CHAPTER 2: PRELIMINARY STAGE

The aim of the workshop model which QPEP offered to schools was to develop in children the skills of affirmation, cooperation and communication. The relevance of these workshops to the curricular requirements in respect of EMU and personal and social development, had been amply demonstrated. The Charities Evaluation Service (CES) Evaluation of QPEP quotes extensively from Norman Richardson with reference to the contribution of the Project to EMU. “A knowledge-based curricular approach ... can be further enhanced by an awareness of skills such as affirmation activities, listening exercises, cooperative games, trust-building experiences non-violence techniques.... The importance of a skills-dimension to EMU has been borne out over many years by a growing range of practitioners.” (Roots if Not Wings! Where did EMU come from? Richardson, Norman). The Evaluation also refers to a comment by a representative from the Board that “QPEP fits in well with the broader concept of EMU, while their work still relates to the traditional concept of cross-community activities” (Quaker Peace Education Project: Evaluation Final Report. 4:14. O’Neill J. Charities Evaluation Service, N. Ireland. Dec. 1993).

Experience of using the model indicated that it had potential for further logical development in that these skills could be applied to training children in concrete skills of negotiation and mediation and that such training was very much in accord with the curriculum. Such practical focus would transform the basic skills being offered, from a body of knowledge which would hopefully be of benefit to the children immediately and subsequently, to skills with immediate relevance to the reality of playground conflict, bullying etc. Through the empowerment of children to deal with these present realities in their lives themselves, and the further enhancement of their skills through practice, children would bring from their school years a crucial skill for adulthood. The Project’s awareness of peer mediation programmes in other parts of the world brought it in touch with the movement for “conflict literacy” (Hilary Stacey, West Midlands Mediation Project, speaking at the Peace Education Conference, London Nov. ‘93) to be seen as a vital “4th R” (The title of the Newsletter of the National Association for Mediation in Education- N.A.M.E. Amherst, Mass, USA.) in the preparation of children for the world of conflict - a reality whether in one-to- one relationships or in the world of work or in inter and intra group and community relationships. It was envisaged that a successful peer mediation programme, located in the immediate realities of relationships within the school, could contribute to the

development of a positive ethos within the school and that, once established, it would begin to demonstrate to staff (teaching and ancillary), and parents, its significance in relation to the problems of conflict and bullying.

The idea of mediation skills training as a logical development for QPEP featured in the 1991-92 Annual Report. Describing QPEP's conflict resolution skills training as an essential prerequisite to handing conflict constructively, the Chairman of the Management Committee goes on to remark:

> *But conflicts do not disappear by magic when such skills develop. Do we also need to offer a model on how to find ways out of conflict? (John Lampen. Chairman's Report, 199 1-92 Annual Report)*

A regular feature in the yearly programme of QPEP has been the P7 Conference, consisting of two Primary 7 delegates from each of the Schools in the city and surrounding area of Londonderry. Up to 30 schools have been sending delegates regularly. Following a successful Conference on the theme of "Bullying" in 1992, (QPEP Annual Report 1991-2, 18-21) it was decided to devote the 1993 Conference to the theme of "Peer Mediation". (QPEP Annual Report 1992-3, 19-20). Preparation for the event included a session for the facilitators led by Brendan McAllister of Mediation Network N.Ireland. The aim of the Conference was to 'sell' the idea of peer mediation, against the much repeated message which children receive that they must bring their conflicts to adults for resolution. Having observed a demonstration of mediation in which children of their own age played the role of parties in conflict, and had an opportunity in role-plays in small groups to try it for themselves, the children got some sense both of its feasibility and of the need to determine those situations which would be amenable to peer mediation and those which would not. Some teaching in the basic techniques was offered. In addition a brochure entitled "Conflict Busters" was written especially for the Conference, containing explanations, illustrations and suggestions. A copy was given to each participant. In a note for teachers in the brochure it was indicated that "The Quaker Peace Education Programme can assist schools in setting up a programme and helping to train the mediators" (Lampen J. Conflict Busters: The Young Peoples' Guide to Mediation in Schools. University of Ulster Quaker Peace Education Project. April 1993)

A particularly positive response from the delegates provided the encouragement to approach the Principals of the participating schools

offering a pilot project for the establishment of a peer mediation programme in their schools. A copy of “Conflict Busters” was included with the invitation to each school. The Principals of the Model Primary School and Oakgrove Integrated Primary School promptly indicated their interest. QPEP had previously worked at both schools but for one Principal it was the enthusiastic feedback provided by his school’s Conference delegates which most significantly influenced him.

> *The initial thought about following it up came from the children. Eoibhe Halliday who went to the P7 Conference, came back absolutely thrilled, and when I asked the two of them to do a report they both said that they really enjoyed it; they got a lot from it and they both wanted a follow-up ... . When your invitation came it was an automatic progression .... The two children said ‘this is good and we would like to do it again’, so that is where the interest came from. (Michael Roulston, Principal, The Model Primary School. Interviewed, June 1994.).*

For the Principal of Oakgrove the previous involvement of QPEP in the school since its establishment in September 1991 was a significant factor. In the 1991-92 QPEP Annual Report, the Principal spoke of this involvement in support of the schools aim of being child-centred. She referred to the programme for the development of self-esteem among the children (P1 -P7), the staff and parents, and of QPEP’s involvement in the schools EMU activities.

> *QPEP working in Oak grove has been like a breath of fresh air. In a very practical way they have given us tools to put our aims of integration and child-centredness into action. Our whole school esteem is healthier because of their generous input.*
> *(Anne Murray, Principal Oakgrove. Oakgrove and Quaker Peace Education Project. 1991-92 Annual Report, JS-16).*

Both Principals agreed to their schools involvement following a meeting with Mary de Largy, a Belfast secondary teacher who had undertaken a peer mediation programme in 1991/2 in her school.

> *It was good to hear someone who had been through it .... We had an opportunity to ask her lots of very straightforward questions that you can’t ask a book. We had the awkward questions and just the nitty gritty questions that sometimes get skated over in a report .... I found her very open and honest; she didn’t paint a picture of this*

being the most wonderful thing in the world. She was very realistic about the context of it. But she was also very enthusiastic about it and that partly helped sell it to me because she was a practitioner as well – a professional teacher and realistic and sensible. (Anne Murray, Principal, Oak grove, Interviewed June 1994).

At separate meetings of the QPEP Director with each of the Principals on 10 September '93, the P7 teacher from each school who would be involved was identified, and their availability for whatever training or planning meetings required their attendance - during school time if necessary - was indicated. The most suitable time in each school for training workshops was established with reference to their weekly time-tables. Both Principals supported the idea of initial training being conducted in each school separately but concurrently. They expressed the wish that "at least one face remain the same throughout" on the QPEP team in each school. They supported the idea of peer group selection of the mediators. They favoured those selected as mediators for each school being brought together for joint training, away from the school and ideally at the University, "to add kudos from the children's view", (Michael Roulston, at meeting of 10 Sept. 1993) but taking care to ensure that those not selected would not feel abandoned. The Principal of The Model in particular was anxious that the programme not begin until after the first part of the P7 selection procedure for secondary schools (11+).

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS FOR TRAINING COMPONENT

As an action research Project, QPEP had as its immediate research objective the development of a process which would inform the action - specifically the training of children in mediation skills. Using Elliott's definition of action/research as "the study of a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it" (Elliott J. 1982 Action-Research: A framework for self-evaluation in schools. Working Paper No 1. Teacher-Pupil Interaction and the Quality of Learning. London Schools Council - mimeo), the Project also envisaged the action informing the research and so the latter was kept open to adjustment throughout the training period. Different research instruments were required once the mediation programmes were launched in the schools. These will be discussed later in this report.

While the research process was primarily focused on improving the immediate action, it was envisaged that the instruments used would at the same time serve the research requirements of this report.

Some initial work on a methodology for research was done during the Training Day and developed further during October. In order that the feedback from the children after each workshop be available in a usable form for the planning of the next one, it was felt important to collate the contents of their evaluation forms. (Appendix 1) Particularly as the workshops progressed, the questions in these forms aimed not just to invite positive/negative comments about the component exercises of the workshop, but to obtain indications as to the learning acquired, 'gaps' in the learning, and the needs of participants. Further indications as to learning and personal needs were solicited through classroom work, designed by QPEP in consultation with the teachers, for each of the periods between workshops. This work too was examined and fed back into subsequent planning.

Examples of the usefulness of this process are worth citing. It provided indications that work which had been done on the "brainstorming" and "bargaining" approaches to finding solutions to problems, had not been sufficiently grasped by the children. It frequently indicated the need for constant attention to the use of' child-friendly' language in the workshops, and in the design of classwork, handouts and other materials. One item of theory - on the interdependence of attitudes, behaviour and issues in a conflict (Galtung's theory of the triangle of conflict), was considered important in the training but the feedback indicated that a didactic approach had been unsuccessful. A

particularly innovative and successful alternative approach (Appendix 2 - the circus elephant) was designed by team-member Jan Caspers. It was highly acclaimed by the teachers, and subsequently used in the school assembly at the Model and in the joint training of those selected as mediators.

Regular contact was maintained with the teachers. When possible they were briefed on the overall programme for the next workshop on a weekly basis. They were specifically briefed as regards components in which they were invited to play a specific role or lead. Such prior briefing was very significant for them.

> *Since the whole idea was completely new to me and I was learning with the children as it went on, I found it tremendously useful that Eileen (Healy) would come across before each session and explain to me what was going to happen, what you were trying to do and what you hoped to achieve from it.* (Kathy Laverty, P7 Teacher, Oakgrove. Interviewed June 1994).

The teachers also participated with the QPEP team in a short evaluation session immediately after each workshop and completed evaluation forms. The minutes of these meetings were made available for the next planning meeting.

With such regular contact with the teachers and opportunity for them to provide verbal and written feedback, it was not essential for them to attend planning meetings. Since these were invariably lengthy and took place during school hours, their attendance would simply not have been possible. Regular informal contact was maintained also with the Principals. As the series of training workshops came near to conclusion, the QPEP team for each school met formally with the Principal and Teacher in each school on November 30, to review the training and discuss the establishment of the mediation programme in their school.

For a pilot project of this nature the provision of parallel initial training for an entire P7 class in each of two schools had numerous advantages. Each planning session could design a basic workshop programme that could be replicated in each school but with modification in view of the circumstances and prior feedback specific to each. Oakgrove had the particular advantage that it's workshop was further refined in light of it having been 'trialled' on the previous day in The Model, and the overlap in the QPEP teams working in the two schools. It has to be said also that both were 'ideal' schools in many respects. From work which it had already done in both schools, QPEP's credentials and a good working relationship with the Principals and staffs were already established.

Such work was in support of the impressive on-going efforts in both schools to develop a positive, whole-school ethos and in the promotion of EMU. While Oakgrove is an officially “Integrated” school, the Model has consistently pursued the integrated school concept and philosophy. While it could he expected that attempts to introduce peer mediation in other schools would not perhaps be as easy, it seems appropriate in retrospect that the piloting of such an innovative programme should be located in two schools which were already amenable to it. A vital objective of the project was to demonstrate that peer mediation can work. Another was to identify what would be basically required of a prospective school in terms of commitment from Principal and Staff, before attempting it there. And with the variation in size, the pilot scheme was able to identify possible different approaches required in light of enrolment and staff numbers, particularly with regard to the implementation of the programme.

It needs to be stressed that, until the P7 Conference and the meeting with Mary de Largy. neither Principal had heard of peer mediation in schools before.

> *“No, not children mediating themselves, no; a completely new idea, and scary. My first reaction I suppose was that this is not something that! would really want to take on. If your discipline policy is working well, as ours is, you don’t want to tack something on to it that may disrupt what is already working”* (Michael Roulston, Principal, The Model, Interviewed June 1994).

In agreeing to their schools’ participation in the piloting and development of an untried and radically new idea, both Principals were accepting that mistakes would be made. This environment was crucial for a pilot project such as this.

The significant variations in the programme implementation following the initial training provided extensive scope for learning. These variations were due not just to size differences but to other factors and these will be discussed later in this report. Another advantage of working with two schools simultaneously was that each, whether in direct dialogue or through QPEP, was aware of their different experimental approaches and, through sharing what worked well for them and what didn’t, were able to modify their programmes accordingly. The joint training of selected mediators proved hugely encouraging for them in that they had a sense of belonging to a new and important movement beyond their school, and a group identity and bonding developed almost imperceptibly. This will also be discussed in

greater detail later - together with the ‘downside’ in respect of those not selected as mediators.

CHAPTER 4: THE TEAM AND TEAM TRAINING

With a view to beginning the training programme immediately after the first 11+ test, the Director of QPEP invited the project team to a meeting on 14 September to clarify availability, set goals, discuss ideas for the workshop methodology, and establish a draft timetable of workshops, planning and evaluation meetings. A team training day had been organised for 20 September, to be facilitated by Brendan McAllister of the Conflict Mediation Network (now known as Mediation Network N.Ireland).

The QPEP team, most of whom were experienced in using the Projects' workshop model for the development of affirmation, communication and cooperation skills, had limited experience overall in mediation skills training. QPEP Director Jerry Tyrrell and volunteer Rainer Schultz had some training in adult mediation but limited practice experience. John Lampen's presence on the team was especially crucial to the success of the project. As a former Headmaster of a school for disturbed children he had engaged in experimental work in the field of education throughout his teaching career and had wide experience of the skills needed for mediation. As leader of the training-the-trainers component of the programme, he has contributed Chapter 7 in this report.

The Training Day began with quite frank acknowledgements of skepticism as to the feasibility of peer mediation and of personal doubts as regards competence. "Will I (we) be able to 'walk in the mocassins' of the children?" "How can I sell something that I'm not convinced about/ confident in?" (Responses to 'Hopes/Fears/Expectations' exercise at Team Training Day, 20 September '93) The session at least began the process of dealing with these apprehensions and was therefore extremely important for the QPEP group. Brendan offered an overview of the basic mediation model, from the pre-mediation process through to the resolution and follow-up phases and facilitated the group's initial efforts to 'translate' the model for use in childrens' peer mediation.

The participating teachers attended the afternoon session of the Training Day, and after receiving a brief outline of the morning's deliberations, a number of practical details were discussed. The sessions' value for them is indicated in the following extracts from an interview with Brendan Hartop of The Model, conducted in June '94:

> *Teachers are wary about outside agencies that come in with a new idea that they want to pilot ... and I was skeptical about whether this idea could become a whole-school thing rather than just part of the*

P7 curriculum .... But from the very first planning session it became clear to me that the group were professional and committed ... that this thing was going to work well within the classroom ... and that it linked in well with our ethos as an EMU promoting school.

