

The Reluctant Writer in the Primary Classroom:

an investigation of mind mapping and other
pre-writing strategies to overcome reluctance.

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The Reluctant Writer.

I don't know what to write Miss,
On the white space before my eyes,
Not a sentence, not a word
Will my mind devise.

I don't know what to write Miss,
On this rectangle of snow,
My mind is frozen,
The ideas just won't flow.

I don't know what to write Miss,
You're gonna think me dumb,
This tundra page is endless
My pen is so numb.

I don't know what to write Miss,
The Snow Queen will frown,
Her hair of glistening icicles
And her ermin trimmed gown.

I don't know what's next Miss,
There are tracks in the snow,
The wolves are chasing,
They sense where to go.

Miss I don't know...
The fugitive who's running so fast,
The story is coming
But will my ideas last.

Miss what's the word for..
He's slipped; their yelping is near;
His blood red eyes
So full of fear.

Miss, they are on him now,
Tearing his screams to shreds,
His breath is shallow, his life diminished,
Oh, its ok Miss, look my story's finished.

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Introduction.

In 2008 the then Bedfordshire Alliance of Schools approached the Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust) for funding to launch a project investigating the use of mind mapping with reluctant writers. The bid was successful and the project began in January 2008. The project, involving 10 Lower Schools in Bedford and Bedfordshire, received funding for two years, with an option of a third year. In its third year, the project considered the impact of mind mapping alongside other strategies, including drama, writing in role, story maps and film literacy. The number of schools was reduced from ten to five in the final year. Through-out the project, the focus has been on the impact these pre-writing strategies have on the motivation and quality of the writing of reluctant writers.

The driving force behind the project was awareness in some schools that the use of mind maps had proved extremely beneficial as preparatory organisational tools for both curriculum and administrative purposes. Parallel to this awareness was the identification of a core of pupils who were failing to make progress in their writing and who were perceived to be reluctant writers. It was posited that because mind maps had been so successful in other aspects of the curriculum they might prove beneficial in assisting reluctant writers to ‘unleash’ their creativity, and organise their thinking, thereby making the execution of writing easier for this group of pupils. It was against this background of professional concern for children’s writing and the belief a remedy had been identified that the project was launched in December 2008.

From the outset a lead researcher from the local university, The University of Bedfordshire, worked with the project management committee on a research design and the construction of analytical tools in order to undertake a thorough evaluation of the project’s progress and outcomes. The central research question was;

- Can Mind mapping have a positive impact on reluctant writers and how can this be assessed?

Emanating from this central question the research sought to validate whether or not mind mapping methodology promotes increased motivation, application and enjoyment, resulting in higher standards of writing. In addition, three strands of inquiry arose from the research question. Firstly, if mind maps proved to be beneficial why might that be the case? What was it about the mind map and the process of producing it that stimulated reluctant writers to write? Secondly, what made some pupils reluctant to write in the first place and what were the characteristic behaviours of that reluctance? Thirdly, what perception did pupils have of writing; themselves as writers and what could we learn from the nature of the writing process that might further our understanding of the reasons why some children struggle as writers.

The first strand of inquiry set out to verify the claims that have been made about the effectiveness of mind mapping as a means of organising and improving thinking. The work of principal advocates of mind maps, Tony Buzan (2005, 2006) and Harris and

Caviglioli 2003), will be discussed later in the report. There appears to be little academic work on the subject of reluctant writers, particularly in the primary age range covered in this project (5-10 year olds). The corollary is that findings from this project have been used to construct grounded theory in relation to the characteristics and causes of reluctance.

Writing is a complex process involving the simultaneous execution of multiple skills and cognitive processes. In order to better understand the processes of composition all writers have to engage with, we also consider the literature around theories of writing and writing pedagogy.

The Project's Outcomes.

The management committee set itself several outcomes, which were;

- the production of guidelines for other schools in the development of mind mapping to aid learning;
- recommendations for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) in order to influence and improve classroom practice;
- to enhance collaboration across project schools;
- the dissemination of findings through a variety of media, including conferences and publication.

In addition to findings in relation to the main research question, the project produced a number of 'by products', which arose from investigation of the strands referred to above and further questions generated by incidental findings, during the course of the investigation. The question of how reluctant writers perceived themselves and their own relationship to writing led to the design and implementation of a pupil survey, which can be found in appendix A. Teachers using the survey reported on its usefulness as a means of gaining insight into the attitudes and writing behaviour of pupils. It is likely the pupil survey will prove relevant to schools outside the project, thereby contributing to the first outcome above. Another by-product useful to all schools is the criteria for the assessment of narrative writing (ANW), written by the lead researcher. Concerned about the nature of national criteria for writing in the form of the Assessment of Pupil Progress (APP), pupils stories were assessed using both the ANW and the APP. Teachers reported that the ANW allowed them to give credit to pupils for their creativity and engagement with the reader, whereas the APP criteria forced them to focus more on the writer's technical accuracy. In our findings we report on outcomes using both sets of criteria, as well as providing comparative data to show whether pupils made greater improvement in technical accuracy or creativity.

During the project there was a clear sense of collaborative enterprise and the relationship of local bodies: schools; the university and the funding organisation, provides a purposeful model for future research partnerships. The identification of a problem and the investigation of particular solutions by means of small scale impact analysis, in a tightly framed systematic study make for research that is highly relevant to classroom practitioners and is, therefore, meaningful and practical.

Part way through the project local government re-organisation made necessary the management committee's change of name. For this reason, the project's final report is presented by The Queen's Park Lower School – University of Bedfordshire Partnership.

Structure of the Report.

The report is presented as a series of chapters, each detailing significant aspects of the project. Chapter One concerns the local context of the study; the schools; their pupils and the socio-economic and ethnic composition of pupil populations. A discussion of the literature and research findings in the fields of mind mapping; reluctant writers; writing composition and writing pedagogy ensues in Chapter Two, followed by an outline of the research design and methods used in Chapter Three. The heart of the report can be found in Chapter Four, where the main research findings are presented and discussed. Chapter Five considers recommendations and summarises the key findings of the project. In this section we report on the management of the project with a view to giving guidance on a modus operandi for future collaborative research projects.

Finally, the project management committee; the university and the schools involved in the project would like to thank The Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust) for the generous support it has given to this research. The financial support of charitable bodies concerned to further our understanding of how children learn and how to construct effective pedagogy is absolutely vital in a period of austerity and funding cuts to both schools and higher education.

Chapter One:

Schools in the Study: First Phase of the Project.

Although the Project began in January 2008, the first few months included an orientation phase in which champions were being trained in the use of mind mapping. Soon after this phase, schools broke for the Easter vacation, which meant that early work with pupils undertaken in March required revision and consolidation during April. It was noted by champions that pupils in the age group covered by the first phase of the project (Years 1 -3) required considerable practice in the use of mind mapping. As a consequence most samples of writing, using mind mapping, were completed between May and early July 2008. When pupils returned in September 2008, Champions found pupils needed further consolidation in the construction and use of mind maps.

In the project's first phase there were three village schools and six that were located in urban areas. Of the six urban schools, two were multi-ethnic; one school was in the Independent sector and a second was a Voluntary Aided Church School.

At the start of the project 18 pupils were in Year One, with a further 18 in Year Two. The largest number of pupils (24) was in Year Three. Samples of writing were collected across two academic years. By the end of the project, therefore, all pupils were an academic year above their starting point. Of the 60 pupils, boys outnumbered girls by a ratio of 2:1. The majority of pupils were of English heritage, although 11 were from minority ethnic backgrounds. All of these pupils were developing English as an Additional Language (EAL).

Schools and Pupils: Second Phase of the Project.

The second phase of the project included two village schools and three urban ones. All of the schools in the second phase had been participants in the first phase. However, both the Champions and the pupils were new to the project. Only one of the multi-ethnic schools remained in the project, as did the Voluntary Aided School.

For reasons discussed later, it was decided to focus on pupils in Years Three and Four in the project's second phase. Of the 40 pupils in this phase, six were in Year Four and the remainder were in Year Three. In this phase all samples of writing were collected within one academic year. Once again, boys outnumbered girls by the same ratio of 2:1; there being 27 boys and 13 girls. The fact the gender ratio was identical in both phases is pure serendipity but perhaps reflects the disparity found in national statistics that show boys' achievement in writing trails behind that of girls. The majority of pupils were of English heritage with 14 being of minority ethnic backgrounds; the majority of whom were EAL learners.

Schools and the curriculum.

The investigation was conducted at a time of curriculum change at national level. However, the pace of change was not consistent across all schools. The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (Department for Education and Employment 1998) which had been superseded by the Primary framework (Department for Education and Skills

2006), was being phased out in many schools, although some retained its central feature; the literacy hour. Concurrent with this change schools were being encouraged to develop creative approaches to teaching and learning; in which cross curricular links meant subjects could be integrated rather than taught discretely (Department of Education and Skills 2003). Although schools tended to retain a discrete literacy lesson, the nature of the lesson varied. At one end of the continuum were two schools in which literacy was taught separately from the rest of the curriculum, with pupils grouped according to ability. In one of these schools spelling, grammar and comprehension were specifically identified as aspects of literacy that were taught explicitly. In the same school literacy was occasionally taught through topic work. In the second school literacy was taught through an integrated approach to the foundation subjects during afternoon sessions. A second set of schools timetabled literacy but tended to integrate it into a topic based approach more than did the first two schools. The remaining five schools had, to a greater extent, integrated literacy into a thematic or creative curriculum. These schools reported that this form of curriculum was more engaging than a subject based one because it offered numerous possibilities for speaking and listening, drama, paired and small group work and that there were more opportunities to develop literacy through topic work. In addition, pupils seemed more motivated to learn because they were able to make meaningful connections between different aspects of knowledge. This point was particularly applicable to writing. Champions in these schools reported that boys, in particular, were more motivated to write because the curriculum design gave them real purposes for doing so. This approach to teaching also allowed pupils greater control over their learning. One school gave pupils the opportunity to choose the form in which they presented their work; for example: film, ICT, Art, Drama or written sources. Of the five schools that remained in the second phase of the project, four had adopted a fully integrated curriculum.

The way in which the curriculum is organised has ramifications for teacher-pupil roles and the position of each in the pedagogic ethos of the classroom. The creative curriculum also positions the learner differently in relation to knowledge creation and the 'handling' of knowledge. Such curriculum diversity presents a problem for the educational researcher who is investigating the impact of a single strategy across multiple contexts, primarily because different environmental conditions exist across several settings. We return to this matter in the next chapter.

School profiles.

In order to provide a contextual understanding of the nature of the different educational settings in which learners in this study were situated, a brief synopsis of each school's most recent Ofsted Section 5 inspection report is included below.

School R.

The location of School R is an area of high socio-economic disadvantage with a highly mobile population. Twenty two languages are spoken by pupils at the school, with the majority of the schools 90% minority ethnic pupils learning English as an Additional Language. Reflecting the economic status of the local community, free school meal provision at the school is twice the national average.

The school is noted for its good community relations and its excellent teaching and curriculum delivery. Although most pupils leave the school at the end of Year 4 below national expectations in literacy, the school has an excellent record in developing pupils' literacy from a very low point on entry.

