice.

The *Common Curriculum of Ontario, Grades 1-9* (1993) has a special section on integration, called *Towards an Integrated Curriculum*. It says that all Canadians need qualities that will help them to understand and respond constructively to change if they are to live successfully in today's and tomorrow's world:

An integrated curriculum is one that is designed to develop ...the ability to apply existing skills and knowledge in new ways in order to meet needs and solve problems as they arise. (p. 1)

It is explained that many of the problems that presently confront the society result from the failure of people to perceive the world as a whole.

The main difference between the two curriculum documents is not the actual definitions but what is said “between the lines”. The Icelandic one is perhaps more objective, it retains more or less strictly to undebatable facts, but the one from Ontario is more political. The writers of the latter document seem to have been able to put their fingerprints on the common curriculum, but that may not mean that people of the whole political spectrum in Ontario would like to sign it. While the Ontario document strongly recommends curriculum integration –the Icelandic one only encourages teachers to integrate.

As can be expected in pluralistic societies, educators and parents alike, are not in a total agreement on whether integrating the curriculum is a better choice as opposed to the teaching and learning in a more subject centred way. In the next section I will outline the arguments most often provided for integrating the curriculum.

2.3 Why Integrate the Curriculum

I have been using project work or integration, for over ten years and in my experience the benefits of it overpowers any other particular method of teaching *because* it actually calls for diverse teaching methods and it creates various opportunities for the active involvement of students in planning and carrying out individual projects.

In the myriad literature on curriculum integration there is no lack of reasons given for using this approach in teaching and learning. Gardner (1993) feels that the project method is the most important avenue for students' growth in schools because it "...gives rise to opportunities for new understanding... [students can] marshal previously mastered concepts and skills in the service of a new goal or enterprise... [projects] foster positive cooperativeness, ...they model ...useful work, ...they allow students to discover their areas of strength... [and] projects provide an excellent occasion for a "metacognitive" or reflective activity" (p. 114-118). Additional to this, the following arguments for the use of integrated studies or project work are among the most frequently mentioned:

Connections to real life – Integrated curriculum is learning that makes connections (Miller, 1990), and since in our daily lives we tend to approach problems, or life situations, holistically rather than from the standpoint of a single discipline, we have to provide students with opportunities to deal with those real-life issues in schools.

The growth of knowledge – Jacobs (1989) talks about the growth of knowledge in all areas of the disciplines which has left teachers with the wrestle of not only what should be taught but what can be eliminated from the curriculum. Drake (1993) says that this has led to quite some duplication in the students' learning, but by reducing duplication of both skills and content, integration allows us to teach more.

Topics of interest – Children acquire a host of skills through learning how to research topics of their own interest (Gamberg et.al., 1988), and they are active participants in their own learning when intrinsic motivation is substituted for an extrinsic motivation (Gardner, 1993).

Responsibility – When students can select activities or topics which they find interesting and more matched to their abilities, they are likely to take more responsibility for their own learning (Gamberg et. al., 1988).

Students use what they know – Gamberg (et. al., 1988) also says that through topics children are learning how to use what they know, and that becomes as a foundation upon which to build new learning in order for them to become independent and critical thinkers.

Relevance – Integrated curriculum is a more effective means of presenting the curriculum, Jacobs argues, (1989) and it becomes more relevant when there are connections between subjects. No matter what the content, she says, we can design active linkages between fields of knowledge. This relevancy issue is of special importance in the minds of many American educators, because of the high drop-out rate in American schools.

Group work, co-operative learning – Properly used projects, says Kent (1968), give children practice in working in groups, developing their initiative, teaching them to use their common sense and putting them in situations which demand social behaviour. Students need to have opportunities to practice, and acquire, social skills when working in a school setting.

Learning styles – Maute (1992) finds that cross-curricular connections can help reach students with various learning styles, it also allows for capitalizing on students' subject preferences. This is especially important where mainstreaming is actually practiced, integration helps to move away from a more mediocre way of presenting the curriculum.

Understanding of self – Beane (1995) notes that knowledge is called forth in the context of problems, interests, issues, and concerns at hand when integrating, and that young people are encouraged to integrate learning

experiences into their schemes of meaning so as to broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and their world.

Research – Vars (1993) maintains that about fifty years of research and more than eighty studies show that students in interdisciplinary programs do as well, and often better, on standardized tests when compared with those in the usual separate subjects programs.

In addition to this, the teachers in Iceland who integrate the curriculum tend, in general, put great emphasis on things like; active learning, higher and more lasting motivation, variety of opportunities for aesthetic expression of their learning and learning to use and draw inferences from a variety of resources.

I would like to close this overview with what Drake (1993) calls making sense of curriculum integration: Integration connects subject areas in ways that reflect the real world, the curriculum is set in the context of human experience, students grapple with real issues and when searching for practical solutions, students require higher-order thinking skills. According to recent brain research the brain is a pattern-seeking organ that operates best in an information-rich environment and it searches for interconnections as its way of making meaning, so it simply makes sense to integrate, to teach through connections.

But it would be a mistake though, to consider curriculum integration as “a panacea for all educational ills” (Gardner, 1993). As mentioned earlier, there are people who have some doubts. In the next section I will address some of these doubts.

2.4 Scepticism about Curriculum Integration

Is there really a need to develop integrated curriculum, or is it just another passing fad? Curriculum integration has been around for number of years according to some references (Kent, 1968, Vars, 1993, Gardner, 1993, Lounsbury, 1992, Gehrke, 1991), even for decades in some places. Still, those who integrate seem to be greatly outnumbered by those who do not. As put by Goodlad (1984):

Inside the classrooms we observed, teachers lectured and questioned, students listened, textbooks were the most common medium for teaching and learning - there was much pedagogical conformity. (p. 247)

An Icelandic research project done in twenty Icelandic classrooms reveals that subject integration was used in only 3% of the 667 periods observed (Sigurgeirsson, 1992: 274). If so, why might that be the case? Following are some of the reason put forth in the literature on curriculum integration, which might explain some of the ambivalence that perhaps acts against integration:

Content-separated curriculum – As can be expected, the most frequently mention reason is the extremely strong force of habit, even though it is not phrased exactly as such in the literature. For decades the organization of the planned curriculum has been around separate subject areas (Beane, 1991, 1995, Case, 1994, 1991, Jacobs, 1989, Noddings, 1995, Vars, 1993, for example), and “...it has remained difficult to restructure our pigeonholed, content-separated curriculum to a more interdisciplinary/integrated one” (Swaim, 1992). According to Beane (1995), this is a legacy of Western-style classical humanism, which views the world in divided compartments, and it goes further back than several decades. It originates, he claims, in the last century when the mind was described as a compartmentalized muscle whose parts were to be exercised separately by particular disciplines. And he adds that the separate-subject approach is protected by four powerful factors: First,

the network of the educational elites, who have “invested” too much of their time and effort in the subject areas. Second, the parents and other adults, who feel threatened by integration because it does not look like anything they remember from their own schooling. Third, the teachers and supervisors, who often build their professional identities along subject-matter lines, and finally various conservative groups, which are noisily reclaiming ground and goods they believe have been taken away from them by progressives.

The Curriculum Guides – Many teachers feel, that since the general school curriculum is divided into subject areas it really dictates how the school day should be structured. It is much easier to “... teach the National Curriculum ...” (Tyler, 1992), if the discrete subjects approach is used. Otherwise they will not be able to cover all the subscribed content. This view is very often expressed by teachers when integration is brought into a discussion on education.

Standardized tests – Several groups of critics of education in America today, the neoconservatives, as Gardner (1993) calls them, say there should be the same curriculum for all students, the same methods of teaching, and the same standardized methods of assessment. Teachers complain that the pressure to produce high scores on standardized tests inhibits the work which can give the students a feeling of the wholeness in their education (Noddings, 1995).

Teacher education – A project is only as good as the teacher using it (Kent, 1968). Most teachers have never seen or experienced an integrative curriculum, their concept of one is particularly vague; they have few, if any, images of the forms it can take (Gehrke, 1991). They may feel that they do not possess the necessary skills needed to implement interdisciplinary teaching successfully (Vars, 1993).

Confusion – The understanding and practice of curriculum integration is not free of confusion, the term is used in association with almost any approach that moves beyond that of strictly separate subjects (Beane, 1995). This ambiguity causes many teachers to conclude that they are already integrating their curriculum when they indeed are not (Case, 1994).

In addition to the above ambivalence, some of the criticism concerning curriculum integration addressed in the literature entail such matters as; the lack of intellectual rigor or substance in some themes (Vars, 1993, Gardner, 1993); that some projects can become a license for fooling around (Gardner, 1993); that curriculum integration is not an end in itself but a means for achieving basic educational goals (Brophy & Alleman, 1991); and that curriculum integration is an educational slogan and as such, it is seductive and urges action without providing much direction (Case, 1994).

As noted earlier, curriculum integration is only as good as the teacher planning it. I find that a great deal more is demanded of the teacher who integrates the curriculum, than when the teacher almost mindlessly passes the content of a textbook in a given subject to inactive students. In my experience, planning integration means heavier workload, perhaps not constantly but periodically. Everything must be more carefully thought out and organized, and it demands more creativity on behalf of the teacher. But this can also be said of all good teaching, someone might argue. The question arises whether a good teacher is not more likely to see the benefits of integrating the curriculum; for his or her teaching and for the learning of his or her students, – as opposed to teaching in this fragmented manner as most often seems to be the case.

2.5 Models of Curriculum Integration

The literature describes several models or approaches to integration that teachers can use to develop a plan for working towards curriculum integration. The models can range from what Vars (1993) considers the most common; those that relate to the subjects and the boundaries between them, where “...each teacher remains a specialist in one field but contributes to a jointly-planned unit...” (p.27), to those that emphasize “...interconnections among subject areas, logical and intuitive thinking, mind and body, self and environment” (Drake, 1992:v).

An example of a particular model is Drake's, et. al. (1993), Story Model. This model is based on a theme or a focus, which is explored by looking at past and present stories through this focus, and creating a possible future story. Drake, et. al., say that the Story Model is generic. They “...believe that the process works for any topic at any educational level. It is essentially a model for understanding the process of change” (p.9).

Fogarty (1991) outlines ten different models to connect and integrate the curricula which she calls Fragmented, Connected, Nested, Sequenced, Shared, Webbed, Threaded, Integrated, Immersed and Networked. She adds that “...integrating the curricula can be any or all (and more) of the aforementioned models. Each teacher and each learner views the integration process differently” (p.xii).

Jacobs (1989) talks about a choice between six options which can be used as planning tools for our programs and four of those can be identified as approaches that work towards curriculum integration; Multi-disciplinary, Inter-disciplinary Units/Courses, Integrated Day and Complete Program. In Jacobs's experience, the greatest success in integration manifests itself when educators do not take an all-or-nothing propositions in interdisciplinary

designs. She goes on to describe on particular model which she calls the Interdisciplinary Concept Model. This model is to “...bring together the discipline perspectives and focus them on the investigation of a target theme, issue, or problem“ (p.54).

The KISS Model of integration (Drake)² is a generic model that starts with an exploratory session with those involved to find common points of interest, current belief systems and possible topics or themes. Then there are six steps to be taken when developing a unit.

Miller (1988, 1990, 1993) identifies three different levels of making connections between subjects, thus integrate them, and that at each level concepts become more numerous and complex: the Multidisciplinary Level, where there may be some linkages through the content of separate subjects, the Interdisciplinary Level, where there is integration between two to three subjects around problems, questions, or limited themes, and the Transdisciplinary Level, where there is integration of nearly all subjects around broad patterns or themes (1993:113-114).

Finally, I will give an example of a model widely advocated in Iceland which is called the Storyline Method developed by Bell, et.al. (1990). This method creates a context for curriculum linkage through a topic study called the Storyline. The essential elements of the Storyline are setting, characters and events. The unfolding narrative provides a structure and logic to curricula connections. The presentation and sequence of key questions is all important in the Storyline Method. Each Storyline episode is dependent on the preceding one (p.3).

² A handout in a course on Integrated Curriculum, given by Susan Drake, OISE, spring-term 1995.