Information on the QPEP team is given in Appendix 3. The training aspect of the training and planning sessions was led by John Lampen. A structure had been established for the initial training of six 105 minute workshops to take place once per week in each school between the end of October and the beginning of December, except for the half-term break *1-5* November. John prepared an overall Course Syllabus to fit this schedule and, in preparation for each training/planning session, a draft programme for the pending workshop and an outline programme for subsequent ones. This made it possible quickly to identify and address the immediate training needs of the team, indicate future training needs, and give concrete shape to the programme for the pending workshops.

It has already been indicated that within the team in general there was a degree of resistance and skepticism as to the feasibility of the idea, and doubts at the personal and group level as regards competence to take on the programme, given the teams limited overall experience. In view of the consequent drain on energy levels, and given the time constraints and the huge amount of work to be done, the preparatory work done by John and his provision of a structure was vital. But the time constraints made it necessary that John be quite directive in his leadership of the training -though he at least as much as anyone would have wished it could have been different - and for a team more familiar with a consensus approach to decision making, this presented difficulties. A ‘casualty’ of the time-pressure, reinforced by a certain reluctance to engage in it, was the lack of attention to team-building and inter-group relationships in the team meetings. Though consistently featuring as an agenda item, it was never ‘reached’. While constraints of time can be offered as a reason, it could equally be argued that such constraints made attention to this matter all the more crucial - and not least when the field of work was conflict resolution! A heated and inadequately resolved debate in a meeting towards the end of the initial training period, on the validity of the “win/win” concept in mediation, may have been as much about unattended inter-group dynamics as about the declared issue. However it should be stressed that the internal debates in the team did not affect its professional working with the children.

By a happy coincidence there was an opportunity for some members

of the team to participate in a day workshop led by Yvonne Duncan, Director of the “Cool Schools” mediation training programme in New Zealand, on 6 November. QPEP’s Director had met her at an international conference in Dublin on the previous week and had obtained a copy of the Cool Schools manual. For participants in a pilot project, these encounters with a well-established programme were a source both of valuable encouragement and of useful ideas.

The feedback from the schools (through evaluation, classwork and teachers’ comments) provided considerable encouragement for the team throughout the period of workshops that it was ‘on the right track’. However it was not until the mediation programmes were established and running that evidence of how right it was and of the far reaching and positive implications of the programme, began to emerge. The initial training programme required from the team a suspension of disbelief that it would actually lead to children resolving their conflicts. It was not an easy period.

Mrs. Patsy Casey, a retired teacher who was widely respected in local teaching circles, joined the team at the beginning. Her presence on the team was subsequently cited by one of the teachers as significantly allaying his initial fears about the team working in his class. Unfortunately Mrs. Casey could not stay with the project. Because of other commitments and for medical reasons, her availability for team meetings was limited, but it needs to be acknowledged also that for a teacher more familiar with the more conventional (didactic) teaching methods, the QPEP approach may have seemed quite strange and perhaps invalid if not threatening, and this may have been a factor in her decision not to continue. The project benefited hugely from her teaching experience during the short period of her involvement and underscored for QPEP the value of having such a person on its team. The experience suggests that for a qualified and experienced teacher to participate in such projects, more account needs to be taken of the challenges involved for both QPEP and the teacher.

Given the team members’ limited previous experience of mediation skills training, the format of the training sessions consisted of team members ‘doing’ the kinds of exercises which were being envisaged for the children and then, through analysis and evaluation, designing the exercise for use in the childrens’ workshops. Trialling in the use of fairy stories as the basis of role-plays for the development of mediation skills, indicated that they could be most effective in seeing the same incident from two perspectives, but that they needed to be handled with care. For example in using the story of Little Red Riding Hood, where the Wolf might cite as his justification for scaring the young girl that “she

needed to be taught a lesson because of her rudeness in refusing to talk to me", this might confuse the children, or worse undermine their parents instruction that they should on no account talk to strangers.

The team developed cards for the children to use during training and subsequently in mediation work, containing the sequence to be followed in the mediation process. (Appendix 4 'Let's Mediate').

CHAPTER 5: THE WORKSHOPS

As an introduction to mediation the team had decided that the first round of workshops would concentrate on the themes of affirmation, communication and co-operation, for which QPEP had an abundance of well-trialled exercises to choose from and vast experience in their usage. While each subsequent workshop would explore different aspects of the mediation process and problem solving techniques, these three basic themes would be retained throughout and re-emphasised as appropriate; for example where communication and listening skills were clearly important for mediators when enabling the conflicting parties to tell their side of the story, providing feedback to each and seeking clarification, an appropriate exercise would be included in the workshop programme. (An overview of the mediation process is given in Appendix 11).

The fact that the teacher in each school played (in each case brilliantly) one of the roles in "The Old Woman and the Woodcutter" conflict in the first round of workshops, (the Hansel and Gretel story), proved to be a master-stroke. With the children sitting in a circle, instead of at rows of desks, seeing their teacher completely out of role, caught up in conflict and misunderstandings and struggling with feelings of hurt and anger, the impact upon them was profound, and ensured their attention and interest right from the start. The exercise, though well-prepared, was deliberately unrehearsed in terms of final outcome and came across as very real.

Evidence of childrens' interest came quickly. After only one workshop the P7 teacher in the Model reported that the children had asked if they could mediate in a name-calling dispute that had arisen in the class, pointing out that they were less interested in the child being punished than in helping him to see the hurt he was causing. It was also clear that the word "mediation", - a new one in their vocabulary - was already being widely used.

In order to move quickly from observing to participating, the children were invited at the end of the first workshop to design two -party conflicts for role playing in the next session in small groups. With children role-playing the conflicting parties, the mediation roles were played by a QPEP facilitator assisted by another child, whose role was to give feedback to the parties after each had told their story. All the children were then involved in the development of ideas as to how the mediators might proceed from there.

As the workshops progressed the childrens' participation expanded, with the adults becoming less directive. The small group format was

used more and more so that each child would have opportunities to practise being a mediator. There was never a problem finding volunteers for either mediation or conflict roles in the small groups but attention had to be paid to sharing fairly the opportunities to mediate and to including the few children who were hesitant. In Oakgrove, where the children were particularly well used to working in small groups, participation in large group sessions was initially weak. This matter was addressed through games in the large group which involved lots of exercising of vocal chords and laughter, before proceeding to work exercises. After Workshop 4 the P7 teacher noted in her written evaluation:

> *Participation is imp roving wonderfully; some children are shining now and there is a great willingness to volunteer and to participate in the discussions.* (Kathy Laverty: Teachers Evaluation, 24 November 1993).

The children were invited to offer stories of conflicts for role-playing in the workshops. Since it could reasonably be assumed that most of these conflict stories would be of actual conflicts in which the story teller had some part and which involved other children present or absent, these facts were established before the story was used and confidentiality was stressed. In such cases it was decided that the story-teller or anyone else involved, not play either role but rather be given the opportunity to select those to play the roles. In the selection of conflict stories to role-play, some that would not be appropriate for mediation were deliberately included, to provide opportunities to explain that some conflicts cannot be the subject of peer mediation eg. those involving serious breach of major rules of the school or other laws. Opportunities were also taken to demonstrate that where it becomes clear that one or both parties persists in telling untruths, the conflict is unmediable even though both have declared their acceptance of mediation. But children were advised in such situations to explore ways of breaking the logjam before ending the effort to mediate. The participation of observers of role-plays was ensured by their having a check-list of the things which mediators needed to cover. (Appendix *5:* “Check-it-out!”). It proved to be an excellent aid to the learning process.

At the final workshop in the large group, actual conflicts involving children who were present, were sought. Two were chosen and these were each mediated by two volunteers, with a QPEP team member acting as consultant. In The Model one of these proved unmediable

due to dishonesty, and provided useful learning from being so. In Oakgrove one of the conflicting parties was totally honest about what he had done but took a 'so-what' stance. This unsettled the mediators and the class for a time; they needed a little help from the QPEP team to realise that he was not being intransigent but honest. After that the mediators handled it impressively. The response of the children in their evaluation forms is noteworthy. To the question "What was good about the first mediation in the large group" the Oakgrove children gave the following responses:

> *"It was real, not a role-play". "You saw it had strong feelings". "The mediators did well to find a solution"* . *"We worked at a real problem and sorted it out". "We got to see a real problem". "The problem was solved". "We got a chance to try out our skills". "It wasn't a big problem, just the usual kind of problem". "It gave us all the experience". "D was so real". "It was so true to life". "The mediators were expecting an argument but D didn't deny anything". "A and K were great at the mediation".* (Childrens' Evaluation, Workshop 6, Oakgrove 6 December).

These were the responses of the two mediators:

> *I was a mediator and I loved it; we had to think hard and work together how to work it out. I was a mediator and it got difficult but we worked it out".* (Ibid).

In the same evaluation form there was opportunity for the children to say which, of all the sessions, had been their favourite, and why ten of twenty eight Oakgrove children chose the final session for the fact that "we worked with a real dispute and not a made-up one". (Ibid).

It became clear, especially from the results of a piece of classwork (Appendix 6: "Questions about Mediation") following the final workshop, that there were gaps in the training. This was especially so with regard to the framing of issues and the range of techniques for finding solutions to problems, including bargaining and brainstorming. The joint training of those selected as mediators would therefore have to take account of this. At the same time this classwork indicated an excellent level of understanding overall and also of motivation. The answers to the three-tiered question, "Why do you think mediation is different from a teacher sorting out a quarrel?" indicated a distinct preference for peer mediation above having teachers or parents involved. They also revealed a clear awareness of the importance of "keeping secrets" and

that what is significant about mediation is that the resolution is achieved by the conflicting parties. Of 28 children in Oakgrove, 26 answered that “the decision is made by the parties” and several added “not by the teacher”, “not by the mediators” or “by no one else”. While 12 answered that mediators “don’t tell secrets” the remaining 16 answered question 2 as follows “Mediators don’t tell the parties what to do”. The question “List three personal qualities you think a mediator should have” revealed an excellent awareness in both schools of the importance of trust, honesty, fairness, listening skills, patience, confidentiality, and helpfulness.

To the question “Would you like to see a mediation programme in this school?” all but three of the children in both schools answered “yes”. One child in Oakgrove and two in The Model said “I don’t know”. However the final question, as regards possible problems with a mediation programme, indicated impressive realism on the part of the children. The following are sample answers.

The Model

> *“The P6s might not accept mediation from P7s”. “The mediators might get provoked .... pushed around .... not respected”. “The younger children might not understand”. “What would you do if the two people kept arguing all the time and ignoring you?” “Maybe if someone was being bullied they would be too scared to say ... How could you help if someone was being bullied?” “There are some people who would prefer to fight”.* (Questions about Mediation - classwork. Model, 2 December).

Oakgrove:

> *“To know when someone is not telling the truth”. ‘Some people might be shy about mediation”. “If someone was being bullied they would be afraid that it could get worse if they told”. “The mediators might not have enough time to mediate”;* “ *.. might not have enough time for themselves”. “You could try but it could lead to a bigger fight”* . (Questions about Mediation - classwork. Oakgrove, 7 December).

Apart from the findings from the classwork, the team’s evaluation of the final round of workshops identified other needs to be addressed in the joint training day. These included:

The importance of establishing that the parties in conflict want peer

mediation, before proceeding.

The distinction between mediation and arbitration. In that respect the word “solution” had proved somewhat problematic. It tended to draw mediators into a ‘detective’ role. So the words “for a solution” were dropped from “Try to get suggestions for a solution from both parties”, on the card containing the mediator’s operational sequence.

Help the children, through brainstorming, to explore the vast area of possible resolutions.

More practise for the children in framing the issues.

The dynamics of mediators working in pairs - sharing the work, alternating between leading and supporting.

A discussion of the training programme in general is reflected in the minutes of the Team Meeting:

> *We have offered the children a framework as the basis on which they can exercise their skills. A framework is necessary but it risks being a strait-jacket, curtailing the childrens’ creativity and ability to own, act from, and trust their own thinking in each circumstance. In a sense then we may need to do a bit of ‘unlearning’ of the framework and ‘unfreezing’ of the children. We need to own our share of responsibility for the fact that some children, though understandably at the beginning, hold rigidly to the sequence of instructions on the “prompt cards” and are paralysed when the instructions seem not to fit the circumstances they are dealing with. As for the confusion between mediation and arbitration it needs to be acknowledged that the latter is what children have most often experienced from adults.* (Team Meeting: Evaluation and Forward Planning, 7 December).

CHAPTER 6: CHILDRENS' EVALUATION OF TRAINING

On completion of whole-class training the children were asked to complete an evaluation sheet. The collated responses from each school are given below.

A: Model School: No. of Respondents 24

When answering questions 1-12 below, the respondents used the following scale; A: Excellent B: Good C: Fair D: Poor

1:	A:5	B:16	C:3	D:0	Teaching me about each of the parts of a mediation session
2:	A:10	B:11	C:3	D:0	Teaching me how to write an agreement
3:	A:18	B:4	C:2	D:0	The role plays
4:	A:18	B:5	C:1	D:0	The way the adults behaved towards me.
5:	A:3	B:11	C:8	D:2	The booklet "Conflict Busters".
6:	A:2	B:l0	C:10	D:2	The written work we were given to do.
7:	A:11	B:9	C:4	D:0	The way the adults answered my questions.
8:	A:8	B:9	C:5	D:2	Chances to ask questions.
9:	A:17	B:7	C:0	D:0	Chances to watch a mediation session.
10:	A:8	B:6	C:9	D:1	Chances to be a mediator in role-plays.
11:	A:18	B:4	C:2	D:0	The length of the workshops.
12:	A:17	B:7	C:0	D:0	The workshops overall.

Most respondents answered Qs. A-D below with reference to the "Mediators Toolkit". Other responses are also collated.

Which parts of the training did you find:
A: Most helpful to you?

The ground rules x 3. Explaining what mediation is x 8. Hearing the stories x 1. Asking how they feel x 1. Brain-storming ideas x 4. Talking to each party separately x4. Helping them to bargain x 1.

Looking at what each party needs and wants x 1. Writing an agreement x 2.
(Other) When you asked us what we liked best. The process of mediation x 3. Being a mediator. Learning not to take sides.