School S.

School S is situated in a village but has a large catchment area. Its pupil roll of 126 includes few pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds or ones considered socially disadvantaged. Teaching and learning is good and, at the end of Key Stages One and Two, pupils achieve higher levels than their peers nationally.

School M

With 230 pupils on roll school M is in a semi-urban location. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average, as is the number having a special educational need. The school has a small number of EAL pupils. Attainment on entry to the school is in line with the national average, although some pupils exhibit relatively weak communication skills. However, due to good teaching, attainment levels at the end of Year Four are higher than average.

School U

School U is a small urban school in a multi-ethnic area of higher than average mobility. Most of its 187 pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds and the majority of these pupils are in the early stages of acquiring English. Twenty two languages are represented in the school. The provision of free school meals is above the national average as is the number of pupils with learning difficulties. Although pupils enter the school with relatively little English, excellent teaching and learning enables them to attain levels broadly in line with the national average at the end of Year Two and Key Stage Two.

School V

With 287 pupils on roll School V is situated in an urban environment of mainly White British people. The provision of free school meals is below average and the school has relatively few EAL pupils. Although most pupils enter school with expected levels of attainment some have weaker communication skills. However, by means of good teaching, attainment is above average by the time pupils leave the school.

School W

Situated in a socially mixed but relatively advantaged urban catchment area, school W has 270 pupils on its roll. The number of pupils receiving free school meals is below the national average. However, the number of pupils with special educational needs and those with statements is above the national average. On entry to school pupils' attainment levels are in line with expectation but when they leave standards for over 50% of pupils reach expected levels whilst around 33% are above expectations for their age. Ofsted concludes this is due to excellent teaching.

School X

With 126 pupils on its roll School X is located in a socially advantaged rural setting that is predominantly white British. The school has few minority ethnic pupils, none of whom are in the early stages of acquiring English. Very few pupils receive free school meals and the number of SEN pupils or those with disabilities is below the average. On entry pupils' attainment is in line with national norms but, due to excellent teaching, pupils make rapid progress and achieve above average results at the end of Key Stage One. Progress is maintained through-out Key Stage Two, leading to excellent results when pupils leave in Year Four.

School Y

School Y is the largest of all schools in the project with 519 pupil on its roll, although it also caters for pupils beyond the primary age range. Located in a village with a mainly white British population, the school has a small number of pupils from the Traveller Community. There is considerable inward mobility to the locality, which means the school is continually expanding its pupil numbers. The provision of free school meals is half the national average. The numbers of SEN pupils and those with disabilities is also below average. Pupils make good progress due to good teaching.

School Z

School Z draws its pupils from a predominantly professional community spread over a wide area. Some of its 397 pupils are beyond the primary age range. The number of minority ethnic pupils is above the national average but none were in the early stages of acquiring English. The school has below the national average number of SEN pupils. Curriculum provision is outstanding and teaching is good. Pupils make good progress from a starting point that is above the national average in terms of attainment.

Summary.

As the above synopses show, there was very little variation in the quality of provision schools in the project provided for their pupils. Teaching was either good to excellent in every case. Where significant differences occurred it was in relation to the nature of the communities in which schools were situated, which resulted in a disparity of attainment on entry to school. However, those schools where entry levels were low, primarily due to English being pupils' weakest language, teaching and learning was described as excellent and we might deduce these pupils made faster than average progress during their time at school. Any differences of attainment between pupils and between schools, was relatively unimportant because the impact of the project was measured by means of individual, ipsative assessment. .

Chapter Two: Literature Review.

Background to Mind Mapping.

In Britain the individual most associated with Mind Maps is Tony Buzan whose publications can be traced back to the 1960s (Buzan, in Morris and Smith 1998). It was as a result of attending one of Tony Buzan's Mind Mapping workshops that some local Head teachers in Bedfordshire became enthused by the strategy and introduced it to their schools. Having witnessed its practical application more extensively these Head teachers considered an investigation into the potential of mind maps for obviating the barriers to writing for reluctant writers. Although most schools in the project had previously used mind maps for such things as: topic planning and the generation of ideas, none had used them as an aid to pupils' writing.

The concept of Mind Maps, which rely upon the Radiant Thinking Information-processing System (Buzan 2000), are generally used to generate, visualise, structure and classify ideas around a central key word. As such, mind maps are found to support techniques of brainstorming, visual thinking, organisation, problem solving, decision making, and writing (Harris and Caviglioli 2003; Buzan 2005). Mind maps are non-linear in nature; can be easily adjusted to individual preferences and can include pictures and colour. Their visual nature and colourful format may be appealing to pupils but the key issue for this research is the extent to which they prove effective in both motivating reluctant writers to write and improve their quality of writing.

Although Tony Buzan is the main advocate of mind mapping in Britain he was not the inventor of the mind map. Hyerle and Yeager (2007: vi) claim they have their origins in the work of Upton and date back to 1941. Mind maps are categorised alongside other diagrammatic forms of recording information, known generically as visual organisers (Hyerle and Yeager 2007). In a mind map key themes are colour coded and radiate from a central word or idea, representing 'strands' of thought. Each theme is then further developed by adding smaller 'branches' which expand the detail of the initial theme (see Figure 1 below)

Advocates of mind maps suggest they support 'visual thinking', by assisting the user to lucidly organise ideas, enabling individuals to problem solve and make better decisions. It is also claimed they support writing (Harris and Caviglioli 2003; Buzan 2005). Their non-linear format is said to mirror the way in which the brain stores and retrieves information (Buzan forward in Morris and Smith 1998). Whilst thinking may well involve the patterning of ideas in visual-spatial-verbal form (Hyerle and Yeager 2007:vi),

Figure 1: example of a mind map.

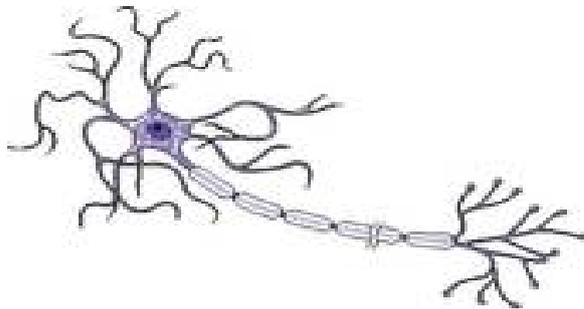


It is a grand claim to suggest that a mind map ‘..mirrors the way the brain stores and retrieves information..’ (Buzan 1998:7). Buzan makes an analogy between the visual appearance of the mind map and the structure of a cerebral neuron (see Figure 2). Visually the two share similarities but that may be where the comparison ends.

Neuro-Science is making important advances in revealing how the brain functions. It is an evolving field of scientific inquiry and based on current available evidence it would be premature to claim that a mind map replicates the work of a neuron. It is estimated there are 100 billion neurons in the brain. Each one is connected to 1000 other neurons. Whereas the mind map is a self contained visual organiser onto which associated words are mapped, neurons are active agents that enable thinking to develop by connecting with other neurons through the conjunction of synapses (Bristol University 2010 online). The neuron is, therefore, not so much a cognitive map in itself, but is more like a data processing unit in a vast cerebral jig-saw puzzle. Thinking occurs when neurons connect and exchange electrical impulses. The processes of cognition, therefore, as likely to be far more complex than Buzan’s analogy suggests.

However, to suggest, as Buzan does, that a mind map ‘..mirrors the way the brain stores and retrieves information..’ is a grand claim. Buzan (1998:7) makes his claim by means of the analogy between the visual appearance of the mind map and the structure of a cerebral neuron (see Figure 2). Visually the two share similarities but that may be where the comparison ends.

Figure 2. Structure of neuron.



Mind Maps and Writing.

The importance of using symbolic and visual thinking in learning has been advocated as one means of improving writing (Fleckenstein et al 2002) and visual strategies, such as ‘story boards’ and ‘writing frames’, are widely used in English schools. Multi-sensory approaches, including the use of mind maps, are recommended as effective learning strategies for dyslexic pupils and those for whom English is an additional language (DfES 2005). There is also growing recognition that children are immersed in a literate world where multi-modal texts proliferate and that pupil’s knowledge of the visual-linguistic combination can be utilized to develop writing (Bearn and Wolstencroft 2007). Mind maps utilize both visual and linguistic modes of thinking by enabling the user to record ideas in symbolic, pictorial and linguistic form. Once the technique has been mastered, ideas can be recorded quickly and clustered around key themes. In the USA graphic tools have been shown to improve academic performance in reading comprehension (Hyerle and Yeager 2007:vii). Teachers at St Vincent’s Primary School, Glasgow found that mind mapping was a useful strategy for reluctant writers, as well as being a purposeful assessment tool (Doran, 2006). However, little analysis is provided to demonstrate a full evaluation of the impact of mind maps with these pupils. In England Millard (2001) advocated the use of visual planning in the form of diagrams and story frames to support writing. In the context of strategies to assist pupils to make material their inner thinking, the mind map then is seen to be a useful planning tool.

The Use of Mind Maps for Academic Purposes.

As has already been stated mind maps combine visual and linguistic thought. Once the technique has been mastered, ideas can be recorded quickly and clustered around key themes. Many schools in the project had previously used mind maps for topic planning and to generate thought in various subjects but none had used them as an aid to pupils’ writing. In the USA graphic tools have been shown to improve academic performance in reading comprehension (Hyerle and Yeager 2007:vii).

Most academic investigations into the use of mind maps have been undertaken with student and adult learners. In his research with high school students in grades 10-12 (16 -18 years old) Choi (1997) concluded that both mind mapping and ‘conversational inquiry’ were effective strategies to develop the basic thinking skills of classification and imaging. It is noteworthy that Choi combines conversation and mind mapping since it is unlikely teachers would employ the use of mind mapping in isolation of classroom talk. As such then it may be difficult to identify the extent to which mind mapping alone assisted these students’ development. In a further study, Williams (1999) conducted tests of experimental and control groups of employees in a high technology firm and concluded that mind maps helped to train people of all learning styles how to learn. Farrand et al (2002) found that mind maps improved recall of factual information in a study of medical students. However, the study also concluded that motivation to use mind maps was not as positive as traditional methods of study. Although not strictly an investigation of mind mapping, Sturm’s (2002) small-scale comparative study of the influence of concept maps on descriptive writing with eighth grade (14 year old) students with learning disabilities found that mapping improved both the quantity and quality of writing. Furthermore, students were able to transfer skills acquired using mapping to other writing tasks without the use of maps. Sundeen (2008) also found that mind mapping improved the quality of writing of students with learning disabilities but did not conclude this was a transferable skill.

Mind Maps and Writing with Younger Pupils.