2.6 Conclusion

In the last five sections, I have discussed the terms and definitions of curriculum integration, as well as several of the arguments given for and against this approach. Also described are some of the models of curriculum integration. It has been noted that numerous terms were used in the literature discussing curriculum integration. This may be confusing but should not be viewed as a major problem. It is natural that various different terms emerge in a growing fertile field. I believe there always will be diverse ways of integrating, depending on the nature of the approach. Integration is about dealing with people in social situations, with real-life issues and problems of interest to the students; it is a learning that can include the past, present and the future of the students, in a divergent context. Further, the teacher always has to bear in mind the situation, development and abilities of his or her students. The definition that I feel can sum up what integration is about is as follows:

A project is a complete piece of work in which the children have made individual and group contributions towards the whole. Information and impressions are gathered, organized, recorded and communicated through a variety of media. First-hand experience, gained through investigation and problem-solving, is particularly important. For each project a number of goals, some broad and others quite specific, will be determined by the teacher. (Waters, 1982:1-2)

In this definition the words relationships or connections or real-life issues for example, are not used, but they are included in there all the same. But having said that, I feel I have to emphasize that in my opinion we do not need *one* definition for curriculum integration. I think that we have to agree on, that in order for continuing growth and development in this field of teaching and

learning, we need to be inclusive in terms of what it means to integrate and which issues are most important. That is precisely the fuel that will keep the discussions on different definitions and meanings thriving and growing.

Concerning scepticism regarding integration, it is only realistic to expect that people will continue to disagree on whether integration is a good idea or not. For great number of people it is very much a political issue. This leaves us, the advocates and practitioners of curriculum integration, with the responsibility to do whatever we can to promote it. Every single step towards integration, how trivial it may seem, is important. No matter how much we might want to take the leap all the way, because no less than a paradigm shift is needed (Beane, 1995), we have to be patient and work with our best allies; namely the students and their parents.

I agree with Beane when he claims that curriculum integration is not about doing the same things differently but about doing something truly different, and I also agree with him when he says that "...shifting to a different approach thus calls the structures themselves into question". (p.622) But in my opinion this is not very realistic, because if we are going to have to wait for this much needed structural changes of the educational system, nothing will ever change, or to be optimistic, at least not in the near future.

In my experience, many teachers claim that they have an obligation to do what the curriculum guides "command". This appears to be true for teachers outside Iceland, as well, as Good (1987) remarks:

Much of the school curriculum... is devoted to teaching simple facts and basic skills that are learned through rote memory and practice. (p. 181)

The paradox in this argument is that at the same time as teachers maintain that they have this obligation, they all too often seem to leave out what the

same curriculum guides also say about methods and ideas of teaching and learning which are geared towards a more creative, non-fragmented schooling.

The final conclusion I feel that I can come to after reviewing the literature is that curriculum integration is an educational approach very much more talked about than used. This is especially true for those who agree with Swaim (1992) when she says that “completing three or four interdisciplinary units of study per year should be viewed as part of the transition to an interdisciplinary curriculum... not as THE interdisciplinary curriculum” (p. v). As true as this may be, one must be careful not to discourage teachers by expecting too much before they even begin to integrate. Being the optimist I am, most of the time, I do want to believe Gehrke (1991) when she suggests that most teachers can be taught—or perhaps coached—to use curriculum integration, at least some of the time. And this, can be considered the first step towards the end-in-view.

Chapter 3

Research Methods

Life can only be understood backwards. It must be lived forwards.

Sören Kirkegaard (1813-1855)

This chapter describes the selection of the research method used, the criteria used for selecting the teachers who took part in this study, and the teachers interviews.

3.1 Selection of Research Method

This paper is based on a research method which I felt would be more likely to fit my style of working with people than any other method; the narrative inquiry perspective. According to Connelly and Clandinin

Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experiences by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future. (1988, p. 24)

The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of how humans experience the world. I came across this method for the first time in a course I took at OISE in the fall of 1994, and I immediately felt drawn towards it. I found it fascinating and inviting. I knew that I would feel comfortable using it, and it is a research method that I want to try and use with teachers in Iceland.

It was my intention to tap into the three major research techniques that dominate qualitative research in order to, as Glesne & Peskin (1992) put it ...draw on some combination of techniques to collect research data, rather than [using] a single technique". (p. 24)

Accordingly, I was going to include observation, interviewing and document collection for collecting data. When it actually came to data collection the time available was not as ample as expected, and as a result, narratives, collected through formal and informal interviewing and conversations, constitutes the major part of the research data. I also visited the teachers' classrooms; observed their teaching and interaction with the children informally, exchanged comments and talked with their students. This was done more in order for me to develop a more complete picture and hopefully understanding of the teachers and their practice than as a formal part of the data to be analyzed. Furthermore, for the same purpose I collected several samples of documents and wrote down descriptions of what these teachers have handed out to their students and used during integration.

3.2 Selection of Teachers

When selecting the teachers for the study I used the criteria that they:

- had experience in integrating the curriculum
- were teachers of two different grades of four through eight
- were teachers who have different approaches to integration
- were teachers who have different teaching experience

Initially, I wanted to find teachers who were experienced in integrating the curriculum. Then, since I have, myself, been a teacher of grades four

through eight for the past 16 years I had in mind teachers of at least two of those grade levels. The reason for this was for me to be able to contrast their practices with the ones I use. I also wanted to study teachers who use different methods of integrating, because I hoped to learn more about integration methods differing from mine. Finally, I wanted to speak with and observe teachers who have different teaching experiences, in terms of how many years they have been teaching, in order to find out whether their experience would result in different methods of applying integration in their classes.

To be able to make this choice I visited several alternative schools in Toronto, Canada, and observed several teachers of grades four through eight for one day each. What enabled me to choose the schools was the fact that I had taken a course at OISE on Alternative Schools, where one of the assignments was to give a presentation on an alternative school in Toronto. The choice of the two teachers was not difficult. I had been only one or two periods in their classrooms when I realized they were the ones I was looking for. Speaking informally with them during that day confirmed my decision.

When negotiating participation in this study anonymity was promised for all data and reports. Because the alternative schools in Toronto are few, it would be easy to discover who is who. Therefore the teachers have been given pseudonyms. When the teachers were approached with the invitation to participate in this study, their immediate reaction was a positive one. They felt that this was a welcome opportunity to reflect on their practices.

I decided to study two teachers in two very different alternative schools, one who teaches this year in a “family grouping” of grades three/four/five and another one who is a teacher of grade six. These alternative schools include grades K-6. One school has one class in each grade and the other practices

family grouping, thus there is one class of grades 1-2 and another of grades 3-6. The reason for grouping grades 1-2 only is the number of students at that age in the school this year. Both teachers are women. One is in her late forties, she has been teaching for 20 years, and she has an extensive experience planning curriculum integration in co-operation with other teachers. The other one is in her mid thirties, she has been teaching for 5 years and has always worked alone. I am in my mid forties, I have been teaching for 16 years and for the first six years I worked alone, but since then I have been team-teaching. All of us have formal teaching certificates, the two from the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, and myself from the University College of Education in Reykjavik, Iceland.

3.3 The Interviews

My major source of data came from the formal interviews with the two teachers. The interviews took place in their classrooms, in a café and in one of the teacher's home. I asked the teachers first to tell me stories about their background, their childhood and their own schooling. The purpose of this was to probe their experience as students and how they viewed the teachers they had in school. Beattie (1994) says:

...the teacher's knowledge is practical, experiential, and shaped by the teacher's purposes and values, and that this knowledge is multi-faceted, embodied and embedded in the narrative history of the teacher's life". (p. 2)³

Connelly & Clandinin (1988) ask *where* the personal practical knowledge might be, and claim that it is in the person's past experience. I was curious to find out if the teachers' personal practical knowledge; the kind of teachers they

³ This view that is quoted here has been expressed before by for example Elbaz and Connelly & Clandinin.

are, was perhaps to some extent, “embedded” in their experience as students themselves.

When I had transcribed the interviews and analyzed them I took them to my interviewees and ask them to edit them. I invited them to make comments, add something to them or take something out. I wanted to make sure that everything that I put down on paper about the teachers, their past and their present practice, how I represented their lives and points of view, was accurate and to their satisfaction. As Beattie (1995) did with her teacher, I also wanted “my” teachers to have a say in what was written and the way in which it was written, as part of building trust.

In the interview, which lasted about two and a half to three hours, the teachers were asked about their childhood and education, when and why they integrate curriculum, and about how they plan and carry it out, as well as how they evaluate. I used a semi-structured approach (Cohen & Manion, 1985:291-314) and designed a list of questions (see Appendix I). These were both key questions to gather the information I needed, and numerous follow-up questions. I kept in mind Glesne & Peshkin's (1992) advise:

The questions you bring to your interview are not set within a binding contract; they are your best effort before you have had the chance to use them... . (p. 64)

It was also necessary for me to have more questions rather than too few, because English is a foreign language to me and I suspected that the interviews might not flow as naturally as when speaking in Icelandic.

After having interviewed the first teacher, I felt that something was missing in spite of my long list of questions. When I listened to the whole interview I realized, that regardless of what I had perceived as a careful

consideration of what kind of questions I needed to ask, there was nothing on how they actually planned and carried out integration today as opposed to in the past. So I revised the list of questions based on this experience. This meant that I had to go back to interview the first teacher again. This was a valuable experience for me as I got to know my interviewee better and I saw her once more interacting with her class. This was a good exercise for me to have before interviewing the second teacher. Consequently, I needed only one formal interview with the second teacher.

Initially, when I was planning this study the short time I had for data gathering worried me. I was afraid that I would not have enough data to be able to properly present the three teachers' views so that they would give a clear picture of their philosophy and practice of integration. Having listened to the two teachers tell their stories I felt that I need not worry. Their stories left me with enough material to depict enough of their lives as teachers. After some consideration, I have chosen to tell the three stories and present the findings in two ways: First, I tell the stories of the three teachers' personal practical knowledge of their childhood and schooling, in a kind of a short-story or prose format, and then I try to link this to the way I think that their experience has made them, to some extent, the teachers they are today. This makes up the content of Chapter 4. Second, I reconstruct the interviews as if the teachers were having a discussion on why and how we integrate the curriculum, where I “act” as a moderator of the dialogue; I ask the questions and then I compare their experiences with my experience. This makes up Chapter 5. Third, sometimes I summarize some of the findings, in order to reduce the text, and I place it in between the dialogue. The purpose of presenting the findings this way is to, hopefully, make it more interesting to

read, and also I thought it would give these two teachers a “louder” voice in this paper. Finally, I am aiming at Barone & Eisner's (1995) claim that

...non-technical, everyday, vernacular forms of speech ...are more directly associated with lived experiences. (p. 9)

I transcribed the interviews myself, fully experiencing the agony (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992)! As I am neither an experienced transcriber nor a native speaker of English it took me a much longer time than I expected. When the transcribing was done (about 70 pages), I went back to my original list of questions and decided which ones would be the leading questions in the dialogue. Then I repeatedly went over the transcript in order to find answers to these questions, in the teachers' own words, and surely, the answers were not to be found in a consequent order since in the interviews I had not always followed the list of questions in a sequence. Finally, when this editing was completed I, as noted above, gave part of the transcript to each of the teachers for their comment.

Chapter 4

Stories of Three Teachers

*To exist is to change; to change is to mature;
to mature is to create oneself endlessly.*

Henri Bergson (1859-1941)

This chapter presents the three teachers' stories. The teachers' names are Selma, Laura and Lilja. They are from Toronto, Canada; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Reykjavík, Iceland. The following stories are images from the childhood and schooling of the three teachers involved in this study, and presented under the following headings: *Childhood Stories*, *Three Young Women*, and *Three Teachers*. Finally, there are some conclusions. They are retold here as they were told in the interviews, in somewhat different version though, as I have, with the permission of those interviewed, edited them; moved sentences around, reduced the text and sometimes I used poetic license, but always in an effort to be true to the voices of these teachers, in order to create a coherent whole.

Each of these stories are different, they take place in three different countries, and on three different continents, but they have similarities which suggest learning experiences that might have influenced the kind of teachers the storytellers later became. I have chosen to retell each of the three stories in two sections, and in the 3rd person, without making any comments as they are told.