B: Most difficult for you?

The ground rules x 1. Explaining what mediation is x 1. Hearing the stories x 1. Brain-storming ideas x 6. Helping them to bargain x 5. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 1. Writing an agreement x 4.
(Other) Role-plays because you have to be brave to do it x 2. Nothing. Actually mediating because you cannot think on questions to ask.

C: Most interesting?

The ground rules x 1 .Explaining what mediation is x 4. Hearing the stories x 3. Giving each party a short summary of what they said x 2. Brain-storming ideas x 2. Talking to each party separately x 4. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 1. Writing an agreement x 3.
(Other) Playing the games x 3. Being a mediator x 4.

D: Boring?

The ground rules x 3. Hearing the stories x 3. Asking how they feel x 2. Brain-storming ideas x 5. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 1. Writing an agreement x 2.
(Other) Nothing x S. Written work after the session. Having to just watch a role-play.

We would like you to imagine that we were about to begin mediation training in your school, or in another school, and wanted your advice on what we might do better. Please let us have your suggestions.

I don't think the written work is that important. The story telling could be better. Try to involve everybody. More mediations and let the children take over. Have more games x 6 and less talking, so that people won't get bored. The games should be a bit less dangerous. We should be allowed to pick the games. More and better role-plays x 2. Longer role-plays. Keep it the way it is x 2, because I enjoyed

everything. The brainstorming could have been made more interesting. Come more often - weekend training. More small group work because you learn more about mediation. Have a different adult in each small group every week. Make the sessions a little longer. Give more chances to ask questions. Give more time to explaining what mediation is, to brainstorming ideas, and to writing an agreement. Give more chances to be a mediator.

Do you think that you will use the skills that you have learned during this training in your own life?

Yes x 19. They are very helpful. I might. I don't really think so x 2. I will value it but not use it.. No because I don't like getting involved in other peoples problems.

In what situations?

Fights, rows, disagreements and rudeness. In trying to stop fights x 3. When my friends are fighting and cannot sort out the problem I will try and mediate. I have used them already in an agreement with my dad. When my brother and sister were fighting I used the written agreement skill. When my two brothers are fighting I will ask them both if they want me to mediate; I have already used it with them. When my Mum and Dad are arguing. It depends on what kind of fight the parties are having. I don't think so but I have a few friends who are not speaking to me and I think I could use a bit of mediation. In school. if I get into a fight. If I have children they could always get in a fight and I could mediate; and I could mediate relations and tell them how to mediate and then pass it through the family so they could learn the meaning of mediation. Yes because I have tried it already and it really does work I can't say when or where but they are certainly useful.

B: Oakgrove Integrated School. No. of Respondents 30

When answering questions 1-12 below, the respondents used the following scale; A: Excellent B: Good. C: Fair. D: Poor

1:	A:12	B:16	C:0	D:2	Teaching me about each of the parts of a mediation session
2:	A:4	B:9	C:15	D:2	Teaching me how to write an agreement.
3:	A:12	B:15	C:3	D:0	The role plays
4:	A:18	B:9	C:3	D:0	The way the adults behaved towards me.
5:	A:10	B:11	C:8	D:1	The booklet "Conflict Busters".
6:	A:0	B:16	C:11	D:3	The written work we were given to do.
7:	A:14	B:14	C:2	D:0	The way the adults answered my questions.
8:	A:12	B:15	C:3	D:0	Chances to ask questions.
9:	A:16	B:8	C:6	D:0	Chances to watch a mediation session.
1O:	A:7	B:9	C:10	D:4	Chances to be a mediator in role plays.
11:	A:12	B:10	C:5	D:3	The length of the workshops.
12:	A:18	B:8	C:2	D:2	The workshops overall.

Most respondents answered Qs.. A-D below with reference to the "Mediators Toolkit". Other responses are also collated.

Which parts of the training did you find:

A: Most helpful to you?

The ground rules x 3. Explaining what mediation is x 3. Hearing the stories x 2. Asking how they feel x 1. Brain-storming ideas x 4. Talking to each party separately x 3. Helping them to bargain x 1. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 6. Giving each party a short summary of what they said x 1.
(Other) Seeing both sides. Being a mediator. Finding an agreement. The role-plays.

B: Most difficult for you?

The ground rules x 1. Explaining what mediation is x 2. Brain-storming ideas x 6. Helping them to bargain x 7. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 2. Writing an agreement x 4.
(Other) Getting a solution for the 2 parties to agree to x 3. When we got stuck for words. When we got mixed up. Filling the sheets. Trying to find an answer for peoples problems.

C: Most interesting?

Explaining what mediation is x 1. Hearing the stories x 7. Giving each party a short summary of what they said x 1. Brain-storming ideas x 6. Talking to each party separately x 1. Looking at what each party needs and wants x 1. Writing an agreement x 1. Brainstorming x 6. Helping them to bargain x 1.
(Other) The Role Plays x S. "Conflict Busters". The games. Being a Mediator x 2.

D: Boring?

The ground rules x 3. Hearing the stories x 1. Brain-storming ideas x 2. Writing an agreement x 6. The Role Plays x 2. Explaining what Mediation is *x 3. Helping them to bargain x 2. Giving each party a short summary of what they said x 1.*
(Other) Nothing x 2. When we got stuck. Having to just watch a role-play x 3. Sitting and talking about it.

We would like you to imagine that we were about to begin mediation training in your school, or in another school, and wanted your advice on what we might do better. Please let us have your suggestions.

Show a scene with a teacher sorting it out and then mediators sorting it out - and see if there is any difference x 2. Play more/ better games x 8. Don't be so serious - have fun! You could make it a bit more fun. Do more role-plays x 3. Have more role-plays between adults. Explain more about writing an agreement. It always seemed to be the same people mediating. You should let everyone have a fair chance at practising mediation and everyone should have more chances. Include the pupils more. More comfy! better rooms x 2. Make the role-plays more interesting. Think up better

role-plays - Hansel and Gretel was the only really good one, and it was great. Try not to use too many big words. Tell everyone in the school what mediation is x 3. Make the sessions longer.

Do you think that you will use the skills that you have learned during this training in your own life?

Yes: 21.
No: 7. I don't think adults who get into a fight would appreciate mediation. There will not be any situations.
Blanks: 2

In what situations?:

Fights, arguments. When I see people fighting I will ask them if they want mediation. With my sisters/brothers/friends/relatives. Maybe if someone I know was having an argument.. When a fight happens in my street. If someone is being mugged. All the tools are helpful in all cases of fighting. In divorce maybe, or just conflicts. I will always be able to see that there are two sides to a story. When I grow up and have children, if they fight I can help them.

CHAPTER 7: TRAINING THE TRAINERS: PREPARING FOR THE SCHOOLS PEER MEDIATION PROJECT.

A REPORT BY JOHN LAMPEN, TEAM TRAINING LEADER.

The relevant events which preceded the launch of the peer mediation training programme are covered elsewhere in this report. The focus of this chapter is on the training-the-trainers component of the programme, which I led.

I was delighted that we had this opportunity to establish a pilot project to assist schools in setting up their own peer mediation system. I had felt for some time that we needed to add more direct work in conflict resolution to the peace skills training and anti-prejudice work which formed the Project's main repertoire of work with young people. I believe strongly in the value of peer mediation as an addition, and often an alternative, to traditional school methods of handling childrens' conflicts. I also believe that peace will not take root in Northern Ireland until there is something like a culture of conflict resolution, in which ideas of negotiation, bargaining, accommodation and restitution take the place of confrontational political attitudes - and one of the ways of developing this must surely be in the education of young people.

All the same, it was a bold venture. The QPEP team had to inspire the young mediators, and also do a serious professional job in training them. As a team we had a formidable and varied range of skills in working with young people; but specific experience in mediation was limited. Rainer Schultz and Jerry Tyrrell have both had some training in adult conciliation, though they have not had opportunities for consistent practice; the other team members, apart from me, had no experience in it at all. Yet both training and experience are needed if a team is to believe that mediation can work among young people - they need confidence themselves before they can inspire and empower the children. One member commented in one of our early meetings, "I feel neither confident nor competent - I'm not enjoying this at all."

My own experience was more extensive and specific. I spent twenty years of my teaching career in Shotton Hall, a well-known school for teenage boys with severe behaviour problems; for the second half of that time I was headmaster. We had about forty five pupils, and all disciplinary matters and problems of behaviour between pupils were brought to a daily meeting, and sorted out with another pupil acting as chairman and mediator. The approach was evolved by the school, drawing on the work of other pioneers in the treatment of maladjusted children. I did not link it in my mind with work for peace, or techniques of mediation, until I went on a mediation training course in Northern

Ireland led by Ron Kraybill, a Mennonite now working for peace and justice in South Africa. Ron's approach was instantly familiar to me, and it gave me concepts and a language for something which we had been doing intuitively at Shotton Hall for so long that it had become second nature.

When I offered to train the QPEP team, I knew that we should have to provide the team with a good deal of mediation experience in a short while, so that they felt familiar with the process and (hopefully) enthusiastic about its value. We were able to take two days for training (as well as meeting with the two teachers involved) before starting work in the schools; after that, we would be training and preparing for the sessions just before they happened each week. These weekly meetings also included detailed planning, and the one stipulation I made was that the training should come before the planning. (I had often found in the Project that when we took business first and training second, the time for the latter seemed to shrink!)

We did not have much to draw on in the way of other people's examples. We had handbooks and training schemes from two projects, the Good Shepherd Neighbourhood House programme in Philadelphia and Hilary Stacey's programme for the West Midlands Quaker Peace Education Project. We had the report by Mary de Largy on a trial project in the secondary school where she teaches in Belfast. We also had information on a project at Downtown Alternative School, Toronto, for eight year olds, which challenged us with the picture of its very simple and informal structure. During our programme we had a visit from Chris Spies who works for the Western Cape Regional Peace Committee in South Africa; his graphic and inspiring accounts of mediation in a climate of tension widened our vision of what it was all about. Then Yvonne Duncan of the Cool Schools Programme in New Zealand ran a workshop in County Donegal which some of us managed to attend. Though not a formal part of our training programme, it was encouraging to see (on video), hear about and practise such a dynamic and well-proven approach.

The initial training day was given by Brendan McAllister of the Mediation Network N. Ireland in Belfast. This day was helpful in giving an overview of the mediation process, and at the end of it we were able to take a decision that we would work with a particular mediation model in both schools, choosing a fairly structured one rather than the Toronto approach. We felt this would give the schools a clearer basis for developing their own practice when mediation started. We also agreed to keep the training programmes in the two schools instep with one another, because of the limitations on our preparation time, and

because some team members would be working in both schools. These decisions simplified the preparation of our own materials and the worksheets which we prepared for the schools. But that opening training day had frustrating gaps; in particular we only covered the introduction and "story-telling" stages in practice, so we got no real insight into the most demanding (and exciting) part, which is the work towards resolution. Moreover Brendan had no special experience in working with children, so this crucial aspect of our preparation was largely postponed to our second day together.

The day helped me to identify a number of dilemmas about the training process. I knew that we would need to do role-plays, both to give the team confidence, and also to iron out problems in materials which we might later use with the children. But should we work with situations which were real to us, or the sort of problems which arise for children? Children's mediation does not mirror adult practice; they tend to do it much faster, and are less concerned with tying up all the issues in an agreement. But it would have been hard for us to enter into that; as Jan Caspers commented,

> *The fact that children's style and form of mediation is quite different to our 'adult' mediations does not matter here - aping pseudo-P 7 mediators would not have helped anyone.*

Early in the training we generated conflicts which could have arisen in our own lives, and did enough work on these to understand the process and how it worked. We varied this approach later by asking two visitors to play out a similar conflict for us; the value of this was in mediating a conflict between parties whose personalities were unknown to us. Then we took a fairy-story, Hansel and Gretel, and worked on the conflict between the children's father and the old woman (not a witch in our version, but someone who wanted to befriend the children). This was because we wanted our first demonstration to the children to use a "script" which they knew well, and also give them the fun of seeing their own teacher take one of the roles. Working on this scenario in our own training (without the teachers present) gave us the chance to fine-tune the exercise before taking it to the classroom. Finally in a later training session, we role-played some of the school-based conflict stories which the children had written for us.

Another question concerned the use of jargon. Some of us felt that the use of terms like "party" and "feedback" would confuse and alienate the children. Others thought that this was to under-estimate them; someone made the point that children actually like to learn new

technical terms. Our agreed solution was to use only a limited number of these terms; we then made posters for the two classrooms, where their definitions were permanently displayed.
The third and most acute problem for me was about the pressure of time and the consequences of that for the shape of the training. The tradition in QPEP is that the team evolves its workshop approach collectively. But after the second training day, we only had a morning session each week, for both training and planning; and we had to emerge from that confident about what we were talking to the schools next day. So I took a directive approach to the training. Rainer Schultz wrote in his evaluation,

> *The planning work, which was excellent, has been done mainly by John. Often there was no real chance for the rest of the team to bring in its own ideas. On the other hand, because of that the planning process was much easier.*

If we had had a longer preparation period, we could have developed the children's programme co-operatively. This would probably have created a more flexible mediation instrument for the children to use instead of the step-by-step method we gave them. But there would have been three disadvantages to this: (a) it needed more time than we had available for each team-member to get to a level of experience where she or he would feel confident about what would work and what wouldn't; (b) the necessary experimental period would bring failures and disagreements as well as successes, which might damage the team's confidence in their own skills and in the value of mediation itself; and (c) mediation was a new challenge not only to us and the children, but also to the schools and the teachers - and they would feel more confident with a clear-cut process which they knew had been tried with success elsewhere. Seamus Farrell commented:

> *Considering my own lack of experience of the field, I am in retrospect amazed at what as a member of the team we took on and achieved. Substantial credit for this must go to John's leadership of the training. Were I to have had previous experience I might have resisted the directiveness of his approach, but as it was I welcomed it, and also his bringing to the training sessions a draft outline of the [children's] workshop programmes pending. I also want to acknowledge that when -from working on the evaluations of the children and the teachers and classwork by the children -I identified aspects of the process which seemed to need further*

attention or clarification, John and the rest of the team took due account of these.

The other team members' evaluations also express satisfaction with the style of training. But Jan Caspers pointed out a deficiency:

The one point which I regretted is the fact that the training was mostly training in mediation, and not enough work was devoted to how we should convey this to the children. But I think this was a problem of definition, as the training did include all we said it would include. I just feel we have not recognised the need for -and the potential of - training ourselves further and more specifically in the didactical dimension of the project.