In a brief paper on the subject, Richards (2002 online) rightly asserts that writing is a complex process, requiring competence in a number of sub-skills such as: spelling, syntax, knowledge of vocabulary, fine motor control etc. According to Richards, until writers have mastery over these sub-skills they are likely to struggle with writing, possibly leading to ‘reluctance’ to write. She considers planning to be the most important stage of the writing process and, like other advocates of mind maps, confirms the strategy helps the writer to organise and visualise thinking. In addition, she asserts, vocabulary and words the writer finds difficult to spell can be recorded and checked at the planning stage, making writing more fluent because these sub-skills are less of an impediment at the drafting stage. In addition to the use of mind maps, Richards includes role play and drawing as equally important pre-writing strategies. Millard (2001) also recommends the use of visualisation and diagrams as stimuli for composition. In a small scale study, involving 18 boys and 17 girls in Key Stage 2, she found distinct differences between boys and girls attitudes and behaviour towards writing. Gendered writing behaviour was evident in the finding that girls generally liked writing whereas only 50% of boys did. Boys preferred to be active and to draw, particularly when planning writing, and were less confident than girls across a range of text types. However, the boys in the study enjoyed poetry because of its ‘open’ form. Girls showed themselves to be more adept than boys at giving their narratives detailed settings and characters. Millard also found that pupils had an overwhelming pre-occupation with technical accuracy with very few of them being able to evaluate written composition and meaning. The emphasis placed on technical accuracy or secretarial skills is a recurrent theme running through studies of the pedagogy of writing and has drawn criticism from a number of quarters, as we shall see later.

According to the literature, there is a tendency for boys to be more reluctant writers than girls but their motivation can be improved by writing tasks that have a meaningful purpose or communicative function (Merisuo-Storm 2006). A pilot project conducted jointly by The Primary National Strategy team (PNS) and the United Kingdom Literacy Association (UKLA) across nineteen classes from Year R to Year Six, in three Local Authorities, provides a pedagogical framework for raising levels of achievement in writing, particularly amongst boys. The researchers on this particular project found that the use of collaborative group work, talk, visual stimuli, drama and role play helped to significantly improve the quality of pupils' writing (PNS/UKLA, 2004). However, although the research appears to have influenced approaches to literacy in the new Primary National Strategy (DfES, 2006),

On the issue of reluctance being more applicable to one gender than the other, we briefly discuss this matter in our findings and suggest it may be the case girls and boys exhibit reluctant behaviours differently with the reluctant behaviour of the latter being more obvious than that of girls. In addition, anecdotal sources from project schools that had adopted a 'creative curriculum' endorsed the suggestion that boys became more motivated to write when they grasped a real purpose for writing. A purpose for writing, together with peered collaborative writing, has been found to improve both motivation and quality of writing amongst reluctant writers (Alber 1999). This suggests reluctant writers thrive when writing activities are treated as collaborative social events in a community of writers. The reluctant writers in Alber's study, who were contributing to a class newspaper, also had an authentic purpose to write.

There appears to be little evidence of substantial published research on the use of mind maps with the age group in this study (5- 9 year olds), which may mean key findings of the inquiry make an important contribution to our general understanding of the strategy for the learning of reluctant writers. In a small scale study of 11 pupils, 8 boys and 3 girls in Years 3 and 5, Cain (2001) found that during the course of a year the pupils, who began with low self-esteem as learners and were low achievers, improved in several ways after the sustained use of mind maps. The pupils were classified as mainly visual and kinaesthetic learners. Mind maps were used to help pupils recall information and to plan future learning, including use as a pre-narrative writing planning 'tool'. It was noted that pupils' motivation and attitudes to learning improved, as did their self esteem. They also became more self-reliant and independent, showing increased application to tasks. It is also claimed the Year 5 pupils did better than expected in the SATs the following year, although no data is provided to show to what extent they improved. Anderson (2001) drew upon her experience as a classroom practitioner in New Zealand to propose a systematic process of firstly identifying pupils who are reluctant writers and the causes and then supporting them to obviate the barriers to their reluctance. She lists the typical characteristics of reluctant writers as:

- pupils who are reluctant readers;
- pupils with poor spelling and punctuation skills;
- pupils who are easily distracted from reading and writing;
- pupils who work slowly, often not completing work;
- pupils whose work is poorly presented;
- pupils who use displacement activities to delay writing;

- pupils who lack life experience;
- pupils who refuse to share written work in a group;
- pupils who like being read to but who have reading difficulties;
- pupils who like to make things and build.
- pupils who sometimes use strategies to mask their reluctance.

As we shall see later, some of these characteristics were also identified by teachers in our project. Her explanation for the reason why pupils become reluctant writers is their lack of success as writers, leading to generally being ‘switched-off’ writing. In our study we explore causation in greater depth and propose a multi-varied model to explain the root causes of reluctance. Reluctance to write is a condition that affects all of us at some point and is triggered either by a disinterest in the subject or a lack of knowledge of the subject (Artell 2005). In addition, Artell suggests that many young people find writing an intimidating task, largely because they know their work will be evaluated by the teacher for ‘errors and inconsistencies’. Although Artell ‘skates over’ a detailed discussion of the reluctant writer, he offers solutions that employ short, structured writing tasks that are both linked to real life contexts such as advertisements and mapping directions and sustain the interest of the pupil by utilising visual literacy, drama and music. In keeping with Fleckenstein et al (2002) and Bearne and Wolstencroft (2007), Artell states:

‘The ability to think visually and textually bolster students creativity and helps young writers express themselves more effectively in today’s visual culture.’

(Artell 2005: vii).

It is this recognition that visualising thought, by what ever means, is an important pre-requisite or accompaniment to writing that permeates much of what has been said about support for writing. Although there has been relatively little research conducted into the use of mind maps to assist young writers, we might expect that the visual-linguistic nature of the strategy provides a useful support mechanism for writers. However, the issue in this study is the extent to which it provides sufficient support for the young reluctant writer to overcome barriers to writing, either in terms of starting their writing or extending their work and being adventurous with it.

Embedded in her advice about motivating the reluctant writer, Anderson (2001:25) reminds us that: ‘..as teachers of writing we need to be familiar with the writing process so that we can pass it on.’ Bearing this point in mind, in the next section we review the current state of writing in English primary schools and briefly explore theoretical perspectives of writing.

The State of Writing in English Primary Schools.

In the years prior to this project, there had been general concern about the standard of writing amongst English Primary school pupils. Although pupil performance at end of Key Stage Two Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) had improved over a ten year

period, from 57% in 1997, to 67% in 2007, achievement in writing continued to trail that of reading (Barton 2007). SATs results in 2007 indicated the extent of the continuing discrepancy in achievement with overall literacy levels standing at 80%. That is, pupils achieving the expected norm of Level Four at the end of Key Stage Two. The picture was all the more concerning when gender differences were taken into account. Boy's achievement in writing was even lower than that for girls at 60%. It was not surprising then that in 2007 writing was designated a national educational priority by the British Government (Department for Children Schools and Families 2007). It was against this background of persistent under-achievement in writing that the Mind Mapping Project was undertaken.

What do we know about writing composition and writing pedagogy.

Research on writing has attracted less attention than reading (Stannard and Huxford 2007; Wyse and Jones 2008:112) with the result that there is less informed thinking about children's processes of composition. Smith (1982) makes the distinction between writing as transcription, which involves the secretarial skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting and writing as composition, which includes the 'crafting' of meaning through syntactic and semantic artistry. Myhill (2009) notes a tendency for theories of composition to be developed from the Hayes and Flower (1980) model. In this model three main elements of composition are identified. The first element involves the writer generating ideas, followed by a translation element in which ideas, which may originate in non-verbal form, are communicated by means of the writer's knowledge of lexico-grammatical constructs. The final element involves the writer reviewing what has been written. However, the process of composition is recursive rather than linear and involves the writer switching between these elements during writing (Hayes and Flower 1980). Accepting the elements of composition outlined in this model, Cremin (2008) notes that composition also involves socio-cultural influences and suggests a socio-cognitive model of composition which combines individual problem solving and social constructions of literacy.

Clearly mind maps are instrumental at the planning or generation phase because they allow the writer to record ideas in a succinct way. It is suggested young children do not discriminate between drawing, painting, modelling or writing in order to record and express experience (Kress 1997 cited in Cremin 2009). Ellis (2002: 40) found that teachers and pupils report that both the generation of ideas and the use of planning to compose narrative texts were problematic. However, she found a framework of paired peer discussion and a written plan helped 'immature writers' to move beyond localised composition to more global considerations. Smith (1982) defines local composition as decisions at sentence level whereas global composition requires the writer to hold in their head a view of the text as a whole. For young writers the latter represents a heavy cognitive load. The use of mind maps with young writers is predicated upon the notion that a whole text may be 'designed' in visual form which thereby relieves the writer of the need for global considerations during the writing process. Buzan (2006) suggests that mind maps are effective because they engage both the creative and logical elements of the brain through a process termed 'radiant thinking'. There appears to be some correspondence here with research evidence of how people think (Hyerle and Yeager 2007). Ellis (2002: 42) found that strategic

planning, involving character and plot, helped pupils maintain narrative coherence during composition and it may be that mind maps serve this function of. 'strategic planning'.

Brief overview of changing approaches the teaching of writing.

In their discussion of the history of writing, Wyse and Jones (2008) begin with the creative writing movement that emerged in the 1960s. The child's interests were central to themes for writing and young writers were encouraged to draw upon existing linguistic skills to create stimulating texts for readers. Whilst supportive of the movement's central tenets, critics of 'creative writing' felt it resulted in a narrow range of genre produced and suggested children be encouraged to write in a variety of genre (Protherough 1978, cited in Wyse and Jones 2008: 116). Britton was influential in developing a broader view by means of his classification of writing as expressive, transactional or poetic. The earlier creative writing movement elicited personal or expressive writing, which Britton associated with the early writing of novice writers. He suggested a pedagogy of writing was needed to help pupils develop the more advanced forms of poetic and transactional writing. For Britton (1972:174) transactional writing involves participation or response, a reply, whereas poetic writing requires inspection from an audience without interruption. One essential difference between expressive writing and the other two forms is the degree of explicitness; poetic and transactional writing requires texts to be read by an audience in the absence of the author, whereas the expressive mode, because it is closely allied to personal feelings, has as its essential reader the writer him or herself.

A further dimension to the pedagogy of writing was the theory of 'emergent literacy'. Closely allied to the Piagetian notion of the child as an active experimenter, emergent literacy, like the creative writing movement, placed the child at the centre of the process of writing. In this perspective, through experimentation children's literacy gradually emerges from mark making to conventional writing. Wyse and Jones (2008:119) draw attention to the close links between emergent literacy and developmental writing. The latter recognises that literacy begins in the home. As soon as they start school children are encouraged to write independently. The teacher has an influential role by not only providing resources for writing but also by modelling writing processes and giving a real purpose for writing. At the heart of the process is the need to convey meaning with selected transcriptional errors being corrected as a secondary measure. Risk taking was encouraged and children were given sufficient time to complete extended texts. Wyse and Jones (2008:120) cite several differences between development writing and the earlier movements, including; the more interventionist role of the teacher in taking children's writing forward and the teacher's use of developmental knowledge about writing to assist the child appropriately when intervening. As we can see, this approach to writing took us from a Piagetian perspective to a more Vygotskian one in which the teacher, as the 'more expert other', identified the child's writing ability and helped them to develop potential by means of scaffolded progression.