4.1 Childhood Stories

The Slippers

She quietly tip-toed to the milk box with her new pair of slippers in her hands. She wanted to wear them to school even though she knew perfectly well that slippers are not be worn to school. But she was so proud of them. They had a little milk box in their house with a tiny little outside door where the milkman would leave the milk, and an inside door which her mother could open to get the milk. She put her pair of slippers, she loved so much, in the milk box. When she left for school she took them from the outside, without her mother knowing it, and put them on. Then she happily skipped to school in her new pair of slippers. But her second grade teacher was a teacher who was going to root out... And she gave her just hell, making her the centre of attention. And the teacher phoned her mother, getting her into enormous trouble. That teacher was not the kind who was sensitive to a child who did something unusual, for whatever crazy reasons children do what they do. School was frustrating for her in her early years. She had a learning disability. She was very slow to acquire language skills. She simply could not figure out, –this mystery. She was very frightened in grade one and two. She even felt slightly at physical risk, that if she came in and did not have her lessons learned, that she would be shaken up. Her parents made sure that the house was a secure environment, that was their role, but they did not monitor homework. There were high expectations concerning performance at school. There was a classroom at the school with kids who had a combination of mental and physical challenges that were quite severe and they were really tormented by the other kids. They were like freaks. She had this fear that she could cross the line one day and be included with them. Then, in grade five, there was a very good teacher, the very first teacher who really was caring and warm, who really helped. This was somebody who was working with her, as opposed to somebody who was judging. And suddenly a cloud lifted around words and things got much easier for her. This teacher created some kind of order out of what really seemed very random, created a sense of calm and peace in the classroom, a kind of warm environment. She didn't know how the teacher did that. She wasn't that aware of the teaching methods. It was a rote kind of learning though, having to read from standard textbooks, no activities ever particularly child focused or interesting, that she remembers. Once she got beyond elementary school and

overcame some of those hurdles, she felt much better about herself as a learner, and school became a happier place which she enjoyed. She enjoyed history, the social side of history, not so much the politics, she loved literature, reading and discussing novels.

Hungerstrike

She just sat there with a completely blank stare, as if she was looking into space. She closed her mouth really tightly so that the nuns couldn't force-feed her. All the children in the huge dining hall, boys on one side, girls on the other, in their classic uniforms, stared at her. Already in grade two she made this connection that if she didn't eat her parents would have to withdraw her from this boarding school permanently. So one day she became really withdrawn and really quiet like she was plotting how she was going to leave this prison. At first it was a game, a rebellious thing, but after a while she was so determined not to eat anymore that it was like she lost the need to eat. She wasn't hungry any more, it was either that or death. Eventually mother came and said: "Pack your bags". To the nuns she said: "Why isn't she eating"? Mother used to pick her up on weekends from the private school and she used to scream when she came back, grasping mother, holding on to the door frame. The nun was standing at the door saying to mother: "It's OK, it's OK, everything is fine, we treat her well here", and when she walked in the door she kicked her. She hated that school. The nuns were really cruel to her and unjust because her parents were divorced. Once she peed in the church during mass because she was afraid to ask to go to the washroom. All the little girls screamed because she peed during mass, and she was so scared. Two nuns came and grabbed her, one by each ear and pulled her up, dragged her all the way across this huge hall and stuck her in the corner for what felt like a whole entire day. They criticised her when she drew her flowers crying. But she did that because she was crying inside. And they criticized her when she drew a dog that had two legs and wrote a poem about him. "Your daughter is mentally retarded, she is drawing dogs with two legs", the nuns said. They criticized everything she did. She got to the point where she would do the opposite in order to defy their rules. She made the letters so small that the nuns almost had to use a magnifying glass to look at them. She was considered to be really rebellious. She had a short attention span, they said, she was mentally challenged, they said, her parents should take her to a special

education class, they said. But she went to a public school. The year after, she got A's in everything, honours for everything. She now lived with her aunt. She only remembers one teacher, in grade four. She had a soft voice, she always used to put her hand on her shoulder, like she was reassuring her, and in her way she said that she was really bright. She had just come out of private school, was really low, and didn't see there was any worth in what she did and who she was. The Ambassador of Costa Rica was going to award the school with a plaque for something, and the grade four teacher was asked to choose the hardest working student to receive it. And the teacher said "I don't have to think, I already have the person who is going to receive the honour", and she said her name, and all the kids started clapping. This was the most incredible moment in her life. And mother wasn't there as usual. She never was there for her. This teacher believed in her, she really did. She took her in and taught her math after school. She just did tremendous things for her. She invited her to her house to see a collection of Amazon treasures that she had collected. She was a traveller, and she had left-wing values, like her aunt. She really was her inspiration. Then mother just came out of the blue one day and said: "I'm going to take you to Canada".

Shame

This morning was different. She didn't just have the butterflies in her stomach. This time she felt sick. Really sick. Rows of second graders waited impatiently for their turn to enter the splendid new school building. She shifted her weight from one foot to the other, afraid of not being able to control... She closed her eyes in concentration and told, no, commanded her stomach to quiet down. For a while it worked. It always worked for a while, but then it hit again. She hadn't noticed that they were already inside the building, climbing the stairs, to the top floor. The second graders had their classrooms on the top floor. She wondered if she would make it all the way up and to the washroom. Suddenly it was all there, on the beautiful shining floor in front of her. She had thrown up on the floor in front of all the second graders, in front of the whole school, –on one of the landings. Now, everyone could *see* what she had had for breakfast. She had fixed the breakfast herself this morning, as she so often did. And it was not always the healthiest thinkable meal. She stared at the puddle before her feet

and she sensed nothing but shame, and the sounds of disgust from the kids standing around her. The butterflies were back, and now the shame too. This filled her stomach, her whole body and soon she learned that the only way to control, not to notice, –no, to push them out, to the back of her mind, –was to talk. She became very talkative in class. The teacher wrote the names of the kids who talked too much for her liking, on the blackboard. Her name was always at the top. School pictures proof that. And she was only seven, eight, nine years old. By grade five she had trained herself to *think* the butterflies away. She wasn't talkative in class anymore. She became shy, or so she was told. Shyness wasn't her nature though and later she learned other names for this; insecurity, no self-esteem. She was confused, she didn't know if she was bright or plain stupid. On “good” days her grades were up to 90-100%. “Bad” days, on the other hand, brought her 20%. She didn't understand, –then. It wasn't until 20 years later that she made the connections. She need not be ashamed, not to blame herself, it was her father's alcoholism... Her teachers were all nice people. She especially remembers her first teacher. She had a smiling face and dimples, she was a kind, caring teacher, but strict in a just way. A new school and her teacher of grades five through seven was a firm, but kind man, whom she respected and liked. Everyone was afraid of him in the school except the kids in his class. She really liked going to school and very often would stay behind when it was over. She was not in a hurry to go home. The only unpleasant memory she has from this classroom was when she had to recite poems in front of the class –standing so close to the boys. Being new in this school she had not been able to choose a seat, therefore she had to sit next to the row where the boys were sitting. Next autumn she made sure to sit as far away from them as she could. That teacher would allow her and her girl friends to have the classroom all to themselves after school. They took turns in role-playing teaching and school activities. She had lots of friends, –always. The classrooms in elementary school were nice places with an atmosphere of warmth and a touch of light heartedness. A traditional way of teaching was the common practice of that time, and she hardly paid any attention to it. It was just the way it should be. Her grade nine teacher praised her and believed in her when she certainly did not herself. He went to the principal and without a word he put in an application for a field of study which demanded better grades than she had on the average at that time, and she was accepted. She remembers that always.

4.1.1 Some Comments

These three stories tell of both painful and pleasant experiences. In my experience, when people are asked to reflect on their childhood and schooling, on both positive and negative experiences, the conclusion usually is that positive memories are not necessarily associated with single events, but rather with feelings associated with the classroom, the atmosphere or the caring, pleasant teacher. The opposite is most often the case with memories of a negative nature. Single events perhaps stand out like a distinct picture. The lesson I learned from this is that a pleasant, caring teacher and an atmosphere of warmth is *the* starting point in all teaching; everything else comes alongside or after that. This is a view, I believe, all these three teachers share, and I felt it came very clearly across in the interviews with them. What I feel supports this is when the teachers were asked to reflect on their schooling and mention what came first to their minds, and they talked in detail about a very negative experience, but when asked if they could remember teachers from their elementary school years they described one teacher who had made a difference in their lives. These positive recollections portrayed how they felt in the classroom with that particular teacher.

4.2 Three Young Women

The telling of Selma's, Laura's and Lilja's stories continue to give some notion of their lives prior to becoming teachers:

...Selma

She was borne in 1947, the middle daughter of three girls. Her religious background is Jewish, her parents were fairly traditional, and it was a close

family, well enough off that they didn't do without things, nor were they so indulged that they had everything, but it was a secure time for her. The summers were spent away from the city, at summer cottage or at summer camps. It was a pretty normal, comfortable childhood, with no serious concerns. Her feelings became very positive about school as she became more competent as a learner and participated in activities outside of school. One year Selma was the chairperson of a whole committee that prepared everything concerning a very big dance at the end of the year. They put up a big play, took care of the decorations and the drawing of murals. Selma liked those kind of big challenges; that felt very real! They were important to her in terms of learning about herself and gave her a sense of having real skills. And it surprised her to find that she could do those kinds of things, that she could take on a big organizational project and actually be able to delegate and brake it down at the end of it. It gave Selma a great sense of accomplishment. Selma worked as a camp-counsellor, working with younger children which she found interesting. And by the time she was in university she had a job helping a child who had a learning disability. Then it became more clear to her that that was a kind of work that she wanted to do. It had something to do with her own struggle, she always really could identify with how difficult learning is, because it wasn't easy for her. Selma felt good when she was in that role, that one to one with a child, who really had a specific need. She felt she was really accomplishing something, really helping directly, making a difference to someone.

...Laura

She was borne in 1957, the only child of her parents, who divorced when she was 2. Her childhood very a very unstable, terrible childhood. Her guardian

after the divorce, her great-aunt, didn't live very long so her father sent her to a private catholic boarding school. After that ordeal Laura stayed with several relatives until she went to live with her aunt, her mother's sister. She really admired her aunt. She was a real feminist, who didn't see herself as such though, and she went out to demonstrations and fought for what she believed in. She taught Laura how to think and that “left” in her comes from her aunt. In Latin America, politics is intrinsic to people's values. Her mother would show up once every six months or once a year, she was a designer, and she worked all over the place. She remarried when Laura was fourteen years old and decided that she was going to take her away, with her new husband, to Canada. And the woman who really had been Laura's mother for six years, lost custody. She tried to fight it but she lost. Once in Canada she went again to a catholic private school. She hated the nuns and tried to do things opposite to what they said, and they called her mother and said that she was disturbed. It was exactly the same, all over again. She almost failed that year, on purpose. Besides her stepfather, the nuns were the most devastating, the most cruel, horrible human beings in her life. She became an atheist. In grade 10, Laura went to a public high school and by the end of that year she had 80% an average. Later, in a community collage, an art school, one teacher tried to evaluate one of her work in an unjust way, and she walked out. Then she just got a job, got pregnant, married, divorced and at 21 she decided that she wanted to go back to university. She did her degree in Spanish and Italian. And she taught adult ESL and summer school. One day a professor said to her: “You need to sort of bring your focus back. You're a teacher”. And she thought: “Maybe I am”. Remembering those days when she was probably 8-9 years old, when she used to play with a whole bunch of friends, including the dog, being a teacher. And in that “classroom” she did everything opposite to

the nuns. Many of her friends were people who needed something and she'd say: "I'll be the teacher and you guys are going to learn". She was already forming a value system in terms of education. This was her favourite game as a child and her ultimate adult world. He saw it, –this professor. She was 24 when she applied to the Faculty of Education, at the U of T and at her first try she got in. She regained the course she had lost for about 15 years.