I am sure this point is valid, and it seems to be reinforced by the fact that a very experienced teacher dropped out of the team in the middle of the project. But given the pressures of time, and the presence of the class teacher throughout each school's programme, it was probably right for our training to concentrate on the "peace component, and rely on the teachers to keep us straight on the "educational" side. Through the evaluation meeting in school straight after each session, the teachers played a crucial role in our team training. We encouraged them to reinforce the children's learning in a traditional way by asking for a schoolwork or homework assignment to be done between each of our sessions with them. We used this to obtain stories of conflicts which we could incorporate in our work, and to check up on whether they understood and retained what we were trying to teach (Appendix 7). As Seamus pointed out, this feedback and that of the teachers was an essential ingredient in planning the next training session. Jerry Tyrrell recalled,

At one stage I expressed the concern that the children weren't 'getting it', that the skills were coming at them from all directions and they weren't understanding them. However from the reaction of the teachers and the subsequent role-plays it was clear that they did 'get it'.

Our first day together was the general introduction to mediation led by Brendan McAllister. The morning of our second full day was devoted to training, the afternoon to planning. In the morning we generated a conflict between two people. To give as many of us as possible the chance to experience the pressures on a mediator, and to try our

personal approaches, we set up two chairs for the mediators. When one person had worked for five minutes (quite a long time when you are not used to it!) their companion took over. The first person slipped away, and another took their place, until everyone had been involved.

In the afternoon we discussed a draft for the six sessions in each school.

WEEK I PEACEMAKING SKILLS / INTRODUCTION TO MEDIATION
Affirmation / communication / co-operation exercises.
Unrehearsed demonstration of mediation by us: Hansel and Gretel with the teacher playing one role.
Children's discussion and evaluation of the role-play. Children answer a questionnaire on conflict.
During the week, the children were asked to prepare a role-play for the following week.
WEEK II UNDERSTANDING AND RESOLVING CONFLICT Children's role-play.
Mediation by one of us and a child: Introduction, story-telling and summary of stories only.
The children in small groups analysed the situation and discussed possible agreements.
The whole class pooled their ideas and the two parties evaluated them.
During the week the children wrote stories of their experiences of conflict which provided material for future work with them.
WEEK III CONCENTRATING ON THE PROCESS
(A) Mediators' introduction; story-telling; summarising (mostly small group work).
WEEK IV CONCENTRATING ON THE PROCESS
(B) Framing issues and generating solutions.
WEEK V CONCENTRATING ON THE PROCESS
(C) Resolution and agreements.
WEEK VI PRE- AND POST-MEDIATION
School support for a mediation scheme: arrangements, confidentiality, "when things go wrong".
Case initiation, development and follow-up. When not to mediate.
A good deal of this session was the responsibility of the teacher.

This programme was agreed. From then on our team training followed its pattern; but I devised the detailed content during each week. It was a great advantage for me to be working with the Oakgrove School

team, so I had two perspectives: direct contact with one set of sessions, and reports on the other. This meant that our on-going experiences with the children could influence the contents of training. Once work with the children began, it played the major part in empowering the teams, which freed training time for other needs. For instance in the second week in Oakgrove School a girl called Katie was picked as the mediator from a number of volunteers. She summarised the two parties' stories with such devastating skill that the QPEP team and her teacher, in their evaluation meeting afterwards, said, "Now we know that the kids can do it!"

The most difficult part of training for mediation is the middle section, after the stories and feelings have been brought into the open, and before a solution is anywhere in sight. There is no simple pattern which can be taught, as there is for the early stages and for framing an agreement. Ideally one relies on the creativity of the parties, but when that is not functioning the creativity of the mediators is the only resource - not to propose solutions, but to overcome the parties' resistances. Some models of peer mediation deliberately cut this stage short. At Downtown Alternative School, for example, the mediators ask, "Is there anything more you want to say?" and "Do you have any solutions?" This can sometimes generate a quick agreement where honour is satisfied and the quarrel can be dropped. But it is unsatisfactory in any situation with a past history of conflict, when issues need to be explored and deep feelings understood. We began to have confidence that our young mediators would work quickly and simply when it was appropriate; but we felt they needed to be prepared for when more complex issues arose.

Our training became a discussion at this point. We only had one session with the children focusing on this stage: how should we shape it? There seemed to be two requirements: one was some insight into conflict processes, the other some tools for moving the controversy in the direction of a solution. Looking at the first of these, two themes arose. One was the way that when an incident is described from two different perspectives the stories can be quite incompatible. The Model School team worked on this, using a variant of the fable of the elephant and the blind men. The other theme was that in a conflict the attitudes, behaviour and issues interact with one another in a complicated way; it is often necessary to see these strands separately and decide which to untangle first. The Oakgrove School Team developed this idea. Incidentally, this was the main point at which the two programmes diverged, and that was a symptom of the time constraints. It should not have been an either/or situation. (The two converged later, in the

training day for mediators from the two schools; each group was able to present its piece of theory to the other.)

We also concentrated on the use of three tools, since each class divided each week into three sub-groups. Our idea was that one small group would work on bargaining, another on brainstorming solutions, and the third on what can happen if the mediators talk to each party separately (often called caucusing). Each group would then demonstrate its findings to the whole class in the form of a mediation role-play. QPEP was familiar with brainstorming and caucusing from its other programmes; but I think I assumed too readily that negotiation was a skill with which we were all be familiar from everyday life. But the main problem was that the material was too much and too varied for a single session; and this was compounded by the fact that this was a week when we had some absences and exchanges of people between the two school teams. Jerry Tyrrell commented:

> *It was very ambitious, and inevitably more time would have helped. At times I felt as if I was running to catch up with John's walking speed. It seemed that I had barely time to internalise and practice skills before I was teaching them to the children. (And on some occasions the children in a small group had to then demonstrate them to the large group: for example, bargaining.)*

Not only was the preparation at this stage inadequate for the task we had set ourselves, but the pressure of time meant that we could not fully integrate this experience into the next week's training. This was because we had got to the point where the most crucial issue was what structure the schools were going to give to their mediation system. We had delayed this question (rightly, in my view) until the teachers had shared the first four school training sessions, but it would radically affect what we did in the *final* two. Preparation for a meeting on this question with the two Principals dominated that session, and questions of team functioning were put aside. One member of the team wrote:

> *There always has to be a balance between the team spirit and the task, as a focus for attention. I think we achieved the task, but I found being a member of the team stressful; and nota place where it was easy to share feelings of inadequacy or difficulties. I am excited about the work, but not about working in that team. It is however a credit to our collective professionalism that we achieved the task.*

I did not see team-building as part of my training function, since each team had its own leader. But the training sessions should certainly have been a safe place for “feelings of inadequacy or difficulty” to emerge. The time pressures, and an uncertainty at times about what was going on, led me to concentrate on shaping a clear programme, clarifying our understanding of what we were trying to do, and bringing Out the team’s abilities. I recognise the “down” side to this; as Seamus Farrell wrote,

> *Someone with John’s experience can have a disempowering effect on others, and I occasionally felt this.*

There is one element of mediation which I hope we managed to convey to the children though it did not play a large part in our own training. That is the concept of mediation as something more than a technique. For instance Jan Caspers wrote afterwards,

> *The project has greatly boosted my confidence in mediation. lam more convinced now of the viability of peer mediation; ... training the children has shown me how the process of acquiring and asserting the necessary skills is more important to the final effectiveness than the skills on their own.*

If something detracted from our work at this level, it was that team members were conscious that we were not dealing with some of our own conflicts in the way we were advocating to the children. But what worked in our favour was the relationships we began to form with them; they realised that we took seriously the common conflicts of school life which hurt so much and are so often minimised by the grown-up world.

Eileen Healy said in her evaluation:

> *I am absolutely convinced that this type of activity leads to a more empowered young person who enjoys the delights of high self-esteem, self-awareness and a positive and developing attitude to conflict in a personal and global sense.*

I do not think that this is wishful thinking; we see all around us what happens when people have not been trained to work for the co-operative resolution of problems. Our programme did not set out to preach some kind of moral message to the children. Rather, we hoped it was implicit in the way we worked with them. I tried to bring out these

deeper implications at our second team training day by reading a quotation from Thich Nhat Hanh's Peace is Every Step:

> *Reconciliation does not mean to sign an agreement with duplicity and cruelty. Reconciliation opposes all forms of ambition, without taking sides. Most of us want to take sides in each encounter or conflict. We distinguish right from wrong based on partial evidence or hearsay. We need indignation in order to act, but even righteous, legitimate indignation is not enough. Our world does not lack people who are willing to throw themselves into action. What we need are people who are capable of loving, of not taking sides so that they can embrace the whole of reality.*

CHAPTER 8: TRAINING TEAM EVALUATION.

Since plans for related follow-up workshops, with children or adults, were at best provisional, the joint training day marked the end of the team's functioning as a team, though it was expected that some individuals would continue to be involved in either school at the request of the schools. Also the QPEP staff would be involved in monitoring, researching, and support for the mediation programme. A full-team evaluation was conducted before dispersing. An evaluation questionnaire (Appendix 8) was compiled and distributed on 18 January, for completion by the 28th, in preparation for a full morning's meeting on 2 February. All team members responded at length. These responses and the meeting itself have provided much of the material in this report in respect of team functioning and training. Selected extracts from this extensive material are offered below, without attribution and using the structure of the questionnaire:

A: Team Functioning

A fundamental difficulty for me was the lack of a team-building unit being fitted into the programme.

We needed to have acknowledged the diversity of the team, and the gender imbalance - one woman and five men. We were two English, two Irish and two German, and there was the diversity of religious affiliation tradition. I believe that the conflicting approaches and ways of thinking about conflict resolution, including particularly the role of affirmation and the role of criticism, were due in part at least to such diversities, It is however a credit to our collective professionalism that we achieved our task.

Considering our acknowledged inexperience and our diversity it is quite surprising that we didn't become dysfunctional.

B: Overlapping Teams. (Two of the overall team worked in both schools while the remainder worked in only one.)

Difficulties arose when we were notified about changes in the programme for Oak grove, following its use in The Model, on the threshold of the workshop.

Because I worked in both I felt I got a better sense of the work and it certainly improved my confidence and commitment to mediation.

Having two team members working in both schools ensured continuity. The focus in planning was inevitably on the workshop due to take place the following day in The Model, and there was little time for reflection on the Oakgrove workshop of the previous day. It may have

appeared that the specific needs of Oak grove were not given the same attention as those of The Model. Given that it was a pilot project it enhanced the programme to have two schools involved separately but simultaneously. It was useful to compare notes.

Oak grove did benefit from the fact that we were able to make sometimes big modifications to the programme, in light of the experience in The Model.

C: Training

The time constraints were severe.

Excellent. I think it is largely due to John's (Lampen) input that we were able to go from starting a completely new project to a point where 28 mediators were ready for further training in three months.

The training of the two school teams together was very important. It was a way in which the very limited amount of experience in peer mediation, which of course was being hugely increased every week through the workshops, was all fed into everyone. If done separately we would have missed out on so much of the learning being gained.

Regrettably but unavoidably we had to focus extensively on our own training needs - to the detriment of work on how we should convey this to the children.

D: Learnings about Peer Mediation, through Participation in the Project.

Through the training I got more confidence to practise it and I learned a lot about how to handle different situations.

I started with some skepticism, especially around how we could integrate it into a school community. These doubts have gone completely.

I've learned how quick on the uptake children are, and that if we hold out a vision of what is possible, whilst giving thoughtful support, we discover how creative they can be.

I have learned that children can mediate among their peers and that it is much more appropriate than their having to resort to grown-ups- who veer towards arbitration rather than mediation. In that respect children are in fact better mediators.

We have the bones of a specific programme to offer to schools – one with the potential for immediate application within the school and one therefore from which children can, through practice, become steadily more competent in exercising the skills of mediation. But I say "bones" advisedly because as a pilot project we are still only in the middle of it.

E: Teacher Participation.

Excellent. Crucial. Key.

They both invested heavily in the project and worked extremely hard between workshops.

With their teaching experience and knowledge of their schools, and now in the light of their experience of the training programme, I feel they have much to teach us now about how to improve the quality of the training we offered.

I feel we should offer participating teachers a mediation training programme before the workshops in the classes start.

F: Listening to the Children.

Sometimes we stuck too much to our adult understanding of mediation and ignored the fact that children concentrate much less on the structures of mediation than adults.

I feel that in the workshop programme the way the children were given a voice that could be heard, was an integral part of the programme. From the earliest opportunity they were involved in demonstrations in front of the large group -first as disputants, then as mediators and finally as both. The evaluation forms after each workshop had several uses, apart from providing each child with the opportunity to be heard. When completing them the teachers and the children inevitably engaged in conversation and interaction as regards conflict resolution and its methods. In the process the children began to own the vocabulary of mediation - an important aspect of developing conflict literacy. And from this process the teachers were able to give us feedback from their listening to the children.

In retrospect I think we should have indicated to the schools from the beginning that we would have preferred the evaluation forms to have been completed anonymously. The initial evaluations were somewhat 'polite' as a result, whereas subsequently the children felt able more easily to criticise.

Overall I feel that we took due account of all feedback (direct or indirect)from the children in planning subsequent sessions, and that we took childrens' pace into account in preparing workshops.

I think that one 'hidden' way that we tried to get at the childrens' needs was in getting them to tell conflict stories from their own personal experience, which would give us some idea of the needs in their school.

And they did come up with ideas which were subsequently developed into quite satisfactory role plays.

G: Lessons Learned.

We have broken new ground in mediation skills training with this particular age-group and we have the skills to make it an integral part of the school life.

We can take this to other schools . What we are doing is compatible with what other agencies elsewhere in the world are doing but we have a process that is 'homegrown' for the Northern Ireland context.

I think that if one were doing another programme with children of this age, the series of works hops which we developed would form a structure which would only need some fine-tuning.

The idea of an intensive initial training-the-trainers session, ideally involving the teachers who are to be involved, deserves consideration. A two-day session, away from everything else, devoted entirely to training and barely at all to programming, would be worthwhile, even if the team already had some experience, but more especially if the team was inexperienced.

I think the training team needs the challenge and the resources of an experienced teacher on board.

H: Sharing with Other Agencies.

We should further develop our relationship with Mediation Network N.Ireland, which is keen to encourage the development of peer mediation. The offspring of QPEP could have a province-wide brief We should be looking to disseminate the experience of this project as widely as possible. Peer Mediation in Secondary Schools would be a very different 'ball game' and a brand new pilot project would be needed for this.