In the 1980s the process approach to writing, advocated by Graves (1983 cited in Wyse and Jones 2008), was popularised. This approach positioned the child as a writer to be encouraged and guided by the teacher through demonstration and modelling. In its pure form children had freedom of choice over the types of writing and the subject matter with which they engaged. The view was that ownership of both form and content would enable the child's authentic authorial voice to emerge. The approach was criticised by the Genre Theorists whose influence can be felt from the late 1980s. With their theoretical roots in the functional linguistics of fellow Australian M.K. Halliday (1978), which emphasised the importance of recognising the function of language in social context, including the nature of the relationship of interlocutors; the role of language and the situated use of language, the Genre Theorists claimed that allowing children freedom of choice in their writing resulted in the practices of a narrow range of text types. In contrast it was advocated children required didactic instruction involving the analysis and imitation of a range of text types or genre. It is evident in Wyse's work (Wyse 1998: 150) a degree of tension was caused by the Genre Theorists criticism of the process approach. Criticism was considered unfounded because teacher pupil conferences, a key feature of the process approach, involved teachers giving pupils guidance about structural features of texts (Wyse and Jones 2008:126). In addition, the assumption that any one genre remains static over time is erroneous. So too is the view that the features of one genre are exclusive (Wyse 1998:150). Nevertheless, when the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (DfEE 1998) was devised it was genre theory that proved to be the most influential perspective. Since the late 1990s then the dominant approach to writing pedagogy in English classrooms has placed the study of texts and their structural features before the child's ideas and intention to construct their own meanings through writing. The *raison d'être* of the NLS was to raise standards through an objectives based model of teaching linked to the crafting of writing at three levels: words, sentence and text.

However, during his period both the teaching of writing and pupils' standards of writing in primary schools (pupils aged 5-11) in England continued to be a matter of official concern (Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), 2009: 47). In both the UK and the USA, pupils' performance in writing lagged behind levels of achievement in reading (Andrews 2008: 5).

The Current Pedagogy of Writing in English Schools.

Approaches to the teaching of writing in the primary school have been influenced by fluctuating theoretical perspectives in the post-war period. We might look at these approaches as pedagogic phases influenced by competing theoretical perspectives and, in more recent years, political discourses. Periodically, standards of literacy have been high on the political agenda. Attention to literacy has been most acute when social perceptions of 'falling standards' has received intense media coverage, driven by interested political commentators. Of the two 'strands' of literacy, writing has been the 'poor relation'. There is a greater volume of published academic work on theories of reading and the teaching of reading than there is on theories of writing and the teaching of writing. It is also the case that the teaching of reading receives greater political attention than does the teaching of writing; the most recent example of this, following the publication of the 'Rose Report' (2006), is the statutory status given to

the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics, as the ‘best’ method of developing early reading. The attention given by the British Government to writing is more muted.

Various reasons have been given for the discrepant performance of pupils’ achievement in reading and writing. Current approaches to the teaching of writing which emphasise writing as product over content, meaning and process have been criticised as narrow and ‘technicist’ (D’Arcy undated; Larson and Marsh 2005; Wyse and Jones 2008). The emphasis on the analysis and deconstruction of texts in order to identify the specific textual grammars of different genre as a means of developing pupils’ writing has also been criticised because it restricts creative expression and originality (Ellis 2002 : 37). Successive national frameworks, focussing on word, sentence and text level analysis and prescribed approaches to the teaching of writing have restricted opportunities for pupils to engage in extended writing practice (Frater 2000; Hilton 2001). Assessment criteria based on a ‘narrow linguistic paradigm’, typical of the strategies, is thought to reinforce a pedagogic discourse that hinders effective writing (D’Arcy undated). Whilst teachers tend to be avid readers, very few feel confident about writing, or see themselves as writers (Grainger et al 2005; Cremin 2008). It has been proposed that a national writing project for teachers in the United Kingdom (UK) be established similar to that which exists in the U.S.A. in order to improve teachers’ understanding or processes of composition (Andrews 2008).

Summary.

There is scant research in the field of reluctant writers and this is particularly the case for the age group that is the focus of this study. Reports of the use of mind mapping are either descriptive, or else are based on the conjecture of advocates of the strategy. Visual pre-writing strategies have been found to be effective with a range of writers and we might deduce that mind mapping is a useful planning tool for pupils because it appears to synthesise visual imagery with linguistic expression.

Approaches to the teaching of writing have changed over time. Current writing pedagogy, based either on the deconstruction of texts followed by teacher modelling of genre, or on the imparting of discrete skills at word, sentence and text level, have been criticised, leading to a view that writing and the teaching of writing is problematic in primary education. This is particularly the case because SATs test data shows, that despite national literacy initiatives, achievement in writing at the end of Key Stage Two lags behind that of achievement in reading.

If mind mapping is proven to be effective with reluctant writers the strategy could be used to improve the quality of writing of all pupils and thereby ‘drive-up standards.’ Hence the disparity between achievements in reading and writing might be reduced or even eradicated. We return to a discussion of the relationship of mind maps, reluctant writers and writing in chapter 4, following an explanation in the next chapter of the methods used to gather data in this project.

Chapter Three

Research Methods.

The project consisted of a small scale intervention study across multiple educational settings. There were two phases to the project; the first, over two years, focused on the use of mind maps as a pre-writing strategy; the second, of a year's duration investigated the incremental impact of using two pre-writing strategies; one of which was a mind map. Purposeful sampling was used to identify pupils to be included in the investigation. Parental permission was sought and granted in each case and to further adhere to ethical practice the names of pupils and their respective schools have not been identified in the body of this report. Each project school identified a teacher to 'champion' the intervention strategies being used. At the start of the two phases of the project champions were trained in the use of mind maps. The trainer was a Head teacher of a project school who had made extensive use of mind maps during her career and who had herself been trained by Tony Buzan.

In phase one Champions trained their reluctant writers in the use of mind mapping and then applied the technique as a planning strategy for narrative writing and the writing of formal letters. Phase two investigated the impact a cumulative approach might have on reluctant writers by introducing them to one pre-writing strategy and then adding a second. Four champions began by using mind maps with their pupils whilst five used another initial strategy. These initial strategies included; drama, role play, film and story-maps. At the start of both phases and before any strategy was introduced, pupils produced 'baseline' samples of writing. This was followed by four further samples produced using the strategies that had been introduced. In the first phase mind mapping was used to plan four narratives and four formal letters. In the second phase narrative writing was the exclusive genre.

Data was collected using qualitative methodology. Methods included face-to-face, semi structured interviews; symposia (Champion's meetings); reflective journals and documentary analysis (assessment of writing). Two sets of assessment criteria were used to generate comparative data. Although the data sets were relatively small (between 36 and 66 pupils), data were quantified for comparative purposes.

Both phases of the project were overseen by a management committee. Initially the committee consisted of Head teachers representing the Bedfordshire Alliance of Schools; the Local Authority; researchers from the University of Bedfordshire and a representative of the funding body, the Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust). Membership of the committee changed over the three years, largely due to local government re-organisation. However, continuity across the two projects was maintained by a 'common' core membership. The common knowledge of core members about the project and its history enabled the effective management of the project and assisted necessary changes to be accommodated with ease.

Interviews with colleagues.

Early in the first phase of the project, face to face interviews were held with each Champion and their respective Head teacher. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to elicit data about the extent of each school's pre-project use of mind mapping; the Champion's pre-existing knowledge and use of mind maps; perceptions of the writing process and the school's writing policy. Interviews also explored perceptions of the characteristics of reluctant writers and predictions of the impact of mind mapping on the writing of this category of pupils. Information from this element of the research, together with data acquired at the initial Champions' meeting, described below, provided data from which to devise a checklist for the identification of causes of reluctance. The checklist, which can be found in Appendix B, was used at the start of the second phase of the project to identify reluctant writers. A Causal Model of Reluctance to Write emerged from the data accrued through the use of the checklist in the first phase of the project. The model is presented and discussed in Chapter 4, along with other findings.

Sample.

During the interviews it was evident that when asked to identify reluctant writers, Champions exclusively identified boys. When the interviewer highlighted this fact and asked Champions to consider a range of behaviours that might be considered to be evidence of reluctance, Champions then began to identify girls too. It was felt this intervention by the interviewer necessary to ensure the sample was representative of both genders. Examples of the range of behaviours referred to by the interviewer included a reference to an aspect of gender studies which found that girls resistance to learning often involved 'subversive' behaviour within acceptable boundaries. (Attar 1990). In the context of writing, this might include female pupils who do just enough writing to complete the task but who do so in very formulaic ways and who never stray from their comfort zone in terms of topic, word choices, sentence structures and discourse connectors.

As the project's focus concerned pupils sharing specific characteristics, a method of purposeful sampling was used. However, the task of identifying appropriate pupils to be included in the sample differed across schools. In some schools reluctant writers were identified in a single class; in other schools the sample included pupils from different classes. In some instances the Champion identified the pupils; in others it was other colleagues, usually the respective class teachers when the sample consisted of pupils from several classes.

The first phase of the project began with a sample of 66 pupils and the second phase had 40 pupils.

Champions meetings

Champions' meetings were held at regular intervals during the project. Apart from the initial meeting in January 2008, which was a training and orientation day, subsequent meetings, in the first phase of the project (January 2008 – December 2009) were conducted as discussion forums. These involved naturalistic conversation around key themes that emerged during the course of the project. Champion's meetings began

with the lead researcher using a semi-structured interview schedule to initiate conversation. As Champions discussed key questions, fresh issues were raised leading to further questioning. The lead researcher noted significant points during discussion and sought clarification over meanings and the validity of findings, as they emerged. These were summarised and recorded. Discussion 'equalised' relationships and positioned champions as co-researchers, sharing findings with one another. There was not a sense of the researcher 'being in charge' of proceedings. For these reasons, the champions' meetings proved to be an important research 'tool' because the free flow of talk between colleagues positioned the researcher as an active listener.

The first two Champions meetings in the second phase of the project (January 2010 – December 2010) were used to level pupils writing before the discussion of issues. However, assessment took a substantial amount of time, truncating opportunities for discussion and it was decided to revert to the form of meeting characteristic of the first phase of the project. Through-out the project scripts were levelled by independent assessors.

The Champions meetings not only provided a rich source of data, they also proved to be an important means of generating meaningful pedagogic discussion between colleagues across different types of school. Staff meetings in schools tend to be dominated by organisational and business matters and rarely provide opportunities for teachers to discuss their practice. One by-product of the funding for this research project and its design was the opportunity for colleagues to not only network but to engage in informal, mutually supportive professional development. Although Champions chose not to take-up the offer of accreditation at Master's Level for their work, had they done so these meetings would have been model seminar discussions, making significant contributions to learning. The champions meetings, or forums, could be emulated in future research involving colleagues from multiple educational settings who are investigating common themes.

Champions Journals

In the first phase of the project, each Champion kept a journal in which they noted significant observations, either in the classroom whilst pupils worked with mind maps or in relation to pupils' progress in writing. It had been envisaged the journals would be a reflective log for accreditation purposes at M.A. level. Despite initial interest no-one chose to gain accreditation for their work. In the event, the journals proved to be useful field notes that allowed the lead researcher to receive a selective 'second-hand' account of pupils' responses.