...Lilja

She was borne in 1950, the middle daughter of three girls. Her childhood was marked with having a violent, alcoholic father. But her mother was loving and kind, who patiently explained why people can become alcoholic, –every time her father was recovering from a period of drinking. She taught her daughters to read before they started school, because she wanted them to be in the best class. She told them stories, drew pictures with them and sang to them. Lilja finished high school diploma in business studies and worked in an office for a year. She got involved in a group of young people, who were trying to fight what they considered unjust conditions and treatment of patients in mental institutions in and around Reykjavik. This experience made her decide to study Occupational Therapy, in England, since it was not possible to do so in Iceland. She was 18 years old. She had to take an entrance examination because she didn't have *Stúdentspróf* (grade 10 in Iceland is followed by four years in so-called upper high school which leads to exams qualifications, called *Stúdentspróf*, accepted at all universities). She didn't finish because of financial reasons, returned home and found herself establishing an O.T. department in the psychiatry department at the Reykjavik City Hospital. She worked there for three years, found that she disagreed with most things that happened there, became extremely frustrated, because as an O.T. she felt she

had no say in the treatment of the patients. She felt that in the minds of the doctors her job was to keep the patients from taking up too much of their time. She decided to leave, go back to high school, finish the *Stúdentsspróf* and become a social worker. She was five years older than her classmates, married by then, and being this much older put her in a position where she could choose when to interact socially with them and when not, thus enriching her learning experiences. But her plans changed. Her husband was a teacher at that time and so were most of their friends. They were young, novice, passionate teachers who spent endless hours discussing educational matters. These countless discussions and debates changed the course her life took.

4.2.1 Some Comments

The second section tells stories of young women. They show interconnectedness of the lived experiences of childhood and adolescence, with making career decisions. Their paths are unlike but they all had a desire to become somebody who made a difference in other people's lives, like their teachers did, directly or indirectly. They all had the need to be recognized as someone who is able to contribute something of worth to someone else.

4.3 Three Teachers

Selma graduated from a one year program at Toronto Teachers' College which was for teaching elementary school, twenty-two years ago and she doesn't really remember learning anything, she feels it was a real waste of a year. There was very little practical experience. She remembers just taking the whole thing as a joke, thinking that the teachers who were teaching were really from some place else. They didn't have any real ideas to share of any importance and not taking it very seriously. She felt that basically you could

stick anybody in there and they'd be OK. She had a great sense of confidence, until she actually got into the role and then she realized how much she didn't know! She doesn't remember the idea of integrating the curriculum coming from the Teacher Collage, but she remembers having a sense of not wanting to teach reading and writing through textbooks and workbooks, wanting to work from the children's experience and having the language kind of grow. That made much more sense to her than having this rote kind of learning. She had friends who were teachers already, so she thinks it might have come from just conversations and talking about what they were doing.

Laura graduated from The Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto, five years ago. She feels that, like everyone else, her initial experience as a student teacher was really negative. She was with a very strict, traditional teacher, who she felt hated divorced children. Laura developed an art project, a little unit on The Self. The teacher wanted to know the objective more clearly and Laura said it was language, the language of the soul. The next day she kicked her out, saying that she was going to make a terrible teacher. To make up for this terrible mistake, the Faculty gave her two Adjunct Professors. One of them was an expert on integrated curriculum, on thematic structure and she set up her classroom very similarly to hers now, and the other one was an expert on conflict resolution. And that's what she got for the remainder of that year. So, in the end she had a phenomenal experience. That's where the idea of integrating the curriculum was introduced to her, not at the Faculty. They had consultants who came in and spoke about different subjects. She tried to web everything and come up with a whole picture because she thinks that way, she couldn't see things as separate, she has always been making connections.

Lilja graduated from the University College of Education in Reykjavík, seventeen years ago. It was, and still is, a three year program which certifies teachers to teach in grades 1-10. She had high expectations of what teachers' education should be about and everything she learnt the first year was irrelevant, she felt, and she thought of dropping out. She would have, if it hadn't been for the teacher she was placed with for her first practice teaching. This teacher introduced her to a completely new dimension of teaching and learning. Her other main source of positive learning experiences were the ongoing discussions and debates on education in Iceland at that time, both outside and inside of the UCE. Some instructors incorporated this in their courses and her year-group became a group of very critical student teachers, who set out to change, if not the world, then at least the schools in which they started their teaching careers. She doesn't remember if integration per se, was introduced at the UCE, but at that time her husband was in a group of teachers who were involved in developing and writing new social studies material for the basic school (as it is called in Iceland, grades 1-10), and integration was definitely a part of that.

4.4 Good Teachers – Conclusions

During my classroom visits to Selma and Laura I saw right away that they were good teachers. Just watching how they interacted with their students; how they approached them, talked with them, smiled, touched them on the shoulder, praised them, encouraged them, dealt with discipline in a non-threatening manner. All this characterizes a good teacher. They spoke to their students in a calm, soft voice. I sensed the warm, caring atmosphere of their classrooms. And the students, working like “busy bees”: “Look at them, they don't even know I'm in the room”, Selma said to me once, and the same could

be said about Laura's students. They were so engaged in their research, working on their topics, that they hardly noticed the visitor. And I saw that they are teachers who live out in their practice that good teaching is a vocation, a calling, as much as it is a profession (Clark, 1989:17).

During the interviews, Selma and Laura told me stories about their own experience as learners. These were stories about teachers who really had made a difference in their lives, and in those stories I could hear them, unknowingly, describe themselves as the teachers I saw them to be, in their own classrooms:

Selma: I had a very good teacher in grade five, very caring, warm teacher, who really helped. And I remember things kind of clicking in for me, in that year, and school becoming much easier for me... And she was the very first teacher that I remember really seeing as a kind of warm, helpful, somebody who was working with me, as opposed to somebody who was perhaps judging. I just more have an image of her, almost as being this very calm, not overly warm and motherly, but that she created a sense of calm and peace in the classroom. And for some reason she was the person who made things clear for me, and created some kind of order out of what really seemed very random to me, and I can't even tell you how she did it, other than that kind of environment. Cause, you know, as a child I don't think you are that aware of the teaching methods.

Laura: I can't really remember my childhood, it is a very dark thing, and schooling is the most blacked out. The only time I felt I was worth anything was the time in public school... I only had one teacher I remember... in grade four, ...she was so kind to me, and she believed in me, she really did. She had a kind of soft voice... she was always kind and she always used to put her hand on my shoulder, you know, like she used to reassure me, like in her way she said that I was really bright and she took me in and taught me math after school, she just did tremendous things for me. She really was my inspiration, I'll never forget her.

Having probed into their narratives of memorable teachers I was amazed to realize this relationship, how these teachers became the role-models for the kind of teachers Selma and Laura, themselves, later became. Again, I was

startled when my older son, who was reading the narrative of my own experience as a learner and of a memorable teacher and not knowing it was his mother's, said to me: "Well, mom, you are describing yourself as a teacher here, but who is this little girl you're writing about"? His comment made me *understand* the actual connection, the meaning of these stories of our experience for the kind of teachers we have become.

My inquiries into the teachers' learning experiences from their own schooling lead me to ask if they might have had some say in making them the teachers they are today. It appeared that they were aware of the interconnectedness of the wounds from their own schooling and their sense as teachers of their students' needs. Following is Laura's account on how this affected her educational value system:

...those experiences made me more determined and adamant to do it another way, you know. I try to teach my children completely different than the nuns taught me. I learned from those terrible things, and I try to turn them into really positive things for other people based on the terrible feelings that they gave me. ...I was drawing my flowers crying, because I was crying inside, and nobody saw it, instead they criticized me more, and I think now, I have my eyes open X times more to see if a child draws flowers that are wilting, you know what I mean? ...I had a caring teacher who had to be more traditional because that's what was dictated, but that's not what was in her heart, it came through and I felt it. And I think that she would have done it differently if she'd had the chance. And because I had both experiences; I was fortunate enough to see two different approaches, you know, opposing ones, ...that formed my values about education very early.

Neither Laura nor Selma passed unthinkingly their wounds on to the next generation. I believe that they are good teachers because they were able to turn negative schooling experiences into a positive teaching practice in so that they became very sensitive to the needs of their students, their feelings; to them as

whole human beings. I believe that they are teachers who respect children because they recognize and have learnt to respect and love the wounded child within themselves (Clark, 1989:20), and they have brought that knowledge into their practice. It has become a part of their personal, practical knowledge.

Chapter 5

Major Findings

In this chapter I will present the major findings of this study. It contains the recreated dialogue between the three teachers about curriculum integration as if the three teachers were having a discussion on why and how we integrate the curriculum. I am the moderator of the dialogue, and my questions are followed by our answers. Now and then I give some comments on what is being said. For the purpose of brevity some summarization, called *All Three*, has been placed in between the dialogue. The discussion is divided into four sections, each dealing with one or more of the key questions. They are presented under the following headings: *Why they started*, *What does integration mean to you?*, *...How*, *...The Process*, *Problems and Concerns*, *...Evaluation*, and finally *Reflections and Discussions*.

A Conversation with Teachers on Experiences Integrating the Curriculum

5.1 Why they started

All three teachers remember integrating the curriculum from the very beginning of their teaching:

Selma: I saw the positive things that could happen from integrating your program. I was aware of that when using different elements of the curriculum, using art with language or using music and poetry with language, how very powerful it was to do that. Young children learning to read, you couldn't just approach it one way, you had to be really diverse in your thinking and bring as many different opportunities into the learning

and that would mean integration. So I did that when I was working with the younger children.

Laura: I integrate because we are all connected and everything is connected. How can we teach this compartmentalized thing and then expect people to function in the real world? I see the world as connected so I teach that way. It makes absolute sense. I teach what I see. I can't teach anything I don't see.

Lilja: During my teacher education integration was very much discussed among the students and some of the instructors. They were also teachers at the Lab-school (which is an independent department of the UCE), and they themselves, were “experimenting” with it. Well, since my husband was also involved in this work at the Lab-school it couldn't escape my attention. It became obvious to me that this was a sensible way to deal with the academic subjects, at least some of the time.

Comments: I find it interesting that all the teachers started integrating as novice teachers, in spite of the fact that this was not dealt with in their pre-service education. This evokes questions such as; What was it that made them attracted to this approach in teaching and learning? Was integration already embedded in their personal philosophy? Was it because integration has been seen as a component of the progressive strand in education, and these teachers wanted to be viewed as progressive teachers?

These three teachers received their teacher education at times when there were intense discussions and debates on education, and they seem to have been involved with people who were progressive teachers themselves. The answer possibly lies partly there and partly in their personal practical knowledge as learners, as noted earlier. They were all attracted to the progressive ideas in education, they appealed to them as persons, and “fitted” into their personal philosophy; how they viewed the world and the people in it.

5.2 *What does integration mean to you?*

Selma: Well, I guess, integration in a sense is like reality because in the real world things are integrated. Human beings organize things into groups, but in terms of how we experience things everything is connected. Integration is the way our world is and so I create a mirror of that world for the children to help them see the way the interconnections happen, how to deal with interconnections as opposed to how to just compartmentalize. That is, to see the way systems work, because everything is really systems operating together. So I see integration as a kind of a model of real life. When I'm working with the children there are times when you have to separate things into their skill components, but when you're actually, working on anything of substance, it's a question of how all these different skills come together, and how all those different concepts come together and interact with each other.

Laura: Integration is the mess to me. I think that people in general are afraid of the mess. We have been taught to see in tunnels and then maybe make a connection. I think we should be taught to see in a mess and then separate it into the tunnels if we wish to. It was good for those people who taught us, to teach in compartments, because it felt neat and tidy to them. To teach neatly is to control. It is a need for control. To see things as webbed or as a mess—as a ball of everything, is much more difficult because you never know how much each student is getting out of it. It is a mystery. Only they know, so you need to trust that they are going to learn even if you integrate. Everything is integrated. You need to have that philosophy yourself. You need to see things as integrated. You need to see that with reading, with writing, science, social studies or math. The world is about integration. Reality is about integration. It is about a web.

Lilja: Integration is a way for the teacher and students to experience in a school setting that the world is not fragmented (usually it's the teacher who asks the first question). Integration needs knowledge and skills from all the disciplines and it deals with real life issues. Integration requires for teacher and students working together on seeking knowledge and solutions; on what to do with that knowledge, on finding creative ways to

present it and to share it with others. Integration is the path that creates curriculum.

Comments: When I compare these three definitions of curriculum integration they have a common thread that weaves them together: Teaching and learning is about connections between the disciplines as opposed to fragmentation; integration is partly about giving up control, that is working with the students as opposed to subscribing them what to do; integration reflects the real world and deals with real-life issues. All these three teachers have similar ideas about what integration is and how they see their students in this process. The way this term is defined by the three teachers seems to come close to the definition of integration presented by Vars (1990) earlier in this paper.

5.3 ...How

Is there a pattern in the way you usually plan a unit?