I: Other Comments

I am absolutely convinced that this type of activity leads to a more empowered young person who enjoys the delights of self-esteem, self-awareness and a positive and developing attitude to conflict in a personal and global sense.

The first stage has been a success. We must ensure that, as the schools take it on board, we keep up the research and learn as much as possible from them of the successes and pitfalls of the programme in operation.

CHAPTER 9: ESTABLISHMENT OF A PEER MEDIATION SCHEME.

With the decision about whether or not to proceed with the establishment of a peer mediation scheme in their schools still resting with the Principals, the team began in mid-November to assemble the points needing to be considered and to prepare for meetings with the Principals and P7 teachers. Among the points listed were the following:

> *Selection of Mediators. Further training for selected mediators. A day workshop for all school staff? Use of an INSET day? P7 children introducing the programme at a special assembly and or going round to each class. A special room. A special time. A rota system for mediators. Identification for mediators. Debriefing of mediators. Programme monitoring. Confidentiality of records. QPEP support. The P7 class in the Model which was not involved in the training. The children in both schools who were not selected to be mediators. A 'jury system' so that children have a say in who would mediate in their dispute.*

As an indication of the team's deliberations, the following is an extract from a written submission to a team meeting:

> *The introduction of a peer mediation programme into a school is bound to have a significant impact on the interpersonal relationships among the children and not least on the relationships between those selected to be mediators and the rest of the children. The very fact of such a distinction being introduced, risks connotations of superiority/inferiority. Those chosen to mediate may feel, or claim, to be superior. They may become the target of jealousy or of efforts to draw them into a conflict, with the object of 'levelling'. Other children may feel (regarded as) inferior, the objects of the programme, trouble-makers.*
>
> *It seems to me that a peer mediation programme in a school has a wider context and not least in N.Ireland. Seen in the context of EMU it is a contribution to the development of a more mediation-friendly social environment. For me that means the empowerment of everyone to recognise what they can do. Training of 'experts' in peace making, conflict resolution, and mediation, can be disempowering unless it is about everyone being potential experts, needing only to hove their potential let loose, harnessed and encouraged, through learning and practising the skills.*

> *I would therefore propose that all the children who have participated in the initial training be encouraged to use the skills they have learned, mediating at an informal level where the opportunity presents itself, so that mediation will be seen as the role of everyone who wishes to claim it. The distinction between those selected for further training and the rest, will not then be so marked.* (Seamus Farrell, Submission to team meeting, 24 November).

There were prior indications from both schools that they intended to select from among the initial trainees those who would be the school's mediators. Team members who would have preferred that all trainees be formally recognised as mediators and that all those who wished to function as such be enabled to do so, did not pursue the matter. There has not therefore been the opportunity on this pilot project to test the hypothesis that by giving everyone a chance to practise, those children with particular ability as mediators would emerge in the process, and that children with conflicts to resolve would choose these.

Though the matter was not formally discussed, it is known that a majority of the team were hoping that selection would take place after the joint training day, so that all those who had taken part in the initial training in their respective schools, would attend. In retrospect it would have been appropriate to have tried to influence the schools on this matter. An incident subsequently adds weight to this view. When the teacher asked for volunteers for mediation duty on a particular day, a child who volunteered met with the chorus from others "But you are not a trained mediator" - meaning that he hadn't done the 'final bit'. It was an added reinforcement of the experience of exclusion, for this child and for the others in his situation, in not having been selected.

Separate meetings were held in each school with the Principal and P7 teacher involved. As many as possible of those from QPEP who had facilitated the workshops in the particular school, attended. Both schools were keen to establish the programme, both favoured joint training for those selected, to be held at Magee College, and both opted for a peer selection process in the choice of mediators, who would number between 12 and 15 in each school. A degree of intervention by teachers in the selection process seemed. in the view of Oakgrove, to be warranted in consideration of factors such as those outlined by the P7 teacher.

> *Some are more interested than others, some are keen but might find it more difficult than others not to be partisan, and a few do not*

want to be mediators. Account also needs to be taken of the pattern of individuals tending to get picked for everything and of others feeling unrecognised.
(Kathy Laverty, P7 Teacher, Meeting of 30 November).

In The Model the selection of mediators was left entirely to the class.

The concern of both schools that the programme continue beyond the present year, was heightened by awareness that QPEP is approaching the end of its existence. As a first step at least, it was envisaged that children from the present P6 class would be 'apprenticed' to the mediators as soon as the latter had begun to find their feet in the work. Both schools were keen to establish the availability of QPEP personnel for consultation at any time and stressed the importance of staying in regular contact. They also signalled their intention to call on QPEP to help with future training needs whether with staff or with children. The possibility of a mediators' forum at the end of the year, involving the mediators of both schools together, was discussed. Both schools had similar plans for the regular debriefing of mediators, individually and in a group, and arrangements for the safe keeping of records, statistics and copies of agreements. There was a common emphasis that peer mediation should not be compulsory but that the usual avenues remain open to an aggrieved child.

Similar schemes for the introduction of the programme and its communication to all concerned, were indicated. These included the use of the schools assemblies, visits by mediators to all the classes, full staff (including lunchtime supervisors) meetings, and information to Parents and Governors through newsletters and meetings. Since Oakgrove currently had a programme for mid-day supervisors, QPEP was invited to offer input to it on the mediation scheme and would be contacted as regards a Parents Council meeting (open to all parents), planned for January 94. The children would design posters for display in the school. A means of identification of mediators on duty would be devised.

While there was much in common, there were significant differences too as regards the preferred shape of the programme in each school. Oakgrove favoured the operation of the programme in a designated area of the playground at lunch and break times, with provision for mediations to continue into class-time if more time was needed. While this would cater for conflicts occurring in playtime, further thought would need to be given to how/when to deal with those that occurred on the bus (unsupervised) on the way to or from school. A period might be provided after morning assembly. The Model envisaged mediations

during the lunch-break and just afterwards if necessary, and also before class in the morning, with the resource room beside the P7 classroom as the venue for all mediations, and with the P7 teacher readily available but not present. A special approach would be made to the other P7 class, to help them feel included.

A similar process of selection was adopted by both schools. Children who did not want to be school mediators were first identified. In Oakgrove one or two declined. A nomination and seconding process followed. In The Model, two children who were on the list of candidates following this process, withdrew their names. Their nomination and seconding was evidence that, from knowing them and seeing how they had performed in the training, their peers considered them competent to mediate. Their teacher observed that both had limited self-confidence and one was extremely shy.

Where the process was different was that in Oakgrove there was a degree of intervention by the teachers in the case of some of the children.

> *We did put in some who were sort of confrontational children and I am glad we did but I think we could have put in a few more. It is good for those who tend to be conflictual. The two or three that we put in I think it has done them a lot of good. I think I would use more of those children another time.*
> (Kathy Laverty, P7 Teacher, Oakgrove, Interviewed June '94).

The Joint Training Day

With both schools having opted for selection of mediators before Christmas and for these only to participate in the full-day training session, arrangements were made to bring them together at Magee College. Considerable advance planning had been done in early December. The day's programme for 14 January was further refined in the preceding week. The day focused on the following issues:

Hearing feelings. Framing the issues. Mediator's control of the process. Range and variety of possible resolutions. Role of the second mediator. The first 'work' exercise was a recap on the initial training, which was excellently done by children from each of the schools. In order to address the issue of the differences between investigation/arbitration and mediation, a team member demonstrated how not to mediate, in a role play involving two other team members as disputants. The children readily identified all the breaches of mediation rules. Further work on the skills of issues-framing and taking account of feelings was facilitated very effectively by use of the 'circus elephant' story referred to earlier. (Appendix 2).

In role-plays in small groups, attention was paid to the division of work among the mediators. The one not leading at a particular point was encouraged to watch for interruptions, listen carefully and look for ways of supporting his/her colleague. They were also reminded of their option to take time out to consult with one another. The role play focused specifically on a situation in which the immediate and visible conflict was of the 'tip of the iceberg' kind, with longstanding substrata which one party felt afraid to mention. It provided wide scope for the exercise of listening skills, attention to feelings, talking to each party separately, and mediator partnership. "Freeze points" were scheduled so as to involve the observers in brainstorming for framing the issues, and for possible resolutions, bargaining, and in general supporting the mediators with suggestions.

Before breaking for lunch the small groups were invited to compile a list of "What ifs..."- worst possible scenarios which they might be afraid of encountering as mediators. The results fitted well with those themes which the team had anticipated and had made contingency preparations to deal with. They were:

> *Awkward behaviour by parties. When not to mediate - or when to break it off. Getting reluctant parties to agree to mediation. When your best friend is a party to the conflict. When an agreed resolution is hard to find. When an agreement made is broken.*

In small groups with at least one facilitator, the children themselves discussed one of these scenarios and presented their findings to the large group. These indicated an impressive grasp of the whole process, and a deep personal involvement in the challenge to provide an authentic mediation service. The confidence of the children was boosted by being away from their school and in the environment of the University for the work and for lunch.

The joint-training day also began an imperceptible process of bonding between the children from the two schools, and a sense of belonging to an innovative venture. In June when the children received their letters about which Secondary School they would be going to in September, the P7 teacher in The Model noted that their conversations with him were significantly about "X from Oakgrove who is a mediator" going to the same school.

> *A bonding and a collective identity were quietly being established and developed throughout the year.*
> (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, The Model, Interviewed June '94).

CHAPTER 10: RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS FOR PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION

In anticipation of both schools agreeing to proceed with the establishment of mediation programmes, work began early in November on the preparation of monitoring, evaluation and research materials. Materials produced by the National Association for Mediation in Education (NAME) proved helpful in designing a Case Form for the mediators to use, and a Monthly Report Fonn for the teachers.(1: School Mediation: Programme Evaluation Kit 2: The Impact of Conflict Resolution Programmes on Schools: a review and synthesis of the evidence. Lam. Julie A. National Association for Mediation in Education -NAME. Mass. USA.). Copies of these forms are included in Appendix 9.

For several reasons it was considered important to ensure that what we would ask from the schools in respect of our research requirements would be kept to an absolute minimum. We were aware of schools having experienced insensitivity on the part of researchers and the common reaction among teachers as voiced by one of the teachers involved in the project.

> *Sometimes we in schools feel that they come to take what they need out of us for their academic purposes and leave us high and dry.* (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, The Model. Interviewed June 1994).

We were also aware of how much effort the teachers had already put into the project, on top of their heavy statutory work-load. A prime consideration was that the nature of the project itself required special sensitivity on our part since it touched on the school's discipline policy and practice, and current methods of dealing with conflicts. As regards the children we had stressed to the mediators during training the confidentiality of mediation proceedings and we felt that our sitting in on mediations would both confuse the children and be intrusive of the fledgling programme. This report is therefore limited as regards detailed analysis of the numbers, patterns and outcomes of mediations etc. The project needs more time in piloting and such analysis can be done at a later stage.

The research function operated in tandem with the on-going support which QPEP gave to the schools during the second and third terms. The Project was fortunate to have the services of Annette Miller, a peace studies undergraduate on placement, from January to June '94.

She assisted Seamus Farrell the coordinator of research. Both took part in the on-going support programme at the same time. Annette's brief on beginning her placement was "To produce a study of the effectiveness of a school P7 peer mediation programme in terms of: a) dealing with conflict in the playground; b) a whole school approach to discipline and c) delivering the objectives of EMU as a cross-curricular theme. (Work Programme for Annette Miller: Objective. QPEP December '93). Since she had not been involved in the first term training component of the project, Annette brought a useful independence to her research work, and she was considered the most suitable QPEP person to conduct the research with the children. Having made first contact with the mediators of both schools through her participation in the joint training day on 14 January, she then had a session with the entire class of P7 children in each school. The purpose of these sessions was to introduce herself to the children and put them at ease, and then to negotiate with them about doing individual and group interviews - of mediators and mediated. Apart from sitting in on meetings of QPEP staff members with teachers and playground supervisors, she also had informal conversations with these.

QPEP staff members maintained regular contact with the P7 teachers in each school from the beginning of the second term. Following the joint training day and the establishment of mediation schemes in both schools the purpose of these (mostly informal) contacts was to identify the schools' on-going support requirements and at the same time to monitor the programmes in operation. Shortly after the establishment of the mediation schemes, formal meetings were held with the teacher in each school. During the second last week of the school year, individual interviews were conducted with the Principal, the P7 Teacher and the Senior Playground Supervisor in each school.

Interview questions were carefully designed beforehand and all individual interviews, whether with children or adults, were recorded and transcribed.

CHAPTER 11: IMPLEMENTATION OF PEER MEDIATION PROGRAMMES

The Beginnings

At the meeting with the Oakgrove Principal and P7 Teacher on 8 Feb. '94, the Project received an update of the launching of the scheme. The mediators had introduced the programme to P6,5 and 4 with the teachers present, and to the Lunchtime Supervisors and Classroom assistants, assisted by Eileen Healy of QPEP and teacher Bernice Maher. They had also introduced it to the Parents Council, attended by up to 60 Parents "whose response was most enthusiastic". All these introductions were done through explanation, role-plays and responding to questions. The mediators were progressively more competent in their presentations and their fielding of questions at the Parents Council presentation "was particularly impressive". Plans were afoot for the children to introduce it to the School's Board of Governors, and to the teaching staff as a group.

Though it was early days for the programme the Oakgrove staff were already noticing positive indicators as to the significant contribution of the peer mediation training.

> *There is a noticeable increase in confidence in P7 about speaking out in large groups. The EMU skills of affirmation, cooperation and communication have been enhanced and reinforced. The quality of speaking and listening has improved eg. in English Language classes. There is also a noticeable change in the attitude (of the P7 children especially) to conflict; they are much less intimidated by it and show much more confidence to deal with it and conviction that solutions can be found to conflicts. They have learned crucial skills and it has changed all of them. And the mediators are growing in confidence and competence. Already too they have demonstrated their capacity to identify those types of conflicts which they should not try to mediate eg., when one party presented with marks on his neck.* (Anne Murray/Kathy Laverty. Oakgrove - from transcript of meeting of 8 Feb. 1994).

At this stage P7 children were the most frequent users of the scheme - and the mediators among them were very willing indeed to use it for the resolution of their own conflicts. But already too there were indications of a particular challenge facing the school in relation to the current P6 class. They were noticeably reticent about using the programme.