Both the champions' meetings and the journals helped to position teachers as quasi or co-researchers. As such, they may have given colleagues a sense of ownership of the research process. However, the journal was discarded in the second phase of the project at the request of teachers, who felt it had been an additional task in a very busy working life.

Pupil Survey.

Early in the research, data about teachers perceptions of reluctant writers had been gathered but we wondered how these pupils perceived themselves as writers; how they felt about writing; about being supported with writing by an adult and how they reacted to the use of a mind map. We also explored the extent of their writing when not in school. All pupils received a pupil ‘friendly’ questionnaire which, in many cases, was completed with the assistance of an adult. Most of the questionnaire was designed with a single question in the centre of an A4 page surrounded by several emoticons, with which pupils would be familiar. Pupils answered the question by circling the emoticon(s) applicable to their response to the question. Champions reported on the success of the survey. It helped to reveal to them pupils’ attitudes to writing and writing behaviour, of which they had previously been unaware. Some champions subsequently used the survey with the whole class. It would appear then that the Pupil Survey is a useful professional tool for teachers, enabling them to gather insightful information about their pupils. This information could be used by teachers to build on the out of school literacy practices of individual pupils, as well as a means of identifying pupils who require particular types of affective support for their writing and, possibly, other aspects of learning also.

In the second phase of the project the survey was conducted before the introduction of mind maps or other strategies. This required a slight modification of the original to exclude the specific question referring to mind maps.

Analysis of pupils’ writing.

Samples of narrative writing were levelled using two assessment criteria as described in the section below. Formal letters, produced in phase one only, were levelled using the Assessment of Pupils progress (APP) criteria.

In the first phase of the project, some champions experienced difficulty producing the required number of samples. One reason was the pressure of time to produce writing in two genres in a crowded curriculum. This resulted in a reduction in the sample size as the project progressed through its first phase. The corollary is that there was insufficient writing from several schools at the end of the first phase to enable a robust comparative analysis of the progress of reluctant writers within those schools. Where samples of writing were produced these were included to provide cumulative data across schools. However, where a school was unable to provide sufficient data for two consecutive samples any available data from that school was excluded from the final analysis. This explains why the number of samples is smaller at the end of the first phase of the project than at the beginning. Numbers also varied slightly due to pupil absenteeism where this coincided with writing activities.

There were no such data collection problems in the second phase. This is partly because fewer samples were required as we chose to focus solely on one genre. We also learned from the first phase and took a project management decision to give specific completion dates for each sample of writing. These dates fell a week before the date of each Champions meeting, to which samples were brought. This proved to be an efficient means of collecting samples of data. In the case of pupil absences, Champions were asked to collect a sample of writing from the pupil as close as

possible to the date of writing produced by their peers. This slight change proved effective.

Assessment tools used.

The timing of the project coincided with the national introduction of the Assessment of Pupil Progress (APP) criteria for writing. Schools were beginning to familiarise themselves with the criteria and use it for the assessment of their pupils writing. As this was the most up-to-date assessment criteria it was adopted as an assessment tool for the project. However, on closer inspection the lead researcher, in discussion with Head teachers on the management committee, concluded it to be too narrowly framed for a thorough assessment of narrative writing. As stated in the introduction, a second set of assessment criteria, Assessment of Narrative Writing (ANW), were devised by the lead researcher specifically for levelling narrative scripts. Narrative texts in both phases of the project were levelled using both sets of criteria. This provided additional data upon which to make further comparative analysis. Detailed findings of this comparative analysis are currently being prepared in a separate paper to be presented to the International Conference of the United Kingdom Literacy Association at the University of Chester in July 2011. The APP and ANW criteria can be found in Appendix C and D, respectively.

Exit Survey.

At the end of the first phase of the project Champions completed an 'exit survey' which asked them to give their summative thoughts about mind mapping and its affect on reluctant writers. Several Champions completed the survey at the final meeting, whilst others completed it electronically. At the end of the second phase of the project champions gave summative views at a final champions meeting.

Variables.

The research was undertaken at a time of significant curriculum innovation in English primary schools. National initiatives in literacy education caused significant changes to classroom practice and, given that classrooms are social arenas in which learning reflects socio-cultural processes (Vygotsky, 1962), it was necessary to attempt to identify variables that may have, to a greater or lesser extent, influenced findings. It is not entirely possible to isolate variables in educational research but it is important to identify them and attempt to evaluate their bearing on outcomes. In the early stages of the research several possible variables were identified. These variables have been categorised as either macro or micro pedagogic factors.

Macro-pedagogic variables.

The most significant macro-pedagogic factor affecting the research was the change to the primary curriculum and its delivery as a result of the implementation of the Primary National Strategy (PNS) (Department for Education and Skills 2006), which superseded the National Literacy Strategy (NLS), introduced in 1998 (Department for

Education and Employment 1998). Schools across the country began implementing the PNS in September 2007. However, at the start of the project some schools were still in the early phase of transition between the two strategies. The corollary is that there was no consistent approach to curriculum delivery across all project schools. The changes significantly affected the way literacy was taught. The NLS had been a highly prescriptive, objectives based curriculum, which, if followed strictly, required English to be taught by means of discrete skills at word, sentence and text level. This was achieved by means of a designated literacy hour with specified times allocated to whole class, group and independent work. One criticism of this approach was the lack of time available for pupils to engage with sustained, extended writing. In view of this, some schools modified the NLS framework so that one day a week could be allocated to writing. The PNS framework dispensed with the Literacy Hour, and allowed schools a greater degree of control of curriculum delivery. Although, the content remained largely prescriptive with the coverage of specific textual genres designated to particular year groups, there was greater scope for schools to be creative with their methods of teaching. Teachers were also given more control over decisions about matching coverage of aspects of the curriculum to the specific needs of their pupils. For example, where a teacher found pupils needed more time to complete work on a specific genre, it was possible to do this, whereas the previous strategy had emphasised pace and coverage of all learning objectives.

At the same time, some project schools moved away from the demarcation of subjects to their integration in a topic based approach to curriculum delivery. This was a major cultural change for schools. The change had important epistemological significance, since it enabled teachers and pupils to make connections between knowledge across subjects which had hitherto been taught as discrete entities. One Champion drew attention to this change in her comments, which recognised that the topic based curriculum had had a profound affect on boys' writing. In her view, boys appeared be more motivated because they were able to make connections between ideas and information in the more holistic approach to knowledge and, presumably, were able to see the relevance of learning. During the course of the project, this significant macro-pedagogic factor could have influenced progress made by pupils in schools that had adopted a 'creative curriculum'.

Micro-pedagogic variables.

In addition to curriculum change at national and local level, several micro-variables were identified. One variable concerned differences in teachers' educational philosophies and approach to the teaching of English. One example of this emerged during a Champions meeting when discussing the way mind mapping was being implemented. It transpired that some Champions combined it with the use of 'response-partners'. This is where peer talk took place between the completion of the map and the beginning of writing. This was particularly the case when there was a time lapse between the two. For example, when the map was completed one day and writing began the next day. A further variable was the difference in the amount of time each Champion gave to the sample group. However, it was also the case that some pupils, particularly younger ones, needed additional time to understand the function of the map and how to produce it. Where the Champion was not a class teacher and the school's sample of reluctant writers came from different classes mind mapping sessions were conducted in withdrawal. This presented a further variable and

raised a question about the different effects this might have compared with groups taught in the context of whole class sessions. There is a possibility that the novelty of new ways of working created a 'Hawthorne Effect' (Mayo 1933) and influenced outcomes when pupils worked in withdrawal groups. The likelihood that they received closer support than when in class and had new coloured pens might have improved motivation to write. However, given that this was a medium term project lasting more than a year it could be argued that the novelty effect was relatively short term and was unlikely to affect work produced after the initial sample.

Summary.

The research drew on the multiple perspectives of teachers. In addition to an entry interview, teachers kept a reflective journal; contributed to regular symposia and completed an exit survey. Observations of pupils, whilst working with mind maps, complemented findings from the pupil survey. Teachers were positioned as co-researchers, engaging with the lead researcher by means of a dialogic exploration of findings, issues and emergent questions related to the locus of the research. This mode of research proved to be an effective means of developing both teachers' and the researcher's continuing professional development.

Initial scripts written by pupils before the use of mind maps, provided a benchmark against which achievement was measured. Narrative scripts were levelled using two contrasting assessment criteria. Formal letter writing was levelled using only the APP criteria. By means of aggregated levelling it was possible to discern patterns of achievement across the whole cohort, as well as within sub-groups, at school level.

Chapter 4

Introduction.

Evidence from literature on the use of mind mapping with reluctant writers suggests the strategy is most effective as a planning tool because it enables pupils to formulate and organise initial ideas. However, the most ardent advocate of the mind mapping strategy, Tony Buzan, argues that in addition mind maps also ‘unlock creativity’ (2006). In the early stages of the project, Champions observed that pupils trained in the use of mind mapping exhibited improved motivation to write. There was also evidence of improvements in terms of aspects of textual structure, particularly the organisation of paragraphs (Gardner and Jeffries 2008). However, to be effective writers pupils need to be able to do more than control and manipulate the secretarial aspects of writing; they need to be able to translate thoughts and ideas into coherent texts that have meaning both for themselves and their readers. Clearly, secretarial skills assist the process of doing this but without creativity and the ability to enthuse the reader, writing can be a technically accurate but monotonous process, resulting in a functional dull product. We sought to investigate therefore the extent to which mind mapping might enable pupils to make compositional improvements beyond those of textual structure; that is the degree to which the mind map facilitated the translation of ideas into lucid, fluent and imaginative writing. To do this it was necessary to devise alternative assessment criteria to the Assessment of Pupil Progress (APP) criteria (See Appendix C), devised by the Primary National Strategy. Champions were critical of the APP criteria because they emphasise secretarial aspects of writing and neglect to give due credit to compositional features of writing. This is not surprising given that for at least a decade schools had been advised to construct learning objectives in literacy at word, sentence and text level. The alternative criteria, referred to as Assessment of Narrative Writing (ANW)(see Appendix D), were devised by the lead researcher, after investigating the field of narratology, particularly the work of Genette (1988) and Barthes (1989). Reader response theory, based on the work of Rosenblatt (1995), can also be seen to influence the criterion relating to the affective response of the reader, which in this case is the teacher who is assessing pupils’ writing. The two sets of criteria differ in another respect; The ANW are designed specifically for the assessment of narrative writing, whereas the APP criteria are generic and intended to be used with all text types.

The way in which scripts were assessed differed between phase one and two. In Phase One Champions assessed their own samples. However, in Phase Two, two external assessors were appointed. Both were practising, part-time teachers of pupils in the age group covered by the project. The demarcation of the quasi-research role of the Champions and the assessment role of the external teachers made for more efficient project management, as far as the lead researcher was concerned, and also allowed for a more consistent and possibly more objective assessment process.

The findings of this aspect of the project are presented in two sections. Section one deals with findings specific to the first phase and section two with the findings of the second phase. In a summary we synthesise key findings of both phases.