Selma: Well, I guess there is a certain pattern, but it varies with each group of students. I call it research because in trying to make the kids active in it, rather than presenting: here is the music of this culture and here is the art, and here is the science that they were doing at this time, I prefer to throw the challenge at them and say; let's find out about it. The intermediate child really wants real-life, hands-on experience. They're dying to do what they see as a sort of legitimate, serious work. When I'm planning, a big part of it is how I'm going to involve the children, so that it feels to them like it's theirs, as opposed to my project. I mean, that is kind of manipulating them because I will first think about all the different possibilities before I present them with an idea. Sometimes ideas come from them and then I take that idea up and think of all the possibilities, and then bring it back, so it does work both ways. Once I hit on something, and I have a sense that it will be something they will connect to, which is really important in terms of my planning for the actual project, I will think of possible ways to develop it. So that would be all the different disciplines that could be brought in, all the different resources, all the different methods that the children could use to learn. You can allow

some groups to play a bigger role in actually fleshing out the organization of the project, but some groups need more direction. And I find that when they receive an invitation in terms of taking part in the project, it works really well. For example the children I'm teaching now, were “chosen” to be on an investigating team that was going back in history, and they all assumed identities of investigators. If the children can be somehow in role, they connect more into it.

Laura: I usually categorize a unit for visual reasons, I need to envision a theme inside my classroom. But I do have focuses, like now, we are planning a huge camping trip at the end of the month and the focus is math. The kids have to plan the menu for two days and all the equipment they'll need, for example. I've got this whole umbrella in my head, the theme at the top, then I've got these categories, then I've got all these curriculum areas, and they are all together underneath one thing and the students are the ones who are exploring this and they're creating this mess, but at the same time they are making connections all the time. When my students are working on a theme they can choose from many different activities, they make decisions like; “I'm going to try that first, that looks like fun.” Most of my themes have 30–50 activities, and about ten in each category. Then I give them choice, because you have to accommodate for different learning styles, different levels of learning, different abilities and different approaches. Some of them might require partners, some may be independent, some may be group oriented, for some you need maps and references, so you need diversity, different ways to explore the activities. So, I may say you have to do six, but you can choose the six from that area. I'm very specific about how many they have to do, they have to do a certain amount. But sometimes I have had units that are so huge that they need to rotate and they have to track all their activities.

Lilja: Since I have the advantage of teaching the same group of students for a number of years I know what my students have learnt already, so I think of what needs to be built on that learning. When I decide what topic to take I try to bear in mind the knowledge and understanding I want them to acquire, I also think of the different skills I feel they need to practice and of different ways to present their findings. These are the three main things that I keep in mind. But I very rarely make those kind of decisions without discussing them with my students first, and I never come to my students with a ready-made unit and say; “Here's a unit, start working!” I

will always, at some point, make sure that there's an interest for taking a particular theme and I will always make sure that the students have a say in fleshing-out the theme with me, at least some parts of it. The same is true when they come up with the topic. In addition to this, I think it is important, as Selma does, that the learning is put in as real-life context as possible, that there is a kind of story behind it where the kids take on a role of an expert who is researching something, and preferably include some humour in it. So, in the project outline or the instructions, I once invited my students to take part in an expedition into space, for example, and as “astronauts” they researched the topic. Another pattern that can be seen is that preceding a unit or a theme which has a subject focus, like the Settlement of Iceland or the European Countries, for instance, I usually leaf through the textbook with my students and they work on individual assignments. I want all of them to get an overall view of our cultural heritage, the subject-matter, the history or the geography of the world we live in, but not just parts of it. We do not spend a lot of time on this, but by doing it this way I feel that I'm being accountable to a lot of the outside demands that are made on teachers; that our students receive a “broad” education and they be in general knowledgeable. When we have finished this overview, it leaves us with time to go deeper into some parts of a theme and research it from another perspective. Further, this means that we can set up a travel agency in the classroom, for example, and my students can practice all kinds of real-live skills and deal with real-live issues connected with the theme, without me having the parents or whoever, on my back for not passing the cultural heritage over to their children.

Comments: I think it is interesting that all three teachers have very similar things in mind when we are planning curriculum integration. There is this emphasis on involving the children, both in deciding on the themes and in developing and expanding them. There are no rigid structures, each project is different. It is also of interest that all three teachers make precautions, they “do their homework” and have their “bags of ideas” ready if needed. Of interest is also how the themes are expanded. Laura uses a form of visualization to expand her themes. Other strategies are looking at the themes from the perspectives of different subjects and considering how they can

contribute to expanding the theme. Also helpful is considering the application of various resources, how the projects lend themselves to different categories, methods, skills and forms of presentation. An additional dimension is the extent to which the work is based on individual/pair or group work arrangements. Finally there is a question of how to build on what the students know and the linking to real life contexts.

In addition to this, I would like to note that I have, as Selma, experienced that my students are much more willing to take risks as learners when they are in a role of somebody else. I feel it allows for doing something out of the ordinary and being creative, as well as for failure. Besides, when the students are in role they are not so book focused, because as in real research, the students are more willing to use variety of different media for exploration. Partially, researchers have to be able to investigate through using texts, but there is also a lot of hands-on work. Methods for record keeping are not always just long texts. I find that because they are in role, they get further away from that traditional method of reading and writing, and they are more willing to explore other aspects and to use art, music, dance, and drama, for instance.

Deciding on a theme

All Three: What we have in mind is whether a theme or a unit is going to be subject oriented or issues related; whether we are going to have a science focus (a unit on the human body), a social studies focus (a unit on the native peoples of the Americas) or if we are going to be open to different events or human affairs, that are happening in the neighbourhood, in Toronto or Reykjavík, in Canada or Iceland, in the world, that would be of concern or interest to the children as well as us.

Selma feels that it is important in grade six, that her students get a sense of what science, history and geography is, because when her students leave

from this school they will go into more structured programs, so she wants them to know there are those disciplines. Laura feels that a theme always has to be global in its perspective, that it has to be large, and broad in its thinking, –that way she will be able to fit everything into it, all the capacities. I feel that the main thing is to always be flexible when choosing a theme or a unit and take care not to get stuck on one model.

Neither Selma nor Laura feel they need to have the curriculum guides at the back of their minds when they are deciding on a unit. Selma says that in her school they have been talking a lot about becoming more specific about what themes or projects to choose, because there's a feeling that when the children leave they should have some kind of mental timeline, to have a sense of, for example, where different moments in history fit. They have been talking about identifying key moments, especially for the junior grades, to make sure that they will hit on key historical periods. Laura says that her units are so large and they have so much to offer in terms of activities during a whole year, and they are all cross curricular, all transdisciplinary; so she wonders what is she going to miss. Myself, being the one who is teaching in a public school, I feel that I have to bear the curriculum guides in mind, but that they are only guidelines. In addition to this, having the same group of students for 5 years, I have the freedom of arranging the teaching and the learning as I (and my students) see fit within that period of time. Nevertheless, I do realize that the “hidden” curriculum is also very often at work when I decide on a theme that has a subject focus.

What are the steps you take when planning a unit?

Selma: I start by brainstorming around certain situations or experiences that the students stimulate, but I also have to have a whole bag of other possibilities, because you can't just wait for the kids to bring things in. I find that at this age they're really interested in the social side of the developments, because that's what's happening for them. I try to look for opportunities to develop awareness of different people, in terms of social history, or if we are looking at geography, how it affects people, science in the same way. I usually find that that works best. Somehow if there's that connection to people, then there will be a connection to the children. When we do research here, I try to create a situation where they can role-play a real life situation, like I said earlier, and as a result of that it's integrated, because that's the way it is in real life. So that they feel that in a

sense, it's almost like happening. The students tend to like to have opportunities to share their work, whether it's just with the class or parents, but I think that most of the time that's a fun stage for them. So in my planning I would be thinking about how can we take all this and bring it to other people and communicate.

Laura: I always start out by the title, and let us say I choose Kids United around the World, then I envision categories for it; how they may look in my classroom. It may be categories like education, health, housing, language, and religion, for example. These are the categories and these are the ones that I am going to place around the room. Then I think of the curriculum areas I want to explore under each category. My next step would be to plan the activities for each curriculum area. I will come up with an art activity, for example, that has to do with the curriculum areas, and a science activity that has to do with each of them, and so on. Finally I decide on the higher order skills like co-operative learning, critical thinking, analyses, comparison for sure; cultural diversity and maybe celebration of diversity, time management and so on. The higher order skills are not the basic things you get when you learn how to spell or you learn subtraction for example. Those are first order skills.

Lilja: Like Selma, I start by brainstorming around an issue, an idea or a question in regard to something of interest. I write down everything that can be connected to the issue. At this stage I don't necessarily think of what all the subjects can offer, that may emerge later. So I think about what it is I want my students to know and what might be of interest to them. The next step I take is that I think of the different skills I want my students to practice, like for example, thinking skills, social skills and various other skills and how they can be linked to the way they may want to present their findings. So, I also think about what I want my students to be able to do and furthermore, how they can connect their knowledge and skills to come up with creative ways of sharing that with others; their classmates, parents, other kids in the school, and so on. When I have, sort of, drawn the picture of the theme, I think of how I can involve my students in the rest of the planning; what it is they want to know, what it is they want to do, and so on. Having received their ideas I turn to the final planning of the unit, the designing of the instructions and activities; that is, how it can be connected to people and real-life situations; I set the stage

for the theme, so to speak. If they come up with the idea of a topic then I go right into step one and two with them.

Comments: Again, I see the strategies the three teachers used to expand and develop the themes. They are linked to people and real life situations, subjects, different skills that need to be practiced, diverse activities and presentations, and so on. When I examine the second step they take, it is interesting to notice that in order to expand the possibilities of a theme or a unit, Selma thinks of how she can link it to people, Laura looks for what the subjects have to offer and what Lilja thinks of are the skills she want her students to practice. In the third step, Selma looks for ways for her students to role-play a real life situation, Laura thinks of activities in which her students can explore an issue, and Lilja considers how her students can connect their knowledge and skills to present their findings creatively. Both Selma and Lilja take into their preparation how their students are to share their findings, but Laura does not mention that.

What strategies do you use for involving your students in the planning and building on their ideas?

Selma: I think the best plan really comes when you have a pretty good idea before in your mind, then you come to the students, and together you flesh it out. That is what I try to do with them most of the time, so that they feel that they have real input and I think that makes them more committed to it. I may say to them; let's look at this as if you are the organizers, –the teacher. What do you need to do here, if you are going to write a journal, for example. I actually brought in a person who had taken a year off and did a lot of exploring of cultures in Papua New Guinea. We talked about the kinds of experiences she had, and broke them down, so that when they were writing their journals they looked at the kinds of things that could actually happen; what would be the kinds of things that they would have to do. We used her model and then came up with a whole

lot of questions that they would have to answer to do their journal. And so when we had got that done together, I recorded it on a sheet and when they were working on their journals they would go back to that outline.

Laura: I may mention a couple of topics to them and ask what they would like to do and they come up with the unit they like the most. Then I'd say; "what would you like to learn about, let's say, Kids United Around the World?" And they'd say; "we want to learn about languages and we want to know how many, and so on." So I brainstorm all the things they want to learn and I ask them how they would like to do it. Would they like to do more of group work or would they like to do more individual work. And they come up with the mixture they would like. They also tell me how long they want the theme to last, and so we write all these things down and we put it up. When I plan the activities I make sure that I cover those specific issues of learning they had mentioned. Then I develop the theme and that takes a lot of work, it takes me about a couple of weeks just to put it together.

Lilja: When I involve my students in the planning of a unit I use very much the same strategies as Selma and Laura. I have a pretty good idea in my mind about the theme beforehand, but I always discuss it with my students or brainstorm around a question that focuses on the key issue of the project, like for example; "What does one need to know about a country, to actually *know* something about it?" Or, "I thought it might be fun to do a theme on adolescence, what do you want to know and do?" Then when I have obtained their ideas I do the final planning and put the unit together.

Comments: I will make two observations here. The first is again the great emphasis all three teachers put on engaging the students in the development of the units. Their opinions are sought and the teachers make efforts to built on interests their students have exposed. They take great care to use the ideas of their students so that the students will definitely recognize them when working on the unit. The students have to be able to say: "There's my idea..." or "I said that..." and so on. The students take part both in deciding what is to be studied as well as how. Ideas are provided but the students have to experience being

co-owners. In the experience of the three teachers the students are more responsible as learners, show more enthusiasm if they have some invested interest in what is done in school.