> *Being the class which will inherit the mediation role next year, the school faces a strong test as regards the continuance of the programme. If the transition can be effected successfully, the programme has excellent prospects.*
> (Anne Murray. Principal Oakgrove - from transcript of meeting of 8 February 1994).

The school immediately indicated its need for help in this matter.

> *If P6 children continue to be reluctant to use the programme it can be envisaged that they may need virtually the same level of training as has been given to the P7's. This particular class would benefit from some extra self-esteem work.* (Ibid).

The corresponding meeting with the P7 teacher at The Model took place on 14 Feb. '94. QPEP was again briefed on the launching of the scheme. Its introduction to all the classes and to the staff (teaching and ancillary) was not complete at this stage but mediations had begun, mainly involving children from the P7 and P6 classes. Following an introduction at the School Assembly, mediators had visited, in pairs, the second P7 class (which had not been involved in the training), as well as the P6, *5 &* 4 classes. They demonstrated mediation by means of role-play.

> *They got a good reception, both from the teachers and the children. Some teachers approached me and said how impressed they were with how the two had communicated what mediation was about and about the time and place arrangements for it. They answered questions from both the children and the teachers. As far as the teachers are concerned the children did far better than if I had sat down with them in the staff room and talked about it. Now that all the children from P4 upwards know of the availability of it, I have been encouraging the teachers to encourage the children to come forward.* (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, The Model, From transcript of meeting of 14 Feb. '94).

When asked if patterns of usage had begun to emerge, Brendan responded:

> *It's a bit early, but one thing I noticed is that the mediators learned very quickly. They are spending a lot of time making sure that*

> *those who come to mediation really want it. They have had a few mediations which were unsuccessful; they have written these up too. Naturally they don't want 'failure' so they will only mediate when they are sure that the people want it. I have heard them not just asking "Are you happy to come to mediation?" but "Why are you coming to mediation? Has he made you come? Whose idea was it?" They have had a few where they have spent half an hour and they haven't been able to resolve it - and they don't like that though it is something that they will have to learn to accept. But I do notice that they are being selective - only taking on what can be mediated.* (Ibid).

Brendan had arranged that he would be accessible without being present at all mediations. They took place in a room adjacent to the P7 class. When he saw signs of stalemate he might ask how it was going and if the parties had come up with any ideas to solve the conflict, but otherwise he did not intrude.

> *I stress the importance of mediators keeping secrets. Melissa (one of the mediators) is in charge of the mediation reports file and she looks after it and keeps it confidential. The children now assume that I don't even read the file. The mediators hand in their reports to her. I think they like to know that they don't come to me. But they also know that they cannot take on a mediation unless I am here. So while I don't intrude I don't think it will work unless it is monitored closely especially at the start. One thing I do is explain to the parties who the mediators are for the day and l ask them ~f they are happy with those two mediators and ~f necessary I arrange for other mediators. But that's as far as I go; it's over to the mediators then.* (Ibid).

Initially the mediation time was fixed at 8.40am. Conflicting parties were asked to come early to school next morning and to check in at the P7 classroom where the mediators and Brendan would be waiting for them. He cited several reasons for this arrangement, though even then he wondered if it should be a more spontaneous one.

> *As with a health problem you make an appointment to go to see your doctor the next day. You don't just rush in and get it taken care of right away. It also gives them a bit of time to think about their conflict.* (Ibid).

A significant factor, related to Brendan's commitment to being available and the importance of not intruding on class-time, was that at lunchtime the children are the responsibility of the Lunchtime Supervisors. Arranging mediations during the lunch break would impinge not just on the mediators' playtime but also on the role of the ancillary staff. That this latter factor especially should seem to rule out the possibility of having mediations during lunch and play time, is indicative of the 'blind spot' in the project till then - for which QPEP must share the responsibility - of not having involved the playground supervisory staff in the project right from the start. Chapter 13 will deal with this issue more extensively. When it began to be addressed, mediations began to take place during lunchtime, at the same venue as before, with the possibility of extending a little into class-time if necessary. This arrangement became obviously necessary when it was found that, with the lapse of time between the conflict and the early-next-morning time for mediation, children frequently just wanted to forget about the conflict of yesterday and often didn't keep the appointment they had made. Another factor was the information coming to The Model that mediations were taking place in Oakgrove at lunchtime - also in a designated place indoors.

At the February meeting Brendan gave examples of 'spin-off' from the project in terms of the transfer of skills to other areas of the curriculum and of relationships among the children.

> *In science we were investigating wheels. It was a very open-ended type of investigation, in small groups. Some of the groups were much more successful than others and it became clear to me that the more successful groups were the cooperating groups. I decided at the end to ask them to evaluate their working together. With no input from me they came up with the idea that the rules that we had used in the mediation workshops were the rules that would be good for a maths or a science workshop. I was delighted; that is a direct area of application. And I have noticed their interactions in the classroom. I hear an occasional comment when somebody says something that is 'off-track' – like a smart remark - and someone else will say "No put-downs!" So it certainly has permeated.* (Ibid).

Brendan enthusiastically supported the idea that in future the project should begin with an intensive training programme for training team members and teachers who would be involved. He considered that the project warranted 2 days of such training during the week, or a week-

end if teachers could not be available in school-time. In addition to training he saw it as providing opportunity for planning the entire year's programme and spoke of how, among other advantages, this would enable him to prepare relevant classwork for the periods between workshops. Kathy Laverty in Oakgrove likewise supported the idea. It is appropriate to note here that, after the Lunchtime Supervisors had become fully involved in the scheme, those in charge of supervision in both schools also expressed their interest in participating in such training and their willingness to attend outside working hours.

As with Oakgrove a large portion of the February meeting at The Model was devoted to on-going support issues and specifically to the question of how to ensure the scheme's continuity beyond the present year. With only one of The Model's two P7 classes having participated in the training in the project's first year, Brendan was emphatic that both P7 classes should be involved in future. But, with there being a doubt about the availability of a training team after the end of QPEP's existence, it was not possible to make concrete plans in the long term. For the short-term the idea of P6 children being 'apprenticed' to the current team of mediators was mentioned in both schools but plans were vague.

> *The logistics still need working out, involving the P6 and P7 children and their teachers. QPEP's help will be needed* (Anne Murray, Principal, Oakgrove, From transcript of meeting of 8 February '94).

The idea did not in fact materialise, not least because of the difficulty of fitting anything extra into the P6 curriculum and especially in the last term when a lot of the ground work for the 11 **+** is done. Brendan anticipated other difficulties.

> *How do you select the P6 children who will be the mediators for next year, from apprenticeship. Do we ask their teachers? That would be a very 'cold' procedure. This year we had whole class training and then a selection process - in which the children actually did the selection themselves. From role-plays and experience the class actually ascertained for themselves who from among them would be good mediators. In fact 1 think that is the only way to do it. The idea of nominating the 'good' and the 'perfect' - the ones that always get picked for everything - would be all wrong.* (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, The Model. From transcript of meeting of 14 February '94).

In support of the schools' efforts to ensure the programme's transition to the following year, QPEP facilitated workshops for all the P6 children in both schools during the last term. These will be dealt with later in this and the subsequent chapter.

Review of the Programmes in the Two Schools.

In Chapter 10 it was indicated that for a number or reasons the research requirements from the schools were kept to an absolute minimum. As a result this report is limited as regards detailed analysis of the numbers, patterns and outcomes of mediation. The monthly report form proposed by QPEP (see Appendix 9) was not in fact completed by the teachers. Their work-load was one reason but another may have been that the form, which aimed to harvest a substantial amount of data, may have been unsuitable for a fledgling programme. The pilot project has not been in operation long enough to make it amenable to detailed analysis. Unfortunately too, most of the data collected at The Model School by the P7 teacher, was lost in the air travel system when two mediators from each school went as guest speakers to a seminar at the British House of Lords. (This visit will be dealt with later).

The findings, learnings, and overall assessment of the programmes in operation, are presented in Chapter 13. These are based largely on the substantial body of interviews, with teachers, ancillary staff and principals which were conducted just before the summer holidays, and with children during May. All of these were recorded and transcribed. This brief review will confine itself to events and developments within the period of operation of the programmes (the last two terms of the school year).

During the Spring term, QPEP staff member Eileen Healy responded to requests from Oakgrove to do additional work related to the mediation programme and volunteers Jan Caspers and Rainer Schultz did a considerable amount of work at The Model, for example in helping to prepare for the Assembly.

The services of mediators began to be used quite quickly, particularly among the P7 children, including the mediators themselves, but increasingly involving the P6 children at The Model. Resistance among the P6 children at Oakgrove has already been mentioned in Chapter 11.

The mediators in Oakgrove had to contend with P6 children faking conflicts, for the fun of being mediated and of playing tricks on the P7s! In both schools the P5 and P4 children gradually began to use the

scheme. The general pattern in both schools was of three or perhaps four mediations a week but this began to taper off towards the end of the first term and by the time the schools' re-opened after Easter, mediations had virtually ceased.

A number of reasons for the lull were identified, among them the fact that a suitable means of identification of the mediators on duty was not established in either school. In The Model the time-slot for mediations (8.4Oam) was proving unsuitable and, as mentioned earlier in this Chapter, was changed after the Easter holidays. A subsequent reflection by Brendan Hartop is relevant.

> *Children are constantly reinforced every day and in every class inside school, that adults sort out childrens' problems. It is hard for them to learn, and hold on to the learning, that children can mediate their own problems. And one Assembly is not enough. When an advertiser is selling something to children he doesn't just run one ad. We need to keep it front of them. They forget about it. I'm sure if you went and asked the P5s, they wouldn't remember anything about the mediation programme. They have had 15/20 minutes on it in the whole school year. It's not enough. We have got to think of some way of flashing this service in front of them - just like we were selling them something.* (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, Interviewed June '94).

A fundamental reason has to be the failure of the Project to involve the Lunchtime Supervisors right from the start. In QPEP' s preparation for the interviews with the Supervisors in June '94, there is the following statement "The place of conflict is the playground ... . A mediation programme therefore relates more to lunch and play times than to class time.... Its successful working depends very much on your involvement". From her interviews with the children, Annette Miller heard that when conflicts occurred in the playground, they continued to be dealt with by the Supervisor, just as before the mediation programme was established. The mediators, encouraged by their teacher, offered their services on several occasions but their offer was not considered. In the interviews they voiced the opinion very strongly that children should now be allowed to decide for themselves whether to choose peer mediation or not. The mediators were emphatic that there was no shortage of 'business' emanating from the playground.

In her concluding remarks Annette stressed that the problem was certainly not one of ill-will on the part of the Supervisors towards the idea of peer mediation but rather of their not having been sufficiently

involved or briefed.

> *These ladies are eager to become more involved in the mediation project and I am sure that, with their support and help, the programme in both schools will run more smoothly.* (Annette Miller, Peer Mediation Project Report, June '94. P.14).

When asked specifically about reasons for the lull, Brendan Hartop said:

> *One reason was that the further we went from the Assembly at which mediation was introduced, the more it got lost and forgotten about. But the other reason concerns the ancillary staff; it is important to have them involved from Day 1, and not just the Senior Supervisor but her whole team. We didn't have them from the start and that was an error on our part.*
> (Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher, Interviewed June '94).

The issue of involvement of ancillary staff will be discussed further in Chapter 13. The programme did not extend in either school to the junior classes (P1, 2 & 3). Their only contact with it was at the Assembly at which it was launched. It wasn't a conscious decision to exclude them. Rather, as Kathy Laverty said.

> *We didn't introduce it in the junior classes as we did with classes P4-6. 1 think it was a case of 'right, lets see how it goes with the senior ones first' - and we never got any further.*
> (Kathy Laverty, P7 Teacher, Oakgrove, Interviewed June '94).

The view was expressed that smaller children would prefer to go to adults, but Brendan Hartop commented.

> *Smaller children have been taught to go to adults. What they prefer and what they have been taught are two entirely different things. It would be easier for older children to recognise that they have an option. Actually I'm not sure that our School Assembly meant anything to the younger children. We would need to do more work on getting the message across to them. Maybe it could be done by sitting down with a small group at story-time and reading them a fairy story with a conflict situation and getting them to talk about it and about who they had a fight with in the playground. They will all tell you who they fought with! And then if I had a couple of*

mediators with me I would say 'why don't you see if they could sort out your problem better than your teacher can?' We need a gentler, softer, more intimate approach like that. Bringing them into the big hall and putting on a big show ... the older kids enjoyed it, but I think most of it went over the heads of the little ones and it was lost. There is also the location of mediations. It is a pleasant room but for younger children this is the 'big peoples' end of the school. Maybe it should be made available for the younger ones at their side. But the key way to make the programme accessible to them is through their teachers. (Ibid).

Impetus was greatly restored to the programmes following the workshops for the P6 children, which QPEP facilitated. Though the focus of these was on the next school year, when the participants would inherit the mediation role, an immediate outcome was that a substantial level of mediations began to happen and this level was maintained till the end of the year. The workshops brought the P6 children 'on board' and they began to use the service as they had not done previously. It also gave their teachers direct experience of the programme for the first time. They were very positive indeed about it and subsequently encouraged their classes to use the programme to deal with their conflicts. They offered as an additional reason for doing so the fact that the experience of being mediated would be extremely valuable as they prepared to take on the mediation role. For Oakgrove this workshop was especially significant in view of the P6 childrens' previously negative attitude to the programme. Kathy Laverty commented:

The P6s were so enthusiastic about it and they really enjoyed it. It gave them a good idea of how important it was and also of how good they could be as mediators when their time comes next year. The present P7s are a wonderful class and they have done so many innovative things this year; and I have been a bit apprehensive about the present P6s coming to me next year. But now I'm looking forward very much to working with them. They have been in the shadow' of the P7's and that may be one reason for the resistance of some of them to using the programme. But from the workshop they gained a lot in confidence that they can do it too, and I think that what this class most needs is self-confidence building. I must say it was great for me in getting to know them in that kind of workshop. As Vice Principal I would have met them often but this was different and I found myself saying 'I'm going to

enjoy having you all next year'. It was very useful.
(Kathy Laverty, P7 Teacher, Oakgrove, Interviewed June '94).

For the Oakgrove Principal it was a very significant point in the development of the P6 children (and in the programme becoming an integral part of the school).

It is an initiation for the P6s - their chance of getting and taking responsibility. I think it will be very good for them. (Anne Murray, Principal, Oakgrove, Interviewed June '94).