The Nature of Reluctance.

As we saw from the available literature on the subject, the term reluctant writer has tended to be used loosely; that is in the absence of any precise definition or identification of characteristic behaviours. It was necessary, therefore, to begin to identify what was meant by a reluctant writer. Preliminary findings suggested that teachers perceived a reluctance to write to be gender specific behaviour. When asked to identify the characteristic behaviours of reluctant writers, teachers readily cited examples of boys who were reluctant but had difficulty identifying girls who exhibited similar behaviours. This may reflect the fact, that boys are generally under-achieving as writers compared to their female counterparts (Barton 2007). Findings from educational research located in Gender Studies, however, suggest that girls manifest different strategies from boys when seeking to avoid or circumvent teacher expectations (Attar 1990). We might conclude therefore that the behaviour of female reluctant writers is manifestly different from that of boys. When this possibility was put to Champions, they were then able to identify a small number of underachieving girls who, although exhibiting different behaviours from boys', might also be described as reluctant. Based on their experience as practitioners, teachers cited the following as evidence of a reluctance to write:

- Child who is good at telling stories orally but has difficulty putting ideas on paper independently.
- Child who is a perfectionist, therefore fear of getting it wrong prevents writing.
- Child who lack ideas due to insufficient experiences; a) of life b) of story through reading or being told stories.
- Child who finds writing a physical struggle... poor fine motor control/pencil control.
- Child who finds spelling difficult which then impedes writing.
- Child who has 'internalized a view of writing as secretarial skills rather a creative process. This may be due to marking practices in which secretarial features have been privileged over compositional ones.
- Child who has difficulty remembering what s/he is writing about (might memory be an issue).
- A child who is unable to build upon their writing.
- Child who truncates their writing i.e. starts but is quick to finish with writing being superficial.
- Child who plays it safe with their writing and is reluctant to take risks.

The initial list, which was refined and expanded during the first phase of the project, was used to identify a fresh sample of reluctant writers at the beginning of the second phase. Findings based on the revised list are discussed below.

Characteristics of Reluctant Writers in Phase Two of the Project.

Champions in the second phase of the project were asked to identify the typical writing behaviours of each pupil identified as a reluctant writer. The collated findings reveal some interesting patterns. Of the 40 pupils in this phase, 27 were male and 13 female; the same gender ratio as in the project's first phase. There were also 13 pupils for whom English was an Additional Language (EAL). Each pupil exhibited several characteristics of reluctance, which leads us to the conclusion that it is unlikely a pupil can justifiably be described as reluctant on the basis of one characteristic alone. What may be of greater significance are the causes of reluctance which we discuss after extrapolating some of the more significant characteristics of reluctance.

Two characteristics stand out above others. Inability to accurately spell was identified in 63% of pupils. A slightly higher proportion of girls (69%) compared to boys (59%) had difficulty in this area. Just under half (46%) of EAL pupils were identified as poor spellers. The problematic nature of spelling for pupils in the project is a recurring theme, suggesting that consideration needs to be given to its amelioration. There would seem to be two possible solutions to this problem; either the teaching of spelling receives greater attention in the primary school, or greater emphasis is given to compositional aspects of writing and pupils are persuaded that spelling is relatively unimportant. Emphasis on the former could simply exacerbate the issue for reluctant writers, making them more reluctant and the second course of action neglects the fact that English orthography has a standard form and accuracy is a pre-requisite skill necessary for academic success. As stated earlier, the current statutory requirement to teach systematic synthetic phonics in Key Stage One, places the argument firmly in the court of explicit teaching by means of the blending and segmenting of phonemes to develop reading and spelling respectively. Specific research is required to evaluate the effectiveness of this approach and its implications for the findings of our study in relation to reluctant writers.

The second characteristic was memory; 63% of pupils had difficulty remembering what to write. This was a feature for a higher proportion of boys (67%) than for girls (54%) with this being the case for 62% of EAL pupils. Smith's (1982) reference to local and global features of writing may be relevant here. The ability to retain a whole plot schema requires a significant act of memory for a child. We might expect that mind maps act as an aide memoire for these pupils and, therefore, reduce the cognitive barrier to writing caused by either poor memory or the ability to generate causal sequential ideas. This explanation assumes a cognitive model of the process of composition established by Hayes and Flower (1980) which posits a sequential but recursive process of writing, beginning with the generation of ideas, followed by the translation of ideas into text and culminating in a process of revision. Mind maps, because they are regarded as planning tools, fit this model well but, as some Champions note elsewhere, whilst they enable pupils to structure their writing, this is at the expense of spontaneity or creative flair. Whilst structural coherence and cohesion may enable pupils to meet specific descriptors of the Assessment of Pupils

Progress (APP) criteria and SATs levels, it does not necessarily make for good writing. Champions suggest elsewhere that strategies designed to elicit pupils' creative thinking may be needed to complement mind maps. This matter was the subject of the second phase of the project and is reported on later.

Although 'restricted life experience' was identified as a characteristic in only 33% of reluctant writers, teachers considered it to be the biggest single factor restricting the writing of EAL pupils (85%). This would appear to suggest this group of pupils require significant opportunities to broaden their life experience as a means to stimulate ideas for writing. However, given that project schools with large minority ethnic intakes were located in relatively poor socio-economic areas, the cause may have more to do with social class than ethnicity and this finding could apply equally to schools in predominantly white British communities. There were no comparative pre-dominantly 'English heritage' schools located in lower socio-economic areas in the project to verify this suggestion, however. An alternative interpretation might be to do with a dislocation of cultural experience that possibly exists between teachers and pupils in multi-ethnic schools, given that the majority of teachers in these schools are of a significantly different cultural heritage to pupils. This difference may result in a lack of awareness, on the part of teachers, of the potential writing stimuli that could be drawn from the life experiences of minority ethnic pupils. Elsewhere we refer to the need for teachers to acquire greater knowledge of children's literacy practices outside school as a means of helping to design an appropriate curriculum. We might add to this notion the equal need to understand children's 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Overall 53% of pupils experienced difficulty developing either the quantity or quality of their writing. When EAL pupils were excluded, this figure rose to 67%, with boys (59%) being the group most likely to experience this difficulty. There may be causal associations between this finding and that relating to poor memory. Generally Champions noted mind maps helped to improve the quantity of writing produced by reluctant writers. Boys tended to place less emphasis on the importance of secretarial skills than did girls; 14% and 39% respectively but the figure was higher for EAL pupils at 46%. However, the generally poor presentation skills of boys was seen to be a greater barrier to them. The respective figures were 48%; 39% and 39%./ Girls were more likely than boys to have low self-esteem as writers, as were EAL pupils. The figure for both girls and EAL pupils was 54% compared to 37% for boys. The group most likely to experience difficulty translating good ideas into writing was EAL pupils (46%), compared to 39% of girls and 33% of boys. Given that traditionally writing has been the primary means teachers have used to assess pupils' ability, this finding suggests that unless alternative assessment strategies are employed, pupils' ability may be under-estimated and their educational needs misdiagnosed. Mind maps provide one alternative means of assessment because they allow pupils to record ideas relatively quickly. The caveat being that young pupils need a lot of rehearsal to create maps in the first place. However, once the technique has been learned, the map can be used as a cuing device for speaking and listening activities, thereby enabling the teacher to listen to pupils as they talk and record the quality of their thinking, as well as the kind of language they use. It is likely that the range of language a significant number of pupils use through talk will be greater than when they are writing because 63% of reluctant writers appear to have an orthographic impediment which is likely to restrict the range of vocabulary available to them when writing.

The Reluctant Writer: Towards A Definition.

In the available literature there does not appear to be an adequate definition of a reluctant writer. However, in this study we used the data derived from face to face interviews with head teachers and Champions in the first phase of the project to construct a definition. The definition below aims to include all characteristics of reluctance referred to as 'barriers to writing' and is inclusive of gendered behaviour. So, attempts to capture girls who write just enough to make it appear they are not reluctant, as well as those boys who simply refuse to write, are considered. The term 'reluctance' implies a behaviour that is persistent. To reflect this aspect the word habitual has been used. A caveat has been included to demonstrate that an element of caution is required when making judgements about who is, and who is not, a reluctant writer. The caveat draws attention to differences between a reluctance to write and styles of composition. This cautionary note is triggered by the work of Debra Myhill, which is discussed below.

A reluctant writer is one who experiences one or more barriers to the writing process on a regular basis. Barriers may be exhibited during the process of writing as well as, or instead of, the start of the process. In addition, a reluctant writer may be defined as one who's writing is habitually superficial, either because ideas are not expanded or because the writing is executed in haste. Before identifying a pupil as a reluctant writer careful observation is required to differentiate between characteristics of reluctance and compositional styles. Being slow to start a piece of writing, or pausing for long periods during writing, may be indicative of a writer's style of composition rather than a reluctance to write. Observation of both the writer and an assessment of samples of writing in more than one context are required before a writer can be defined as reluctant.

Reluctant Writers and Problems of Identification.

Towards the end of the first phase of the project, several Champions reflected on their selections of pupils and stated that, in retrospect, they might not have included certain pupils in the sample. Initially this revelation cast doubt on the validity of some of the data collected. However, the very fact that Champions questioned their initial judgments raised questions about teachers' perceptions of children as writers and their identification of barriers to writing. It may be the case that a teacher's perception of reluctance to write is actually more to do with a child's process of composition. In a study of 38 pupils in Year 9 to Year 11, in four secondary schools, Myhill (2009) found that writers possess different styles of composition. She identified five types of writing processing, which she labeled as follows; *brief pausers*; *flow writers*; *sustained pausers*; *rapid switchers* and *stop starters*

Brief pausers are writers who devote more time to writing than pausing but their writing is frequently interrupted by brief pauses. Myhill found this type of writer tends to think both during pauses and also during writing. A pause is used for global rather than local planning, suggesting the writer is more able to see the bigger textual picture and is, therefore, more able to manage the cognitive load than other types of writer. Like brief pausers, *flow writers* spend more time writing than pausing. However, the reason for each pause is to quickly get ideas on paper and then think

about the effectiveness of the writing. The focus, therefore, is on finishing writing as quickly as possible. In contrast, *sustained pausers* pause more than write. These long pauses served two functions. Some pauses were used to re-read what had been written in order to generate fresh ideas, whilst others were prompted by a dissatisfaction of what had been written and were opportunities to resolve matters. With *rapid switchers* Myhill found parity in the occurrence of writing and pausing. Pauses are used to translate ideas to the text and to manage the cognitive load involved in writing. This type of writer tends not to have a global plan before writing and a desire to make their writing effective increases the cognitive load during the translation phase. The final type, *stop starters*, also exhibit an equal balance between writing and pausing but both tend to be lengthy. Pauses are used to translate ideas into text.