The second observation relates to the various dimensions used to develop and expand the units:

- Looking at the unit in terms of manageable activities;
- Using a real-life dimension: Expanding the ideas by connecting them to people, and real-life and problem solving situations;
- Applying different categories to the unit;
- Looking at how different curriculum areas and subjects can contribute to the projects;
- Asking which activities are likely to foster critical/creative/higher order thinking;
- Identifying different skills relevant for the students to practice;
- Identifying a variety of resources that can be used;
- Considering individual/pair or group work arrangements;
- Looking at creative ways in how the results will be presented to others.

Do you plan your units as a group work or an individual work?

Selma: What I try to do is to look at group work and individual work over the whole course of the year to find a balance. It's really important to build group work skills, as well as the individual skills. There are lots of children who are very good at group work, they find that a fabulous way to learn and an easier way to learn, so I think it's very important that they gain confidence in their own individual skills as well. Then there are some children who really find it difficult to share ideas and collaborate. So, what I try to do is to make sure that there's a kind of challenging group thing

happening and then the next thing we do would be more of an individual thing. But I think they need both.

Laura: My themes are not that prescribed, group work is involved, but most of the time they can choose to do an activity where they need to work with a partner. I always integrate in my themes whole class work, like drama activity, and group work or pair work where they can choose partners. The environment in my class is co-operative, it's a respectful environment, so that there is a choice to work together and the kids work great together. You do co-operate in an environment of high expectations, of conflict resolution because you feel like a valued member of a family of learners.

Lilja: Well, it differs in my case. When a unit has a subject focus I usually plan it as group work, because, as I said earlier, preceding such a unit my students work individually on assignments I give them, where they have to do some of the assignments and can choose to take others. But when that is not the case, I try to include in the planning process individual work and group work, as well as pair work.

Strategies when grouping students

All Three: The strategies we use when grouping our students are very similar, therefore I will use Selma's answer as a synopsis of our practice:

Usually we would talk about how they're grouped in different ways at different times in the year. Again, it's that sense of involving them and giving them a sense of the fairness of it. There are lots of times where they get to choose groups, there are times when they don't choose groups, and I'll explain to them that there are reasons why we do it this way and then they buy into it more than when you just say this is the way it is and I'm not prepared to discuss it. They understand that it's not a life sentence and there will be other opportunities to meet in different ways, so they're usually fairly receptive.

Additionally, Selma said that her students would neither be ready for a group of four, nor for working for three weeks together, until after Christmas, because she wants to know them well and she wants them to know her well, so that she can help them with those group challenges. She

thinks that group work is really important, but that the students definitely need more guidance with it. But as Laura is teaching a family grouping of three grades she bases the grouping on developmental stages when she groups them herself, so she chooses very strong people and pairs them up with weaker ones. The stronger ones have to learn how to encourage the weaker ones to get in and give ideas and feel good about those ideas. And the weaker ones have to learn the skill of having that courage to provide ideas and feel good about their ideas, so she feels that she is dealing with different sets of social skills. In my case, on the other hand, I need not have Selma's concerns, except for the first few months I am with a new group of students. For the same reasons as Laura does her grouping, I usually try to group students of mixed-ability and mixed gender together.

Comments: I would like to note that all three teachers find it very important that at some point they involve individual work, pair work as well as group work, in their units. The students need real group dynamics skills to be able to be very successful in group tasks. There will always be some who need more support with that and the support can be provided in different ways.

Sometimes it comes from the group, which can be extremely supportive in getting a child to participate and feel successful. The group can help a student find tasks, encourage the student to stay on task and do all these teaching things that they have learned. The group can do a great deal lot to help and so can the teacher.

5.4 ...The Process

Introducing a new unit

All Three: Introducing a new unit to our students is something that all of us feel is essential even though we don't necessarily do it in the same manner each time. Basically, our students know that there is an upcoming theme when we suggest a topic to them or when they come up with a topic, and we discuss that. But before we actually suggest a topic we might suck them into it first without them really knowing, to check if there is interest, especially if there is a subject focus in the unit. In our

experience we are less likely to get the response from some kids; “Oooh, another unit...” if we do that. The introduction might include discussions or a film on something connected to the topic, or the students might be asked to think about and talk with their parents about issues relating to the theme and gather information from their family and homes. This is important to prepare the minds of our students for the upcoming work on a theme. And then there is the kind of manipulation we do, to get the children interested in the project, and to get feedback from them on how they want it to be.

Do you open a new unit in a specific manner?

Selma: Yes. Sometimes it will be some kind of an event that I construct to wet their appetite or I would take them to some place where I have set something to happen which will get them going or it could be a slide show and there is some kind of mystery about it or there are some questions. A teacher here, who was doing something on artefacts had buried some things in the ground and a message came to the kids to hunt them up. So there are those kinds of experiences, and I think that works really well, I think that they need some stimulus, that gets them thinking along a line.

Laura: Yes, we bring out the brainstorming sheet and find out what we want to learn from that unit. And then I say; “a new theme”, it's always called a theme, and the very big people that they are, they bring these clipboards to the carpet, they take notes about what they're expected to do during that unit, and I talk about my expectations. They take notes frantically, as if they were in high school. We talk about responsibility, and then I go over each section and I explain what they are, and what choices they have, and what activities there are and where the explanations for the activities are, and who they can go to if they have questions, and where the references and the research stuff is. And then I have a question period. It usually takes me a whole afternoon to go over the theme. Then I say; “Go where you want to go”, and they find their place, they all look at the activities, and they're already making their decisions: “I'm going to try that first, that looks like fun, and so on.”

Lilja: Yes, and once again it appears that I use methods to Selma. In addition, I very often use an open question, like the one's I talked about earlier, guided imagery or visualization, as an opening of a theme, and this

ties in with involving the students in the preparation of a unit. Sometimes I don't finish developing a unit until after the actual opening of it, which means that two to four days might pass between opening it and when the students actually start their research.

Introducing different methods of presenting findings

All Three: Introducing our students to the multiple forms presentations can take, and give them some guidance, is of great importance. Our students can always make a lot of choices of how they present their material, but we may decide that we want them to do certain things, and this is a part of teaching and the practicing of certain techniques and skills. They may include how to do journals and mapping, taking interviews and analyzing them, writing scripts and letters, making catalogues and various types of books, creating artefacts, models and murals, and so on. We may have speakers come in to present ideas to the students. We may do it ourselves or the students may come up with some ideas. And the ideas are discussed in the whole class or smaller groups, and through the discussion new ideas can still be created. This is to enable our students to make a choice based on some knowledge.

Very often the students present their findings or demonstrate what they have learned by putting up exhibitions of some sort to celebrate the closure of a unit. That is something that we have found has worked really well.

Instructions on what to do

All Three: When it comes to designing the project outline or a description of what to do, I agree with Selma that a very good method is to put the students in the role of experts who, for example, may have been chosen to be on an investigating team, and they all would assume identities of investigators. As “experts” the students receive instructions on how to carry out their work. We find that this works really well. If the children can somehow be in role, they connect more into the theme. Laura says that for each activity there are instructions, and the students have to read what they need to do. She designs cards which are in front of each activity, that explains the activity and tells the children where they have to go, if they need to work with someone else, then to find a partner or to research this

or that. The instructions are very specific, which she finds really important.

5.5 Problems and Concerns

Have you had students who, for various reasons, flounder around when doing group work, who rely on their group-mates to do some of the work for them?

Selma: Yes, that will happen. In very large groups you're going to get more of that where people make different contributions. Some will be big motivators, big idea people and others will not contribute. There can be a variety of reasons, sometimes it's because they're not being listened to, sometimes it's because they have more difficulty, or that they're slower in generating ideas. There is a bigger challenge when you try to structure those kinds of large groups.

Laura: Yes, during group work you can have hitch-hiking problems, as I call it. I think there has to be an element of group work in an activity, but it can't be the whole, entire theme, it's just too much. Kids are absent, they don't have the patience, they may not have the skills to do that activity, and so on. When you, and this is my feeling, prescribe something, such as a method of co-operative learning, with them all doing it exactly as prescribed; there's an encourager, there's a recorder, and so on, it works only up to one week and then the kids lose patience. Then you're going to have people hitch-hike because that's the only way for some of them, and the other people are going to get angry. You can't have only this kind of co-operation in a theme, I used this method in the media theme and I'm not doing it again.

Lilja: Yes, I've had that. I think it is bound to happen in most group work situations, but then again that's what it's like in real life, so why should it be any different in schools? I've seen that happen both in mixed-ability and mixed-gender groups as well as in the so-called homogeneous-ability groups and same-gender groups. And it can be for of all the reasons mentioned above and maybe more, like a student may have problems with duration; he or she gives up as soon as there is an obstacle or simply because a student may find a particular theme not very interesting, and all this can cause a problem.

Tackling group problems

All Three: Before the group work we have discussions about social skills, what it means to flounder around or “hitch-hike”, how other students feel when you do that, and what about those who want to take control and how that is different from “hitch-hiking” and which one is least desirable. There always will be couple of children who really find group work difficult, but they are not removed from the group because they are the children who really need the practice. Students, who can really model positive kinds of group feelings, would work with that child. We have to do more of facilitating groups that have problems, spend time talking with the children about the different roles they play in groups and changing roles, and almost structuring it a little bit for them, because they are still just children. Sometimes it's a question of taking a child aside and helping him or her organize their ideas, we can help that child find the avenue where they want to participate. In a family grouping of three, four and five, like in Laura's situation, most often she has to choose the approach where a child in grade three can say to another child in grade three; “work with me on this activity”. In our experience, when the students have spent a fair bit of time around the dynamics of group work, they are prepared to work in groups, they understand a lot about it, and they are able to recognize different needs.

Comments: The main problems I think the three teachers encounter, have to do with students who have some kind of learning disabilities or a non-motivated student who constitutes a behaviour problem. But these are not problems that occur only during integration, as these students usually have problems also dealing with other learning at school. These problems do become more apparent to the other students during group-work, because they do not contribute as much. Therefore it is all the more important to give them opportunities to work in groups in order for them to understand different abilities and needs of their fellow students.

5.6 ...Evaluation

All Three: Jointly our evaluation procedures are quite extensive and following are some of the items that we touched on are:

1. Teacher evaluation – There is a greater need to involve the students in the whole evaluation process, both formally and informally. Informally it is a day to day kind of evaluation that goes on, and this evaluation gives them language that they need, to be able to look at their work and evaluate. Ultimately, the teacher knows what to look for, and it is important that the students are aware of the criteria used for the evaluation, so we tell them exactly what we are looking for; creativity, neatness, the amount of thought that goes into each activity, collaboration skills, risk-taking, originality of a presentation and so on. At the beginning of a theme we are very specific about what we are looking for, and we make sure that we cover those aspects of learning that they requested.

2. Self-evaluation – Self-evaluation is something that we work much more on with the students now, than we did initially, it is really relevant, all children can do that, and it should be a component of the students' learning. Their learning is incomplete if they can't critically look at their own work, at all the different stages and say to themselves; “where do I need help, this is weak, this needs some more, I'm not sure of this concept so I need to practice it, I need to go to the teacher or go to another kid to get some help, this was good, and so on.” The groups also evaluate their own work.

3. Peer-evaluation – Students look at somebody else's work and evaluate it, because different people may say different things about a piece of work, and they learn from that. They also evaluate the work and presentations of other groups. Usually, it results in a qualitatively better work and presentations in the long run, because the students remember what was perceived positively last time; what was regarded as creative, original, and just really good “stuff” by their peers, so they want similar reactions to their work next time around.

4. Reflections – Often the chart or the brainstorming sheet is brought out and we talk about what they have learnt. So before we end the unit we refer back and reflect on the things they did not know before they started.

5. Learning outcomes – In the younger grades, the product is not as important as the process, but as the students get older the product also becomes important.

6. Grades – The students' work is graded in different ways. Sometimes it is just anecdotal, and just comments are written on their work; what is good, what could enrich their work and improve it. And they evaluate my evaluation. They may mark each other, because they need to know that different people see work in different ways and that there is a certain subjectivity in any marking. Although the teacher might say 8, somebody else might say 10 or 6. Sometimes it is number marks and sometimes letter marks, because they do need to deal with marks intelligently too. Sometimes the students are not evaluated in that mark way, because they should not feel that the only thing the teacher bothers doing is something that is going to be graded. So it is kind of a combination.