The Oakgrove childrens' enthusiasm is reflected in their evaluation of the workshop. All of them said that they enjoyed the entire workshop and what the majority most enjoyed about it was the opportunities they had in role plays in small groups to practise mediating.
While the levels of mediation throughout the two terms was never high and did hit zero at a certain point, Anne Murray's end-of-year assessment of the overall project is significant.

It has more than met my initial expectations. I had expected from the start that the skills that the children would acquire in the course of it were going to be one of the most important aspect of it. That happened. As for the programme of mediation, that needs time to settle in. I think that in the first year, a pilot is very much what it says. It is new to the school and new to the children. I think that once it settles in it will go into a different gear. (Ibid).

In Oakgrove there were signs, though no data was collected to support them, that playground incidents were reduced as a result of the programme. The Senior Lunchtime Supervisor at The Model was more certain about it's positive impact. Speaking at the end of the year she said.

We certainly do have less conflict at the minute. You usually find that the last 6 weeks at the end of a school year is the worst - and the last fortnight is desperate. Children and teachers are so tensed; there is so much activity going on and it is very hard to settle children. But this year there is a decrease and I think that is due partly at least to the peer mediation. (Mrs. Emily Browne, Senior Lunchtime Supervisor, The Model, Interviewed June'94).

CHAPTER 12: RELATED EVENTS.

The P6 Workshops

The numerous positive Outcomes of these have been dealt with in the previous chapter. What follows is a brief outline of the events themselves. Three workshops were held, one for each of the two P6 classes in the Model (on May 10 &11) and one in Oakgrove (May 14). The P6 and P7 teachers attended, as did the school's mediators. Some of the latter introduced mediation and briefly shared their experience of mediating and others introduced the workshop ground-rules. Two mediators, with a QPEP team member in a consultative role, mediated a role-play using a variant of the Hansel and Gretel fairy story, in which the P7 and P6 teachers played the conflicting parties (the Old Woman and the Stepfather). In small groups, each facilitated by a QPEP team member and/or a teacher and with 2 or 3 P7 mediators in each group, there were opportunities to do role-plays, one of a fairy story and others of conflicts experienced by the children. During each role-play one P6 and one P7 child co-mediated. The extensive and competent involvement of the P7 Mediators in the proceedings was a major factor in the success of these workshops.

Presentation to Teachers at Queen's University, Belfast

On being invited to offer input to an EMU course for teachers at Queen's University in April, the Principal of Oakgrove decided to bring some of the school's mediators with her to the session. Their demonstration of peer mediation and their responding to questions formed the main part of the session, with only brief, related input from the Principal.

Presentation to Cambridge University Scholars.

Mediators from The Model School demonstrated peer mediation to a group of Cambridge University Scholars at Magee College on 20 May. It formed the substantial part of an input to the group by the Director of QPEP.

Guest Speakers at the House of Lords

Two mediators from each of the schools presented peer mediation at a seminar entitled "Global Education and Schooling Policy" at the British House of Lords on 2 June. It was one of a series of seminars organised by the International Institute for Peace and Global Responsibility. The children were accompanied by the Director of QPEP who gave a brief, related input to the seminar, and by Brendan Hartop, P7 Teacher at the Model School. The childrens' demonstration of peer mediation and

responding to questions formed the main part of the session. The seminar participants were somewhat unfamilar with engaging in dialogue at this level with children, but both the children and they coped well with the 'language' difficulties.

Presentation of Certificates

The mediators of both schools were presented with certificates (Appendix 10) at Magee College on 6 June, by Clare Morrison of Mediation Nework (Northern Ireland). The children would shortly be leaving their schools to proceed to secondary schools. Thirty five mediators met in four small groups, each with a QPEP team facilitator, to discuss their experiences of doing mediation, under the following headings:

a: What went well?
b: What has been difficult?
c: What is your next step in being a mediator?
d: What help do you need in taking this next step?

Each group reported back to plenary. All groups expressed the hope that peer mediation would be introduced at their secondary schools so that they could continue to exercise and develop their skills.

Their teachers and the Senior Lunchtime Supervisor from each school attended the event and they too met as a group, with a QPEP team facilitator. That in itself was significant since teachers and ancillary staff did not meet in school and their deliberations were interesting for the consensus they reached as regards the future. The following is an extract from the minutes of this meeting.

> *The process of selection must be reviewed. In the context of an education system which has a 'creaming off selection process at its core, and of a peer mediation programme which is based on the promotion of a positive school ethos, the latter needs to be identifiably and radically different from the former as regards selection. It must be clearly not about choosing the 'better' children whether in terms of academic ability or 'good behaviour'. It is acknoweldged that the selection process in the pilot year produced feelings of rejection among some of the children not selected often adding to previous such experiences. And since selection brought with it there ward of affirmation and status as mediators, two special events at Ma gee and a trip to London for a few, those not selected suffered additional feelings of resentment. Parents too may have felt*

aggrieved at their child not being selected (yet again).

Brendan Hartop (P7 Teacher, The Model) outlined a possible approach to selection in which some of the mediators would be elected by the children and the remainder by the teachers and ancilliary staff A prime consideration in selection would be the deliberate inclusion of some children with behavioural problems who, in consequence, are frequently caught up in conflicts. (From the minutes of the meeting of teachers and senior supervisors at the Presentation of Certificates Day, 6 June ‘94).

CHAPTER 13: FINDINGS FROM THE SCHOOLS AT THE END OF THE FIRST YEAR

In May a series of interviews was held with the children at Oakgrove and at the Model, both mediators and disputants. In the second week of June extensive one to one interviews were conducted with the key adults at each school - the principal, the class teacher and the senior lunchtime supervisor.

Various issues arose around the use and accessibility of the process, the role of adults in ensuring its success, the logistics involved and next steps.

Use and Accessibility

The QPEP researchers had become aware, from conversations with staff, of a lull in the numbers of mediations taking place at both schools. Some mediators reckoned that this was because "the children had probably forgot it was available" (Annette Miller, (1994) "Peer Mediation Project" A report of the QPEP project at Oakgrove and Model Primary Schools, January-June 1994)

Their response was to go round the classes to remind everyone about the service and to tell them who the mediators were for the day.

Nevertheless there were other factors that were having an impact on the number of mediations. At Oakgrove the Principal mentioned that she'd heard from one parent that her child had wanted to solve the conflict rather than go to mediation. The mediation would have been carried out in a very public place, (the reception area) and would have drawn attention to the fact that she had had a conflict.

At the Model School there was the opposite situation - the mediations took place in a room that was exclusively associated with P7's, and was physically out of the way of the other children's classes.

At the meeting with the principals in November it became clear that they saw the mediation service as being particularly relevant to the older children ie. P4 and above. It was felt that P1's and P2's "would get confused if they were expected to go to a child". (Michael Roulston, (1994) Transcript of Interview by Jerry Tyrrell, Model Primary School, Derry, 16 June 1994)

It could be argued that peer mediation represents a radical challenge to the tradition that children must take their problems to adults, as it encourages children to solve their own problems.

Perspectives and roles of Adults

It is interesting to note the different responses of adults to the concept of mediation. It was clear from both schools, that though the principals

had some misgivings about the ability of children to succeed in mediation, it fitted in with the ethos of their schools.

As an external agency conducting a pilot project, the QPEP team had to work within the constraints of the culture at each school. It has previously been stressed that the environment at both schools was already supportive of the general idea behind mediation. Nevertheless schools are hierarchical institutions, and the power lies with the principal and senior management, and naturally the negotiations are done with the principals in the first instance. The class teachers were involved before the team started work at the school, but there were other adults whose key role only became clear well into the project. These were the lunchtime supervisors. As the Principal of the Model School was to note: “we are inclined to feel that the supervisory assistants are there to do what we ask of them” (Ibid). The lunchtime supervisors at both schools independently concurred,” We weren’t asked about it, rather we were told about it” (Mia Whoriskey, Oakgrove Primary School, Derry, June 1994) and, “It was landed on top of me” (Emily Browne, Model Primary School, Derry, June 1994). Both lunchtime supervisors were ambivalent at the outset; one hoped it would work; the other thought the notion of children solving their own problems was “a load of rubbish”; five months later she was telling her husband about the programme and his response to the idea was the same. She replied: “You’d be surprised; you have to be involved to see that it really works” (Whoriskey).

At year’s end the principals identified overwhelming reasons for the lunchtime supervisors to be involved from the outset. “It is in the context of the playground that a whole lot of this (conflict) is taking place.” (Anne Murray, Oakgrove Primary School, Derry,16 June 1994) and

> *If the lunch time supervisor) wasn’t sold on the idea she could bypass it entirely. Effectively she could have a detour and the mediation would never take place ... to use the experience ... of those at the chalk face ... who have years of supervising play-grounds ... would be extremely valuable and most sensible.* (Roulston)

One Lunchtime Supervisor, in the context of conflict, said, “The supervisory staff out there in the playground know the child far better than anybody else.” (Browne).

The project has highlighted the need for improved communication between teaching staff and supervisory assistants. It presents a challenge to the conventional hierarchical structures in consequence of which ‘Teachers and supervisory staff don’t have meetings.” (Browne).

It has demonstrated the need to recognise that in terms of a child's school day "one (group of adults) takes over where the other leaves off' (Murray) and,

> *that whereas professionalism has tended to identify the teaching role as on a different level from that of other roles, teachers and supervisory staff in fact 'have a professional bond'.* (Roulston).

It was well into the second term that direct involvement of the lunchtime supervisors was sought. At the launching of the mediation service the P7 children assisted in a presentation to lunchtime staff in both schools. A role-play of a mediation formed part of both events. But this did not adequately compensate for their lack of involvement prior to this, and for the duration of the mediation programme the senior supervisor at the Model was not sure "where I fitted in". (Browne). From the transcripts of interviews with the staff, there was a consensus that in future, ancillary staff should be involved in the training from the outset, and both lunchtime supervisory teams expressed the wish to be trained along with the children," to see what the children are doing, to see what goes on". (Whoriskey).

This keen interest in finding out more was echoed when the same supervisor expressed a wish that she could have known," what the Out-come of the mediations were, whether the conflict was sorted out." (Whoriskey).

Logistics

In both schools only one class was involved in the training process, and only half that class were to become "fully trained" mediators. In the Model that meant that only one of its two P7 classes were involved. For the principal there would have been a "potential disaster if the two P7 classes were competitive" and so he was particularly pleased "when two from Mr. Hartop's (P7) class mediated two from Mrs. Ball's (P7) class". (Roulston).

At Oakgrove there was strong antipathy between the P7 and P6 classes, and a desire on the part of the school to involve the P6's at an early stage in training for the following year. This was set in motion by the P6 workshops, (at both schools), described in Chapter 12.

These P6 workshops had spin offs in other directions. It enabled the P7 teachers to meet some or all of their following years P7's in an informal and enjoyable way. As Miller noted it raised the profile of the mediation service at the Model and helped increase the number of mediations taking place. Both P7 teachers noted that: "It gave the (P6 children) a good idea about how good it was for them and how good

they could be at it". (Kathy Laverty, Oakgrove Primary School, Derry, June 1994).

It also enabled the P6 teachers to experience the workshop process, all of whom in their separate workshops took an active part in the role-play in front of the children. Nevertheless it was only one workshop with each class, and the hoped for "apprenticeship" scheme, with a P6 "shadowing" each P7 mediator, didn't get off the ground. This was due to the inevitable pressures and demands on teachers in the latter half of the summer term. Such an apprenticeship would need to be negotiated and structured into the year-long implementation programme.

Selection

The issues around selection have already been alluded to in this report. These continue to be the subject of debate. Where the emphasis is placed on ability and competence, a 'creaming off' selection process seems necessary to ensure that the best are chosen. One principal likened the selection of mediators for further training "to being picked for the orchestra.... only those who have reached the very top really do put it into practice on a regular basis". (Roulston). He compared it to different levels of maths attainment.

Equally when it is presumed that children with conflictual behavioural problems would not make suitable mediators, adult intervention in the selection process would also seem appropriate.

> *It is inevitable that children who are in a conflict would not take being mediated by someone who would be involved in conflict themselves.* (Roulston).

Somewhat paradoxically the decision by the teacher at the Model not to intervene produced a result which indicated that the children themselves operated from the assumption that academic ability and suitability of character were important criteria for selection.

> *This year the children elected their own – and they voted for all the nicest' and 'best' children. And yes they were the children who exhibited the best mediation qualities, but it did have a divisive effect.* (Brendan Hartop, June 1994, Model Primary School, Derry).

At Oakgrove, where half of the mediators were selected by their peers and the other half by the principal and vice-principal:

> *we did put some in who were sort of confrontational children, and I am glad we did. I think it has really done them a lot of good.*

(Laverty).

The divisive effect of any selection process, whether by children or adults or both, and the consequent feelings of rejection among those not selected, was addressed at a meeting of the teachers and lunchtime supervisors of both schools at the end of the school year. Their proposals as regards selection in future are given at the end of Chapter 12. The individual interviews with these provide clear indications that, for them, considerations of intellectual ability and character suitability are less important than other factors. One lunchtime supervisor, who acknowledged that she "wouldn't have been thinking that way at the beginning" said:

> *You want to get the ones who are always in conflict.... Mediation isn't a thing about brains; anybody can do it if they are shown how to do it. (When those who get picked are) the ones who do the 11 + and who can do quizzes, the others just sit back and say 'well I must be useless; I can do nothing'. It is something that those children can get involved in - and feel important. In many ways the ones in conflict can influence everything that is going on the playground. I'd pick key ones. Pick the leader of a group that are always together and always causing problems. Children in conflict are always looking for attention - give them attention.* (Whoriskey).

For the other lunchtime supervisor, the implications for children with behavioural difficulties being excluded are that they see themselves being "classed as different". In expressing full support for their inclusion she said:

> *They need to be given responsibility. They feel very important when they are doing something like this - and valued - and that is what they need. "We have one (such) child at the moment, and I find that if you give that child something to do for you, no matter how small it is, the child's behaviour is wonderful.* (Browne).

In thinking forward, Hartop said,

> *Next year I would have the group partly elected by the children, and partly selected in consultation with the P6 teachers, who know the children better than I do. And I would also pick 2 or 3 children who are often in conflict that no one else may want to pick, or may even have reservations about picking them; I think you have to target those children, because if you succeed with one of those children* ...

; *those children are centre-pins in a playground. They are the key children. I've got three in my room this year, none of whom were mediators, and they are in and out of conflict probably every week. One is the central boy in my class; he is the natural leader; he is also in conflict all the time. He should have been a mediator.* (Hartop).