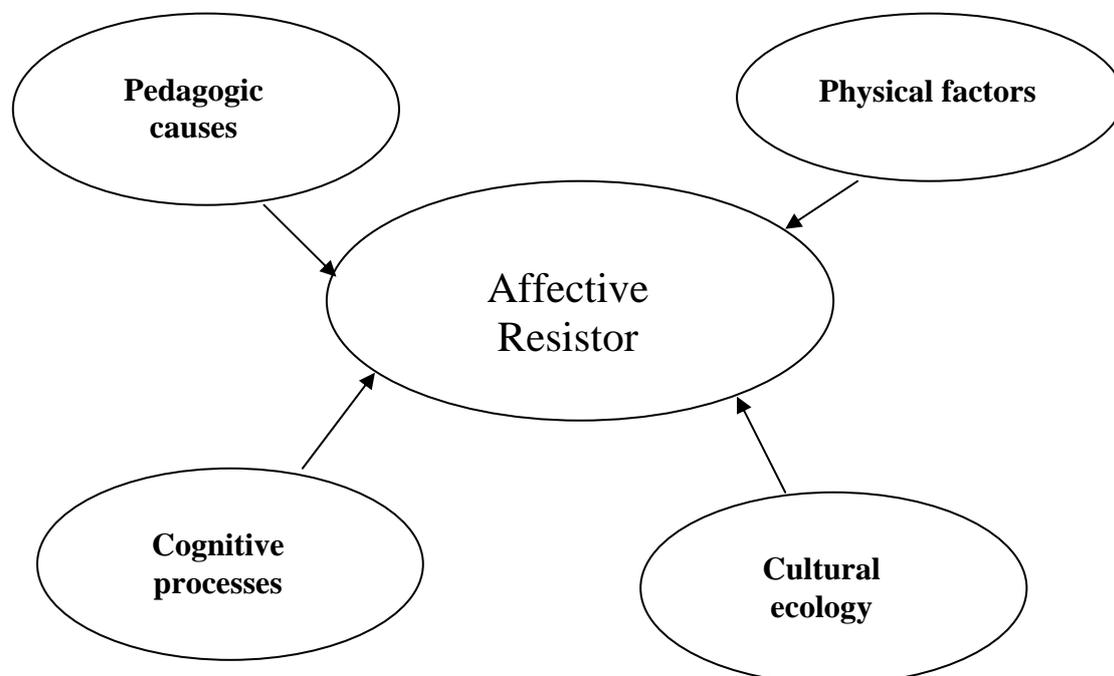
Myhill's research was undertaken with pupils who were much older than pupils in our sample and there may be some maturational differences between writers at KS1 and KS2 and writers at upper KS3 and KS4. However, Myhill's findings provide some useful perspectives to account for teachers' perceptions of pupils as writers. She noted that it is difficult for those outside the writing process to discern when composition actually begins. Myhill found that written composition often begins with a pause or some kind of displacement activity and that this is particularly the case with 'average' and high achieving pupils. It is possible, therefore, that some teachers thought a pupils' delay before writing was a reluctance to write whereas Myhill suggests this is a natural aspect of the writing process. In addition, teacher's observations of pupils during the writing process may lead them to see the long pauses of *sustained pausers* as a reluctance to write, whereas it may actually be indicative of the preferred process of composition of the pupil.

We concur with Myhill when she says more needs to be known about the processes of writing employed by different pupils and that an approach to writing based on the plan – write - revise formula may not suit all pupils. This has implications for national strategies which tend to promote a 'one-size fits all' approach to literacy teaching. The finding also resonates with the suggestion that the teaching of writing has been neglected in English schools (Stannard and Huxford, 2007). The corollary is that teachers may need to explore compositional processes of writing in their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). There have been a number of small scale projects around the country that have investigated teachers' relationship to writing by positioning them as authentic writers with a requirement to reflect on their own work. The hypothesis is that teachers who are able to identify themselves as authentic writers, because they are 'inside' the writing process, are better able to assist pupils to develop as writers (Cremin 2008;). These projects, together with what has been learned from the 'Mind Mapping Project', have informed curriculum change in English on the Primary B.Ed course at the University of Bedfordshire. In their first year students now undertake a creative writing project, which includes an assignment requiring them to reflect on what they have learned about compositional processes of writing and how this learning might impact on their teaching of writing. As Myhill recommends, this approach requires students to engage in metacognitive discussions of the processes of composition. In an evaluation of learning, using this approach Gardner (2010) suggests it lead to students' acquiring deep level understanding of writing, as well as sensitivity to pupils' needs as writers.

A Model of Causation.

A checklist of characteristic behaviours provides a useful means of identifying pupils who are reluctant writers but the construction of ameliorative strategies. requires deeper diagnosis. As well as identifying characteristic behaviours of reluctant writers, Champions were also asked to consider the possible causes of pupils' reluctance to write. The perceptions of Champions were used to construct a working model of causation (See Figure 1 below). It is anticipated that the five categories identified in the model will assist teachers to isolate the underlying cause, or causes, of a pupil's reluctance to write, in order to apply strategies to help overcome such reluctance.

Figure 1 - The Reluctant Writer: Towards a Causal Model



The Affective Resistor

At the heart of the model is the most influential inhibiting factor to which other factors in the model contribute. The term Affective Resistor has been adapted from the work of Dulay et al (1982). In their work they refer to an 'Affective Filter' which represents the learner's emotional state during the acquisition of a second language. In this model, how one sees oneself as a writer and how one feels about writing is significant to the writing process. Influences on the Affective Resistor can be transient or temporary. The writer, Philip Pullman, explains how he can only write on lined A4 paper with four holes punched in the margin. On an occasion when he mistakenly

bought paper with only two holes he found he was unable to write until he had the correct paper (Pullman 2002). This is an example of the writer's Affective Resistor being influenced by a temporary environmental factor. However, for some writers, feelings about writing may be so deeply held that all attempts at writing are inhibited, in which case the Affective Resistor is particularly strong. The Affective Resistor then might be defined as the extent to which the writer's emotional and/or psychological state inhibits their motivation to write effectively. The pupils in our study are, therefore, deemed to have strong Affective Resistors.

In this model the Affective Resistor is influenced by four other influential factors: cognitive processes; cultural ecology; pedagogic causes and physical factors. The Affective Resistor may be influenced by just one of these contributory factors or, several factors may combine to influence the writer's emotional state. We might speculate that where only one factor contributes, the Affective Resistor might be relatively weak, thereby making the success of ameliorative measures effective in the short term. However, where multiple factors contribute, the Affective Resistor could be strong, making the writer more resistant, not only to writing, but also to strategies designed to help them overcome their reluctance to write.

Anxiety caused by negative feedback from a parent or the teacher about aspects of their writing seems to be a key influence for some reluctant writers. For other reluctant writers, high personal-standards can inhibit the writing process because the child does not want to make a mistake. In both instances, anxiety about failing, either in one's own 'eyes' or in someone else's, appears to be critical.

The following four categories contribute to the Affective Resistor:

a) Cognitive Processes

Writing involves the integration of complex mental operations such as memory, motor-control, creativity and language processing. Poor orthographic memory or an inability to correctly spell a new word in the pupil's developing vocabulary, as discussed elsewhere, significantly constrains writing because of the pupil's fear of making a mistake. As a result the writer resorts to a repertoire of familiar words. This can result in an overly conservative approach, lacking the kind of risk-taking necessary for writing to develop. Alternatively, the 'poor' speller completes work that is peppered with crossed-out words or their efforts are returned from the teacher with numerous spelling errors.

A second aspect is the lack of synchrony in the child's ability to share ideas or tell a story and their ability to write it. In this instance the child may be aware of the relative ease with which the story flows orally but becomes frustrated when this is not so easily processed in writing. There is, therefore, a dislocation between oral creativity and thinking processes during writing. This may be due to the additional skills required in written composition. Many established adult writers confess to finding writing a mental struggle. If the experienced writer finds this to be the case, it is not surprising the same applies to the novice writer, except the novice writer may have fewer personal strategies to help them 'wade-through' the process of writing. We have classified this aspect as mental stamina. Mental stamina may include not only the

tenacity to work through, what is for the writer, a complex textual process, but may also include a disinclination to proof-read and edit writing.

The term perfectionist was referred to above when discussing the Affective Resistor. We use the term again here but in a slightly different way. Kress (1994) points out the sentence is a concept of writing that does not appear in informal speech. Different writers approach the writing process in different ways. Some writers can apply their ideas in a constant stream and then revisit the work to proof-read and edit. Other writers have to craft every sentence before moving on, carefully reading and re-reading their work as they progress. For this latter type of writer, the painstaking crafting of every sentence makes progress slow, but for this type of writer the next sentence cannot be written until they are happy with the previous one. In classrooms where writing must adhere to specified time slots, the perfectionist writer may never complete their work in time, thereby appearing to have a reluctance to write

b) Cultural Ecology

The identification of this category has been influenced by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) eco-systemic model and is an attempt to explain how influences outside the classroom may contribute to behaviour within it. Examples of external factors include parents who have high expectations of their child, thereby causing the child to feel anxious about 'letting them down'. Children who feel they are not able to match parental expectations may become reluctant to try as a 'face-saving' strategy. If the child chooses not to write in the first instance they cannot be deemed to have failed. The child is in control and is empowered, whereas negative criticism is dis-empowering.

Other aspects of cultural ecology include the child's reading repertoire. Reading is an activity that takes place both within and outside school. A restricted reading repertoire may affect writing because the child lacks a secure knowledge of genre.

A further factor, cited by one 'champion' was a lack of worldly knowledge or experience. The observation was made in relation to pupils for whom English is an Additional language. As discussed earlier, this particular factor requires very careful scrutiny in order to avoid the trap of deficit stereotyping. It could be argued, for example, that one can write imaginatively about anything and that the writer does not need to have vast experience of the world to be effective. What is necessary is the ability to use one's linguistic repertoire to construct a unique way of seeing the mundane.

The ethos of the classroom, home and community may also be of influence. In environments that are highly competitive, certain children may be deterred from excelling because this type of environment does not suit their personality type. The consequence is that they feel intimidated, or simply 'opt-out'.

c) Physical Factors

For adults, it is easy to forget that writing is a physical process. Several younger pupils in the study had difficulty containing their mind maps to a single sheet of paper because their diagrams and writing tended to be too large. It was felt that this would

improve over time as these pupils refined their fine-motor control and spatial awareness. One Champion noted;

‘It made me realise how impediments such as poor fine-motor skills and spelling impact on writing.’

This comment seems to suggest that teachers, who are themselves experienced writers, may take for granted the physical and orthographic skills required of young children. To be able to see the process of writing from the perspective of the child is likely to be an important pre-requisite for teachers of writing. The fact that the project has brought about this realisation would suggest that positioning teachers in roles as participant-researchers enables them to perceive learning processes differently and thereby encourages a more insightful view of pupils’ difficulties.

Pupils who find the physical process a struggle, either because they lack the fine-motor control to create well presented work, or because they find extended writing by hand a physically painful process, may become reluctant to write. Both reasons can have an influence over how the child feels about writing and how they see themselves as a writer. The pupil’s feelings about the presentation of their writing could be influenced by feedback from home or the teacher. This might suggest, in some instances, a convergence of physical factors and cultural ecology or pedagogic factors, which then feed into the Affective Resistor.

d) Pedagogic Factors.