5.7 Reflections

When reflecting on how we prepared and planned curriculum integration in the beginning and how it has evolved through the years, Laura says that for the five years that she has been teaching she has not changed the way she usually plans a unit. She has enhanced it, but she still uses the same methods. Selma and myself, on the other hand, have almost identical experiences. I believe that it has got nothing to do with co-incidence, but the fact that we have an extensive experience integrating, thus had ample opportunities to review our practice. I would like to use Selma's voice to express what has changed in our approaches to integration:

When I started teaching here, 9 years ago, integration was such a strong current in the school that it became expanded in the possibilities for me. The whole thing just really took off in terms of how large it could be and how wonderful the results could be because of it. I think that, as a whole, it has become clearer to me how to involve the students, that whole sense of them dramatizing and really needing an investment in what's happening; that they really are key players. I think that I did more structuring

when I first started working with the older kids. I've opened it more to them, so they can react to what we're doing and have more input. The fact is that I learned from my first grade six class by just instinctively trying things. We had certain ideas, I saw the kinds of things we wanted to do and what they really connected with. Now I'm more deliberate about opening up those avenues where initially I kind of stumbled on them. It was a real discovery for me, and I've learned so much from my students. It's very exciting now, because when it is clearer in your mind, you actually can stretch it a little bit further every time, can't you? So, that's the difference, I guess.

The main difference in our Selma's experience is, that I have been teaching at the same school since I graduated. But after six years there, I started team-teaching together with an excellent teacher which for me, was like going through a transition similar to what Selma describes when she started teaching at the school she is now.

When reflecting on experiences, courses or people that may have influenced how we integrate the curriculum and the kind of teachers we are today, some interesting observations emerge:

Selma: The most profound thing was coming to this school, this is where I really became a teacher. I was team-teaching together with the principal here. She was my mentor, and watching her interact with the children, spending hours and hours talking about what we were doing and then actually trying it, and then evaluating together. My husband is an educator so we would talk about what's happening. I've done different workshops for teachers on integration, so just that process of looking at my work and really trying to organize what I'd been doing for a workshop, was really helpful. I found that next time when I used the method, it was more deeply rooted. Professionally talking to other teachers in different places allows you to reflect on what you're doing. Ordinarily you don't give yourself spaces in the day to think about or reflect, and we really need that, because I think teachers are very critical of what they do and there's always more you could do.

Laura: I joined the global education network for the board and it put a focus in what I do. In my second year of teaching, I met a teacher who said to me: “You know what Laura, you are a global educator”, and I said: “Yea, whatever that means, it sounds like me, I like to travel!” And I didn't have a clue then what it was, but I knew that I was a critical political thinker. She told me to come to their workshop, and I went. And when they started talking about issues related education, I said: “Hey, that is what I'm doing! I'm integrating all those issues.” And they talked about interconnectedness, conflict resolution and the web, –and I'm, saying: “That's right! I teach my students to see the web.” This workshop confirmed for me that there were other people out there doing this, in different schools. Also, I really liked the course I took at OISE this year, because it brought my past into focus, into the present, and I needed that.

Lilja: I think a lot of different teachers I've met, on courses and workshops that I've taken through the years. My husband, who is also a teacher, was really my mentor the very first years of my teaching career, and sharing ideas with him plays a big part in influencing me as a teacher. But I think that the most profound thing has simply been doing integration, trying out different ways, learning from mistakes and not giving up when confronted with the many obstacles along the way. What has also helped me building my strengths are the courses and workshops on integration and project work that I've given to practicing teachers and student teachers for some years now. Having to put together what you're doing for other people, and put it in some kind of context, is really helpful. I agree with Selma when she says that it gives you an opportunity to reflect on your practice, which again makes it become more deeply rooted.

Apparently, we all claim that the major influences on our practice has been different people along the way, which should not come as a surprise. Both Selma and myself mention giving workshops about their approaches to practicing teacher, as another major influence. In order for them to be able to do just that they had to reflect on their own experience as practitioners, or tell their current story. In other words, as they began telling and re-telling their own stories, they were able to change it and a new story of their teaching

started to emerge. This seems to be a part of a process Elbaz (1991) talks about:

The story affects those who listen, and possibly also the teller, ...sometimes even changing the story (p. 16).

In this case, I think that by telling and re-telling our stories, it changed our own practice of teaching perhaps more than of those who listened.

Chapter 6

Discussion

In retrospect, I find that our philosophy, that of the three teachers involved in this study; the methods we use, our problems and our concerns, that is, the resemblances in our practice, greatly outnumber the dissimilarities.

At the outset, we were all attracted to the progressive ideas in education, they appealed to us as persons and they “fitted” into our personal philosophy; how we viewed the world and the people in it. Today, we have all similar ideas about what integration is and how we see our students in the integration process. Integration is about connections between the disciplines as opposed to fragmentation, about partly giving up control, about working with the students. Integration reflects the real world and it deals with real-life issues. Comparing our philosophy with the literature, the similarities are apparent. The thread that weaved itself through all the definitions of integration was composed of various kinds of relationships, connections between fields of disciplines, real life issues, problem solving, and in-depth study. The interest component was also important, as were the multiple points of view.

When I compare what we say about our practice and what the literature outlines as arguments for integration, the following issues appear in both places: Connections to real life, the importance that the topics are of interest to both students and teachers, that students use what they know in a meaningful context, learning is relevant, the importance of group work and co-operative learning, that the need to attend to different learning styles is recognized and the involvement of students in planning and developing a unit. In our

experience the students are more responsible as learners, show more enthusiasm, if they have some vested interest in what is done in school.

The methods we use when planning and carrying out curriculum integration are not to my knowledge according to any particular model. In retrospect they can be viewed more as a mixture of some of the models mentioned in Chapter 2. What mainly seems to characterize the approach we have adopted is first that it is student centred. There is considerable emphasis in involving the students. The themes are based on the interests of the students and the themes are developed in co-operation with the students as much as possible. The second characteristic is the research element. This has sometimes been referred to as the student as a researcher approach (Schack, 1993:29), as very often our students do research in the role of “experts”. The third characteristic is the emphasis on diversity. We put weight on variety of resources, activities, methods, group arrangements and presentations. Further, we stress that each theme or unit is different from the preceding ones, in content, in structure, and in how they relate to various educational objectives (knowledge, understanding, skills and attitudes). In addition, I think that all three of us, have, at one point or another, integrated on the three different levels Miller (1990) describes: the transmission level, the transaction level, as well as the transformational level (p. 6).

But the problems and the concerns that we, three teachers have encountered have mostly to do with worries about individual students. As noted earlier, we are very sensitive to the needs of our students and we feel that it is of great importance to be responsive to them as individuals. We all share the belief that integration is a great avenue to allow us to tend to each person, to their learning style, as well as that of the whole group. Following are some of

the problems and concerns that we share. Most children who are used to the integration approach in teaching and learning possess the work habits, self-direction, self-discipline, and the interest that is needed, so integration really works for them. But for a certain kind of learner integration can be hard. Some children have difficulties in their learning or have perhaps organizational difficulties, or even emotional difficulties, which makes it difficult for them to do this kind of challenging work. The fact that it is so interdisciplinary, that there are so many different aspects, can be confusing for them. That does not mean that they cannot do this kind of work, but that it has to be simplified for them, they need more structure and often they need to be given less work.

Interestingly enough, I found great commonalities between our experiences of how the students react to a more self-directed learning, to what Susan Hyde (1992) discusses in her article about students reactions to offers of negotiation. As Hyde, we are especially concerned about students who

If left to themselves they will flounder in confusion and never get anything done... These students need a lot of attention, and certainly more guidance, until they become more confident in their abilities. (p. 54)

What Hyde proposes is not always enough. Agreeable solutions to this problem are among the many challenges facing educators who integrate.

Both teachers and students have to learn how to deal with individual differences and accept these differences as a natural element in human existence. In my opinion, we have to approach this in schools. It should be viewed as part of the education of our students. But that does not mean lower standards for everybody. What it means is that we have to give our students lots of opportunities to experience what they can, as a group, achieve together; how they can support each other, and how they can learn from each other. If the so-called low achievers never experience working with the high achievers,

who usually have different perspective of performance in school, they are not likely to set higher standards for themselves.

I believe, like Selma and Laura, that for most children, even the ones who need support, integration is still a more exciting way to work. The children who need more structure still need these opportunities to grow, because in their real life they are going to need these skills as well. Being aware of their needs and giving them the structure, the clear direction they need, or the more defined piece of work every once in a while, can give them the balance that they need, so that they can enter into these challenges and be successful. But it cannot be done all the time, because it is very wearing for a child who has special needs. Even with support, there is a time when, in Selma's words, we have to say; "OK, forget that, they're just doing this page right now and a filling in, because they need that kind of brake". But we really firmly believe that there are not a whole lot of drawbacks if integration is used sensitively. Some kids can work like this ten hours a day and it still is not enough, then there are others who need smaller chunks.

I must admit that even though integrating the curriculum with my students has been a pleasant experience, there are still some concerns. I have found, as has Drake (1993), that anxiety and frustration are predictable givens in this work with students. This given period of anxiety and frustration usually takes place towards the midst of the journey, when the effects of the first enthusiasm wear out, and the end of the journey is not yet in view (and the students are quite certain that they won't be able to find solutions to their problems or that they won't be able to put everything together, and so on.). When I was starting out using these methods in my teaching, this was the time when I felt it was really tempting to give it all up. It was so unbelievably

exhausting. In my experience this period of anxiety and frustration passes rather quickly, and we find ourselves at the top of a mountain, triumphantly proceeding towards the end in sight.

I think that the most surprising outcome of this study for me, personally, is the striking resemblance of how Selma and I plan and carry out integration. We very often invite our students to “take part” in a project, where we create a *story* about experts who are going on an expedition, for example, and the students take on a role of one expert who is researching a topic. We both have found it works well for the intermediate student. We consider in our planning the possibilities for our students on how they can present and share their findings, to mention but two examples. Often times I said to myself, when I was analyzing the data, that it was as if we had been team-teaching together for years. The answer to such speculations can probably be found in the similarities of our experiences. Laura's approach, on the other hand, is more activity centred, she has the categories, and the activities under each category, which the students individually, or in pairs, choose and research; she does not create a story around the research. She does not open a unit by constructing an event, and she does not seem to include in her planning ideas on how her students might present or share their findings, for instance.

Chapter 7

Conclusions

In doing this present study of three teachers' experience integrating the curriculum I learned more than I expected at the outset; listening to their narrative and contemplating my own; making connections between the coursework and readings at OISE this past year and this study, has given me several new understandings.

This study has given me a new understanding and a language to express what I have only intuitively understood for some years now: For the purpose of bringing about educational change practitioners of teaching have to be given power to find their voices so that they can tell stories of their teaching, thus bring forward their personal and professional philosophy or theories (Hunt, 1992) of their current practice. To give practitioners of teaching control and personal power is to give them options regarding ways to think, to imagine, and to be, and choices among stories to live in (Beattie, 1995:142).

Ever since I started working with practitioners of teaching and student teachers, it has frustrated me how difficult it has been to implement change in education. This study has given me a new understanding of why I was frustrated. It made me understand why implementation of “new” methods and ideas in teaching and curriculum had such difficulty finding their way into the classrooms. It had something to do with the top-down method of implementing change. Or as Diamond (1988) commented, “Decision-making theorists may run the risk of betraying rather than portraying teachers.”

(p.136). It made me understand why teachers had difficulties in changing their teaching in spite of wanting to do so. It had something to do with their personal story. I agree with Diamond when he says that “we need to realize that teachers... are not just performers who may eventually be equipped to realize the goals that educational researcher set for them.” (p.136). And it made me understand why teachers have to first be able to tell their current story in order for them to re-tell it and thus change it. It has something to do with the possibility for a new story to be lived out in practice.