Laverty wondered whether the disputants might actually prefer to be mediated by children who had had experience of being in conflict.

From his reflections on the opportunities and challenges which the programme offered to contradict the divisive and rejectionist consequences of many elements of the education system, Hartop had this to say:

I would give all (the children who were involved in training) a certificate 'Qualified as Mediators'. And then we would take those selected (for the mediation function in the school) for further training. Lets give more esteem to (all the children so that) they can leave herewith their heads held high. I mean there's kids going out of here and they didn't get picked for ... and their other name is 'failure'. Here in the Model, with the best intentions in the world we do our best to give the socially deprived children a holiday in Primary 7. But there is a labelling effect in that; it is almost a consolation prize. I would like to see them getting more in-school esteem, instead of a holiday at the end. 1 would like to see them being recognised from the moment they get into P7, being involved in mediation (and saying to them): 'This has got nothing to do with the 11+ or anything else. The fact is that you have been selected for mediation, and there's a note going home to your parents congratulating you'. We would be telling their parents that we place value on their child and that his/her peers place value on their child. That is what i'd like to see. (Hartop).

Both principals, in retrospect, could see the value of all the children completing the training. The teachers and principals were aware that there were some children who didn't see themselves as mediators, one principal thinking that they might well think, "I would need to be mediated, therefore I am excluded from this process". (Roulston). There was a general feeling that "if a child really wants to be, they should be included". (Miller). Miller made the point that the mediation role-plays allowed the children to act differently from their stereotyped behaviour, either as a disputant or as a mediator - "One boy in (the P6 workshop) seemed to get into conflict frequently, but enjoyed role-playing the

mediator." (Miller).

Selection of children to be mediators who are frequently involved in conflict, seems to represent one of the most radical departures from the conventional wisdom in schools and is perceived as risky. However it is borne out by experience in the USA and other parts of the world that successful peer mediation schemes depend on this 'poacher turned game-keeper' factor.

> *Rebels' often have skills that 'good' pupils don't have, including experience of being in difficult conflict situations and the ability to understand pupils who have come from different social backgrounds. 'Rebels' often make excellent mediators.*
> (Cool Schools Peer Mediation Programme, New Zealand. p 23).

Interviews with Children

As already indicated the Project was especially fortunate in having someone to conduct the interviews with the children who was independent of the schools and was not a member of the QPEP facilitation team during the initial training. At the end of her report (which includes the transcripts of the interviews with both the mediators and the mediated), Miller says:

> *The one things that stands out is the commitment of the children- and teachers - to mediation. During the interviews I held with the children it became clear that they feel mediation is a great way for conflicts to be resolved, and the fact that it is children mediating other children appeals to both the mediators and the mediated. The children deal with conflict with great maturity and are anxious that mediation continues in the primary schools next year. Many of the children who have been trained as mediators now view conflict differently and I believe that if children are taught how to deal with conflict at a young age, they will be able to cope with it better in life.* (Miller).

Miller's comments on the maturity which the mediators demonstrated, relates to several factors. One was their ability to distinguish the conflicts that should be referred to the teachers - whether on the grounds of intransigence by one or both disputants or the serious nature of the dispute.

Another was their patience with the parties, a quality that was extensively tested; on several occasions disputants did not turn up at the appointed time; several "disputes" turned Out to have been concocted; some mediations were extremely difficult to resolve and/or took a very

long time. One child commented:

> *All it takes to be a mediator is patience and the skills of being a mediator. The way I put it is there is no point getting annoyed; you're there to try and help to solve the problem and you just have to keep on going.* (Miller).

The childrens' use of their own initiative is frequently evident. They had been advised in training that talking to each party separately was a useful option when one party, for whatever reason, seemed reluctant to tell his/ her story while the other was present. But one mediator reported that when a disputant persistently interrupted the other, she and her colleague insisted that the disputant go out, to enable the other to tell her story without interruption; such assertiveness may have contributed to a steady reduction in the breach of mediation rules by disputants. reported by other mediators. Individuals also took the initiative in bringing conflicts to mediation:

> *If anyone is fighting in the playground I go up to them and ask them if it is a real fight. I don't tell them that I am a mediator but if they say that it is a real fight I ask them if they want mediation.* (Miller).

The single biggest challenge identified by the mediators was to maintain neutrality in the context of the diversity of their relationships with various disputants. Their stress on this issue in the interviews confirms that it is a central one in peer mediation. Adult observers commented very favourably on how well they succeeded in this regard, but it is obvious that the children found it a constant struggle. The following are selected responses by mediators on the issue:

> *"If it is someone the mediator doesn't like it is very hard not to take sides".*
>
> *"The first one I mediated (involved) a very good friend and I was scared that I would be taking sides, so I tried to take it slowly and carefully. The other person was someone I did not like".*
>
> *"I have done one with my wee sister. (I got it resolved but it was very hard). It was a case of bullying, though it wasn't too bad, but my sister was quite upset".*
>
> *"I have mediated someone I don't get on with but you just have to forget about that and deal with the problem".*
>
> *"You tend to believe the one you like".*
>
> *"I prefer not to mediate my friends because the other person might think I am taking sides".*

"If your friend comes off worse they might blame you for it". "You try to get on with the mediation but in the back of your mind you are going to be thinking that's my best friend' ".

"With some people if you don't take their side they would fight with you the next day."

Several children had experience of being both mediator and mediated. From the interviews it was clear that though some admitted to feeling 'strange" whether in mediating in a dispute involving a colleague or in being themselves mediated, they had coped well with such feelings.

"It is very strange being mediated. The work we done with QPEP, they said that if you are a mediator one day, (and) you need mediated the next ... don't feel that just because you have been mediated that you can't mediate anymore".

"It seems strange that you are mediating someone who has had the same training as you and they need mediation."

Other problems arising when a mediator was a party in a dispute included the fact that they "knew everything" (about the process); in one case "they didn't try" and in another they didn't "seem to take it that seriously".

On the question of under-useage of the programme, one mediator identified fear as a factor.

"I think that some are scared; they think they are going to get into really big trouble because they are fighting but they are not".

And another child proposed 'selling' the programme on the grounds that "It is better doing mediation than getting the teacher to sort it out because the teacher gives you lines!"

The characteristic honesty of children, as regards their successes and failures and difficulties, is a hallmark of the interviews with the mediators, Another is the consensus among them that they thoroughly enjoyed both the training and the practice, had learned a lot about conflict and had developed confidence in dealing with it. If anything they perhaps undersell themselves as regards their achievements. Some observations by adults can help to correct this imbalance. Hartop mentions:

the patience with which they sit and mediate a problem; often I wouldn't have that patience. And the respect they show to others; it can remind you of the type of person you should be. And their efforts to be fair. Very very rarely would (disputants ask for a different) mediator. They might say 'I know the mediator is a friend

of so-and-so but I know that when he is a mediator he is fair'. To have built up that much trust in 9 months...!. (Hartop).

After sanctioning the project for her school, the principal of Oakgrove had little personal involvement until the launching of the mediation service, which included presentations to various groups of adults:

"A team of four mediators were giving a presentation to the midday supervisory assistants. They were so confident and capable and skilled. I was in total awe of them. They gave us the whole session. They put us through our paces, fielded questions intelligently, and did a brainstorming session. They didn't just tell us what the skills were; they demonstrated them, illustrated them and did it wonderfully. At that point! realised that no matter if they never solved a problem in the playground; they had grown so much and learned so much and had acquired so many personal skills that it was worth it. And four other mediators gave a similar presentation to the Parents Council - 40/SO parents. They couldn't believe that four children from Primary 7 could give such a presentation, that they had the confidence to do it. And what parents were saying was that they would have given anything to have been exposed to a similar kind of development programme at that age. (Murray).

Oakgrove's P7 teacher concludes: "We don't give children enough credit for what they can do; we really don't." (Laverty).

CHAPTER 14: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Throughout this report there are many references to the learnings acquired so far in terms of how best to proceed with the pilot-project, and about the requirements for the establishment of a peer mediation project in other schools. These will be drawn together in the concluding chapter. What follows are some further ideas, from school staff and QPEP team members, as regards the short and long-term future.

Hope and enthusiasm feature strongly in the responses, of teachers especially, to questions about the year ahead. From being quite apprehensive about taking on next years P7's in view of particular difficulties with that class, the Oakgrove teacher said that as a result of the peer-mediation introductory workshop for them, she was really looking forward to working with them. "The P6 class got so enthusiastic about (the workshop). They are ready to start". (Kathy Laverty, Oakgrove Primary School, Derry, June 1994)

For her counterpart in the Model, involvement in the programme had been personally and professionally "refreshing".

> *It is not often that at the end of a year in any job you can say 'I'm looking forward to next year' - to teaching the 11* **+** *and all that! I think other people would see it in me as a teacher. They would see that! have a positive attitude to this whole mediation thing -skipping about the school quite happily and putting in extra hours with it.*
> (Brendan Hartop, Model Primary School, Derry, June 1994).

For both teachers and principals there was complete agreement on the need for detailed planning of the year ahead and for work to begin as soon as possible after the summer holidays. Such planning would take account of the time constraints in consequence of the 11+, and the need of the P6 class for a specific programme of induction and apprenticeship, to prepare them adequately for the mediation role in the following year. It would include components for promoting the involvement of ancillary staff and of teachers of children other than the Primary 7s. and raising awareness among parents and school board members. It would also include strategies for increasing the programme's accessibility and visibility, and not least to the younger children.

The staff who were interviewed were unanimous on the need for continued external agency help in the establishment of the programme. It can be envisaged that the need for such help would diminish as in-school expertise develops through partnership with the external agency. But:

> *I still feel I need support in getting it off the ground. 1 wouldn't feel confident enough (to carry it with the P7s) this coming year. Maybe next year. There is still a lot that I have to learn about it. It is still a whole learning process.* (Laverty).

Roulston considers that, short of being able to release a teacher (who is already "sold" on the idea), "for two years perhaps", to work with an agency which has a developed expertise and has "all the strategies at hand", external help is crucial. Apart from the fact that such an alternative is simply unrealistic, he sees distinct advantages in schools having a general policy of welcoming external agency involvement.

> *A problem with schools is that we often become closed environments and children become static within the environment. Where children see that this an open community where we do look to others to come in and assist, they love it. And you (external agencies) see a different side (to children) than us.* (Michael Roulston, Model Primary School, Derry, 16 June 1994).

Such welcome for outside help is not without necessary conditions as regards integrity and professionalism. With reference to QPEP and the mediation project, he says:

> *It has been very professionally done. I would have reservations if I thought that it wasn't well organised (and) well programmed. It is and it has been from the very beginning and things have changed because you took heed of the difficulties that arose or areas that you felt needed further insight into. Professionalism is important. Teachers need to see that it is professional - and it has been.* (Roulston).

The Oakgrove Principal also refers to the importance of professionalism in delivering a process which in many ways is different from conventional approaches in education. She found that QPEP worked:

> *in a very structured way. In the kind of skills that it gave to the children, the process of doing so is very very important. It is not something that they are going to get out of a book.* (Anne Murray, Oakgrove Primary School, Derry,l6June 1994).

The relationship of the programme to Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and to the N. Ireland context in general featured strongly in

the reflections of principals and teachers. As schools with a strong commitment to the promotion of the EMU themes and in the fore-front of the search for authentic ways of delivering it, much of their enthusiasm for the peer-mediation programme related to its being a practical way of doing so. Hartop remarked:

> *Personally I think it should become part of EMU. You can cover an awful lot of what you are required to cover (in EMU) in a peer mediation programme. And not only are you teaching mediation skills but those skills can be integrated into the main curricular areas. It definitely has a spillover in science and I can see how we will monitor it through mathematics next year. Then there's the creative writing end - writing on conflict - and the talking and listening exercises. This whole concept (of EMU) where you go for a one day visit to the swimming pool with Joe Smith's school down the road - as opposed to sitting here and actually tackling the human issues within the school. You (should) tidy up your own nest before you go off to look at other peoples'. We have the religious mix here, and gender, and mixed ability, and children and grown-ups - all the diversities. Integration is not just about Protestant and Roman Catholic. It's about one human being with another human being. It's all about respect. And it starts in primary school. I know we are beginning in P7 but I could see a time when you would want to introduce it at an earlier age, to bring the younger children along.* (Hartop).

Laverty concurs. She had recognised from the beginning that it fitted in with the work being done in Oakgrove in the areas of personal development, self-esteem etc. and with the cross-curricular themes of EMU. "It has really tackled the EMU themes in a very positive way. (Laverty).

The principals also comment at a broader level.

> *EMU to me isn't addressing the nub of the problem, (which is) for children to realise that they needn't necessarily get pulled into this massive area of racial, religious and political conflict. (All) conflict starts as a very tiny seed and if people can resolve their conflicts at an early stage, then the world would be an awful lot easier. I do think there is a role for (peer mediation) in education in Northern Ireland. You are giving the children the ability and the understanding and the skills to resolve conflict. Children do what they see. Parents for example get into conflict with each other and it becomes a row and a shouting match and nobody speaks for a*

while and eventually it sort of simmers down. But quite often the nub of the problem is never addressed. It (peer mediation) is almost like counselling for children; you are showing children how to counsel themselves. A problem that we have in schools is that some children don't realise the conflict they are getting into until they are heavily into it. They can't read the signs, the body language, the vocabulary. (Roulston).

The peer mediation is a perfect vehicle for EMU. I was at a course recently for adults, on relationships in schools. As the Education and Library Board Advisor was describing the programme, (1 realised that she was describing) the mediation course that our P7s have done. With the reduction in the primary schools curriculum I would see it giving space for things like the personal development of the children and time for the teacher to interact with the children and time for the children to develop things like the skills involved in the mediation project. (Murray).

1 think that in the context of N. Ireland, mediation is particularly important. We love a good argument; we are very skilled at it and we are skilled at fighting with one another. Where we are not so skilled, because we have never actually looked at it, is around that whole area of resolving conflict in a different way. And unless we start to give our young people those skills then it is not going to filter on through to the adult population. (Murray).

Clearly the Principals and Teachers see the programme as having a potentially significant contribution to make to the development of a mediation-friendly culture in N.Ireland. In doing so it accords with the fundamental objectives of EMU. Hartop envisages for the future: "A link between primary school mediation, secondary school mediation, and community-based mediation. And it's on its way!". (Hartop).