The teachers in this study have many things in common with the teachers Boomer (1992) says do exist:

[They] are hard-headed, articulate theorizers about practice, not plagued by guilt at what they cannot do, nor defenceless against attackers, armed as they are with both their theory and the obvious quality of their practice. They have learnt the futility of trying to stand alone, and they know how to compromise without capitulating. They are not prey to educational fads... Their greatest allies are their students, and the parents of their students who are brought into the collaboration. (p. 12)

In my experience, curriculum integration is a difficult endeavour for many teachers. Most teachers do not have a personal practical knowledge of this approach to education, neither as students in public schools nor from their teacher training. Which means that they do not have a former experience to draw from in order to plan and carry out integrated curriculum. They have to learn everything from scratch, so to speak; all the way from attaining the attitude or philosophy that curriculum integration is worth while, almost to the smallest of details in the practice of it.

It is my intention, when I go back to Iceland, to build on my experience of doing this study and develop a research project on how Icelandic teachers understand and practice integration. This study has strengthened my believe

that their practice reflects their understanding of the phenomenon. I think that when I will probe into the teachers' understanding of integration, they give answers depending on the path that they have taken. And they might even answer it differently at different times in their teaching careers. Jacobs (1989) says that it can cause real confusion when teachers' "...meaning of interdisciplinary unit is 180 degrees different from their colleagues' down the hall" (p. 6). In my opinion that is quite natural, it shows growth, that the teachers are reviewing their work, enhancing it, changing it. And it is only natural that they understand integration differently, it shows that teachers make meaning of their practices as individuals, their knowledge is practical and experiential (Beattie, 1995).

It cannot be expected that practicing teachers "do" integration in some sort of a synchronized manner, nor is it feasible, because it may hinder further development in this field. What teachers need to do though, at least those who are going to plan together, is to come to a similar understanding of what integration means to them; what it is all about in their minds, in the context of their situation, and with the learning of their students as a focal point. Moreover, I hope that by doing a further research on teachers' personal practical knowledge of integration, it will reveal that integration can be seen as a web which consists of threads of many colours. Each thread can be seen as it runs through the web that has been woven, yet together they make a coherent whole.

In the beginning of this paper I said that integrating the curriculum is an educational practice that is very close to my heart. One of the fundamental reasons why I find it so important is because I have *seen* how my students react to the integration and the negotiation of the curriculum so much more

differently than the more traditional ways of teaching individual subjects. I have seen, for example, how much more:

- they are creative;
- they are critical of themselves, the content, the teacher and their peers;
- they are responsible for their own learning;
- they are ready to share;
- they are daring to take cognitive risks;
- they are willing to work hard;

Examples of their creativity are when they are writing poems and music in relation to a theme, as well as choreographing dances, writing scripts for plays or when finding ways to present their research. Examples of their critical thinking is evident when we are planning a theme together, when we are discussing the procedure of a project, and in the evaluation process. The responsibility for their own learning can be seen, for example, in their perseverance to stay on task or when they continue to work long after school hours. The students show their willingness to share their knowledge and “expertise” with their group mates, for example, when they are putting everything together, and creating a presentation of their research. They can be very daring to take cognitive risks when they are in the role of an “expert”. They can show a totally new side of themselves. For example, when a low achieving student, in the role of a journalist, investigated a critical issue and did a very good job of it. An example of their willingness to work hard is when they, at the end of a day of integrated work, suggest various further investigations of their topics.

The above observations are important for me, because they are related to what I believe the major outcome of education should be. I want my students to be creative, critical and positive risk-takers. We are educating for the 21st century and I feel that these life-skills are of vital importance in an ever changing world of new technology and information overload. Many of the students who are in elementary schools today will, in the next century, be working with technology which still has not been invented.⁴ This forces us, the educators at all levels, to look for different paths that create curriculum. My work and studies at OISE has convinced me that integrating the curriculum is definitely one of the better paths to walk towards the future.

⁴ A comment made in class (1995) by Susan Drake, the instructor of the course Integrated Curriculum, at OISE.

References

- A>alnámskrá grunnskóla*. [The Common Curriculum.] (1989). Reykjavík: Menntamálará>uneyti>, skólafróunardeild [The Ministry of Culture and Education, Department of Educational Development]. [In Icelandic.]
- Barone, T. and Eisner, E. (1995). *Arts-Based Educational Research*. A paper distributed in the course at OISE: Research and Inquiry in Teaching and Teacher Education, spring term 1995.
- Beane, J.A. (1991). The Middle School: The Natural Home of Integrated Curriculum, in *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 9-13.
- Beane, J.A. (1995). Curriculum Integration and the Disciplines of Knowledge, in *Phi Delta KAPPAN*, Vol. 76, No. 8, pp. 616-622.
- Beattie, M. (1994). *The Making of a Music: The Construction and Re-construction of a Teacher's Personal Practical Knowledge during Inquiry*. A paper distributed in the course: From Student to Teacher: Professional Induction, in December 1994.
- Beattie, M. (1995). *Construing Professional Knowledge in Teaching: A Narrative of Change and Development*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bell, S. & Fifield, K. (1990). *The Scottish Storyline Method*. Portland, OR: Educational Resources Northwest.
- Bergson, H. (1859-1941). French philosopher and psychologist, in *Beginnings*, (1995). Toronto: General Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Boomer, G., et.al. (1992). *Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the 21st Century*. London: Falmer Press.
- Brophy, J. and Alleman, J. (1991). A Caveat: Curriculum Integration Isn't Always a Good Idea, in *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 49, No. 2, pp. 66.
- Case, R. (1994). Our Crude Handling of Educational Reforms: The Case of Curricular Integration, in *Canadian Journal of Education*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 80-92.
- Clark, C.,M. (1989). *The Good Teacher*. A paper distributed in the course: From Student to Teacher: Professional Induction, in September 1994.

- Cohen, L. and Manion, L. (1985). *Research Methods in Education*. [Second Edition.] London: Croom Helm.
- The Common Curriculum, Grades 1-9 (1993). Toronto: Ontario, Ministry of Education and Training.
- Conelly, F. M. and Clandinin, D. J. (1988). *Teachers as Curriculum Planners: Narratives of Experience*. Toronto and New York: The OISE Press and Teachers College Press.
- Drake, S.M. (1992). *Developing an Integrated Curriculum Using the Story Model*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Drake, S.M. (1993). *Planning Integrated Curriculum: The Call to Adventure*. Alexandria, VA.: ASCD Publications.
- Elbaz, F. (1991). Research on Teacher's Knowledge: The Evolution of a Discourse, in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Fogarty, R. (1991). *The Mindful School: How to Integrate the Curricula*. Palatine, IL.: IRI/Skylight Publishing, Inc.
- Gamberg, R., Kwak, W., Hutchings, M. and Alheim, J. (1988). *Learning and Loving It: Theme Studies in the Classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc.
- Gardner, H. (1991). *The Unchooled Mind: How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gardner, H. (1993). *Multiple Intelligences: The Theory in Practice*. New York: Basic Books.
- Gehrke, N.J. (1991). Explorations of Teachers' Development of Integrative Curriculums, in *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 107-117.
- Glesne, C. and Peskhin, A. (1992). *Becoming Qualitative Researchers*. New York: Longmans.
- Good, T.L. and Brophy, J.E. (1987). *Looking in Classrooms, Fourth Edition*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
- Goodlad, J.I. (1984). *A Place Called School. Prospects for the Future*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Hunt, D.,E. (1992). *The Renewal of Personal Energy*. Toronto: OISE Press.

- Hyde, S. (1992). Negotiating Mathematics, in Boomer, G., et.al. *Negotiating the Curriculum: Educating for the 21st Century*. London: Falmer Press. Pp. 53-66.
- Jacobs, H.H. (1989). *Interdisciplinary Curriculum: Design and Implementation*. Alexandria, VA.: ASCD Publications.
- Kent, G. (1968). *Projects in the Primary School*. London: B.T. Batsford, Ltd.
- Kirkegaard, S. (1813-1855). Danish philosopher, in *Beginnings*, (1995). Toronto: General Publishing Co., Ltd.
- Lounsbury, J.H., editor (1992). *Connecting the Curriculum through Interdisciplinary Instruction*. Columbus, OH.: National Middle School Association.
- Maute, J. (1992). Cross-Curricular Connections, in *Connecting the Curriculum through Interdisciplinary Instruction*. Columbus, OH.: National Middle School Association.
- Miller, J., P. (1988). *The Holistic Curriculum*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Miller, J., P. (1990). *Holistic Learning: A Teacher's Guide to Integrated Studies*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Miller, J., P. (1993). *The Holistic Teacher*. Toronto: OISE Press.
- Noddings, N. (1995). Teaching Themes of Care, in *Phi Delta KAPPAN*, Vol. 76, No. 9. pp. 675-679.
- Schack, G.D. (1993). Involving Students in Authentic Research, in *Educational Leadership*, Vol.44, No.4, pp. 29-31.
- Sigurgeirsson, I. (1981). *Skólastofan; umhverfi til náms og froska*. (Ritröð Kennaraháskóla Íslands og Þunna.) Reykjavík: Þunn. [In Icelandic.]
- Sigurgeirsson, I. (1991). *The Role, Use and Impact of Curriculum Materials in Intermediate Level Icelandic Classrooms*. D.Phil. thesis. University of Sussex.
- Stevenson, C. (1992). *Teaching Ten to Fourteen Year Olds*. New York: Longman.
- Swaim, S. (1992). Foreword, in *Connecting the Curriculum through Interdisciplinary Instruction*. Columbus, OH: National Middle School Association.

- Tyler, K. (1992). Differentiation and Integration of the Primary Curriculum, in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 6, pp. 563-567.
- Vars, G. (1993). *Interdisciplinary Teaching: Why and How*. Columbus, OH.: National Middle School Association.
- Waters, D. (1982). *Primary School Projects*. London: Heineman Educational Books, Ltd.

Appendix

Interview Agenda

Viðtal við kennara um samflættingu

5. maí 1995

1. Background

- when and where born
- where did you grow up
- what kind of upbringing did you get
- where there any particular influences in you upbringing which were important for your later career

2. Could you reflect on your own schooling?

- when you look back to the time when you went to school what comes first to mind
- do you remember your teachers in element./middle school
- can you mention positive recollections
- can you mention negative recollections
- can you mention any significant learning experiences

3. When and why did you decide to become a teacher?

4. Tell me about your formal teacher education?

- how was the teaching profession introduced in your pre-service education
- how was the concept "classroom" delivered
- was there any intentional presentations and discussions in your program as to what schools are for and **should** be for
- was there anything about ethics or values in education
- can you tell me about a significant learning experiences in your pre-service education
- was the idea of integrating the curriculum tackled in your pre-service education
- can you recall what you felt it meant to become a teacher

5. Can you remember what your expectations were when you started teaching?

- can you recall what were your major concerns & why
- how did you tackle these issues
- when you look back now - do you feel that learning experiences from your own schooling might have a say in making you the teacher you are today
- what do you feel it means to develop as a teacher

6. What does integration mean to you?

7. Can you remember when you first started integrating the curriculum?

- can you recall why you decided to do that

- where you alone or did you work with another teacher
- what subjects did you integrate
- how did you plan the integration
- how did it go > good > bad
- what did the students think of it
- how did you evaluate your students
- was there anything you would have liked to do differently
- what was the lesson you learned from this experience

8. Did integrating the curriculum become a part of your teaching after this experience?

- did you make changes to your planning
- what & why

9. Are there any particular circumstances, or experiences, readings or courses that you have taken, – which influence the way you integrate the curriculum today?

How would you like me to represent your life?

(interview - story-telling - journal-writing - letters - conversations)

Framhaldsviðtal við kennara um samflættingu

18. maí 1995.

Follow-up Questions

May, 18th 1995.

How do you usually plan an integrated unit?

What is it you have in mind?

What are the steps you take when planning a unit?

- from A-Z

Is there a pattern in the way you usually plan a unit?

When did you start including other subjects besides the language, the arts and the music?

- history
- geography
- math
- science
- phys.ed
- other

When you involve your students in planning a unit, how do you go about doing that?

- do you use a certain strategy

Do you introduce a new unit to your students in a certain manner?

Do you open a new unit in a specific manner?

Have you had students who flounder around, for various reasons, when doing group-work? - Students who rely on their group-mates to do the work for them?

- how do you tackle that?

When you plan a unit for your class, do you bear in mind what the curriculum guidelines say about what is appropriate content, in e.g. history or geography, at that particular grade level?

Do the teachers in the junior department discuss what units should be taken each year, - what the sequence should be?

Do you plan the integrated units in co-operation with the other teachers?

Do you prepare and plan a unit differently now, than 6 years ago, when you started teaching the juniors?