This set of factors cover methods of teaching, teacher attitudes to writing and thinking about children as writers. One champion, with wide experience of schools over many years, stated that children taught by the method of ‘emergent writing’ (Hall 1987) were generally more motivated to write. The converse of this is found in classrooms where secretarial or transcription skills are privileged over compositional ones, thereby leaving children with the view that writing is primarily concerned with the skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation. Whilst these are important skills that need to be taught, compositional skills are the true measure of a writer’s ability to write. However, where teaching causes a child to internalize the view that the quality of transcription is the indicator of good writing, a skill the child may not have fully mastered, it can lead to the child developing a self-view as a poor writer.

A further factor that may affect children as writers is the teaching of writing through decontextualised exercises, with an emphasis on syntactic accuracy. The National Literacy Strategy (DfEE 1998), which dominated pedagogy in England for a decade from 1998, as discussed elsewhere, encouraged the sub-division of literacy lessons into word, sentence and text level work. This not only led to fragmented teaching, it also hindered opportunities to engage pupils in whole texts, either as reader or writers (Williams and O’Connor 2002: 20). It may be the case that an over emphasis on grammar and punctuation, or inappropriate teaching of grammar de-motivates some children because they become overly conscious of correctness rather than expressing their thinking. Effective teachers of writing recognize the importance of developing pupils’ self confidence as writers by engaging both their emotions and intellect (Cremin 2009: 70)

Causation.

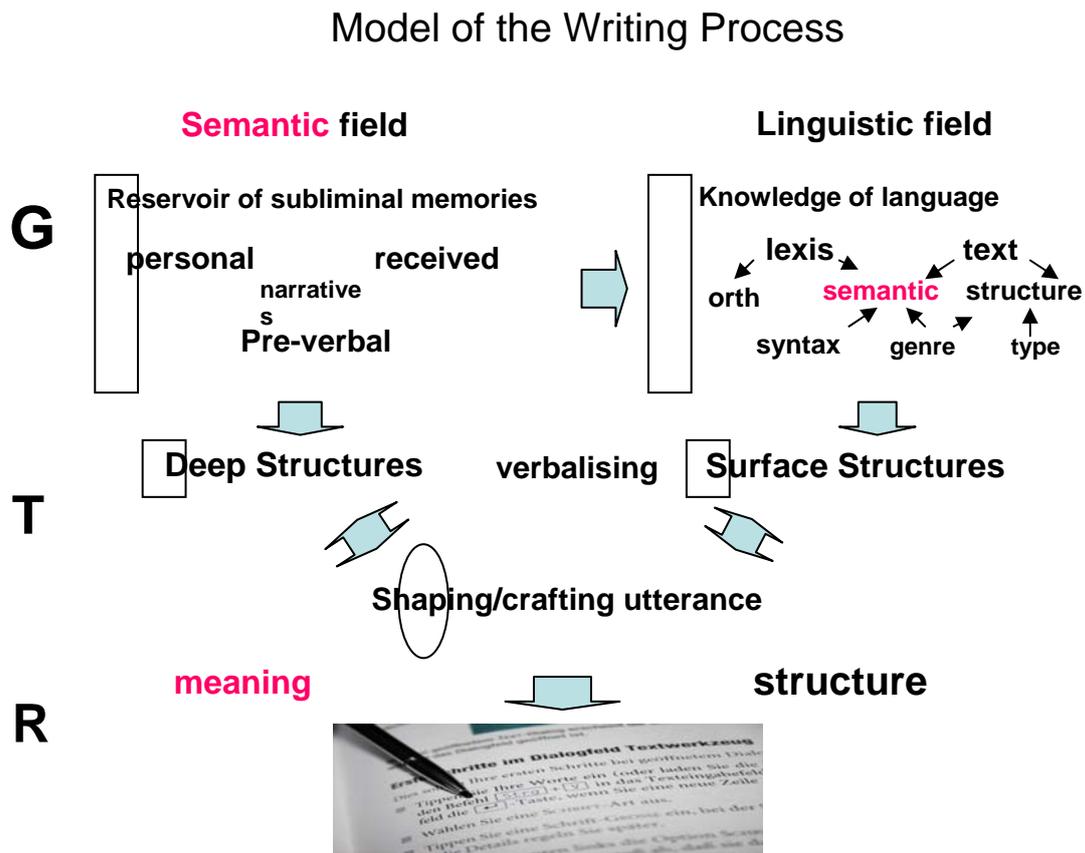
A pupil's reluctance to write generally has multiple causes. However, we found that in just under one third of cases (31%) reluctance was attributable to a single cause. In the first phase of the project, teachers identified this single cause to be a desire, on the part of the pupil, to produce perfect, or near perfect, 'work'. This hard core of 'perfectionists' made up the 31% of pupils whose cause was solely located in the category of the **Affective Resistor**. Further investigation may have revealed other contributory influences but these were not as obvious to teachers as the 69% of pupils who were more easily identified as having multiple causes.

The most frequent of these multiple causes were **cognitive factors**. These were found in 42 cases and the frequency is perhaps indicative of the multiplicity of skills required of the writer. We have already noted that spelling is problematic for reluctant writers but this is one discrete skill amongst many. As experienced writers, we may take for granted the complex inter-relationship of cognitive skills and processes involved in writing and it may be as well to remind ourselves of the enormity of the task we are requiring of young children when we ask them to write.

In an attempt to address the complexity of writing we have devised a model of the writing process, which can be found in Figure 1. Down the left hand side of the figure, the letters G, T, R. refer to the three phases of the processes of composition identified in the Hayes and Flower model (Hayes and Flower 1980). These are; the generation of ideas; the translation of ideas into text and the revision stage. The generation of ideas begins in the semantic field with the mental processes of recall of experiences and knowledge, as well as mental images, relevant to the subject matter and purpose of writing. This 'reservoir of subliminal memories' contains images from our personal experiential narratives but also includes secondary narratives that become part of our personal narrative. These secondary narratives include everything we remember of having ever been told, read or seen and include the multitude of visual and aural images acquired by means of digital and tele-visual technology. As xxx notes this mental data is stored in a pre-verbal form. In our model, the act of writing requires two stages of translation. The first of these is from the pre-verbal to the verbal and is the point at which we begin to convert the meanings that exist in our minds into language. Meanings or ideas enter the linguistic field where we engage in the selection of relevant words from our mental lexicon. Words must cohere in an intelligible form, which prompts our syntactic knowledge system and the shaping of phrases, clauses and sentences able to articulate meaning. Just as words must cohere so must sentences, which in turn prompts our knowledge of text schema. That is our knowledge of the function of particular text types and how they are structured. Although in itself complex, the process of translating ideas into language usually takes only a split second to perform. However, on occasions the translation of thought into language can be time consuming. An 'utterance' may be formulated and then written, or is formulated in the process of writing, which is the second stage of translation. At this second stage the writer moves from narrating in the head to narrating on paper. The process of 'scripting' is the point at which intangible thought and meaning (deep structures) materialises in front of the writers eyes. At this point, the scribe is simultaneously a writer and a reader and there are several skills networks operating to ensure meaning manifests itself in the way the writer intended. In order to make thought and the emerging lexical cohesion manifest, skills networks must work

together. Hence, lexical choices; lexical cohesion, textual cohesion and the lesser skills of orthography and fine motor control (surface structures) must cohere to enable the intended semantic to be articulated. A break in any one of these skills networks may disrupt the others and bring writing to a halt with the possibility that the writer loses control of the meanings to be communicated.

Figure 1.



One such break is lexical, which is when the writer searches their memory for the right word. The time lapse involved might be sufficient to make them forget what they wanted to write. We suggest there are two types of lexical break. The first type is a semantic lexical break in which the writer searches for a word to convey specific meaning. The second is a syntactic lexical break, or an occasion when the writer searches for a word that coheres with what has already been written and what is about to be written. Textual cohesion refers to the writer's knowledge of the conventions governing how different parts of the text cohere. Novice narrative writers often have a restricted range of textual connectors, causing them to frequently resort to phrases such as '..and then..' to join events in an unfolding story. It may be that as they become more adventurous and less formulaic, textual cohesive breaks occur as they search for appropriate discourse connectors. The distance between a writer and their subject matter may be critical here. Berieter and Scardamalia (1987) make a

distinction between writing as ‘knowledge telling’ and ‘knowledge transforming’. A ‘knowledge telling’ narrative may require the writer to recount, in story form, something from their recent past experience. Events are known to the writer and there is relative ease in moving from memories to written narrative. The child writer is likely to ‘tell’ the story chronologically and without embellishment, using simple textual connectors. However, when the writer is required to invent narratives there is a greater cognitive load because knowledge, which may exist as disparate ideas and memories has to be synthesised, translated and communicated. The relationship of the writer to this knowledge is different from their relationship to recent knowledge and they may be required to search for more varied textual connectives. The ‘search’ may be sufficiently long enough to disrupt thought processes, bringing the writer to an abrupt halt. So far we have referred to textual connectives in linguistic terms but there is also an ideational textual connective or the logical relationship of one idea to another. This logic may be internal to the narrative. By that I mean it is a logic that makes sense in the narrative flow. A break in the flow of the story may occur as the writer searches for connections between the meaning of what has been written and subsequent meaning, yet to be written.

Once thought has materialised in the form of words on a page, it takes on a more objective quality and the writer is re-positioned as a reader for an instant, until fresh thought is triggered, ‘re-capturing’ the writer who continues to translate ideas into additional text. In reviewing the text, the writer is both evaluating the synthesis of semantic and syntax, as well as the text’s internal logic and textual cohesion. In other words, does the writing make sense and has the writer accurately communicated what was in their head? The review of text can be another point at which disruption occurs, particularly if the writer discovers that their intended meanings have not been accurately recorded. Thus textual revision is required. Simple revision may require altering a few words to clarify meaning. However, if large parts of the texts fail to convey what the writer intended frustration may occur. Trying to re-frame in language the idea that was in one’s head can be time consuming and may lead the writer to forget what they wanted to write next. However, the opposite may happen with the re-framing of text triggering fresh ideas, or the recall of a pre-existing idea.

This brief analysis of what happens when we write, though complex, still does not capture the enormity of the task and appears to be a wholly cerebral process. A more complex model of writing would site what has been discussed here within the socio-cultural framework in which the writer is situated, both as a writer and as a learner functioning in a particular pedagogic context. In a sense the causal model of reluctance encompasses aspects of a socio-cultural model of writing because it includes pedagogic factors and those of cultural ecology which imply social discourses and practices outside the individual but which influence the individual’s writing behaviour. We now briefly consider these influences.

External influences on the learner were identified in 28 cases. The most frequent example of **cultural ecology** was parental influence. **Physical factors** occurred in 21 cases with fine motor control cited as the main impediment. The most infrequent causal factor identified was **pedagogic causes**. Only four instances of this were identified. However, given the criticism levelled at approaches to writing adopted by government led national strategies, it may be this is an under-reported factor. We would expect that discourses of writing as secretarial skills cause a greater number of

children to become reluctant than is reported in this study. Such a discourse skews the conceptualisation of the nature of writing, privileging such things as handwriting, spelling and capitalisation over content. A child who is a good writer in terms of content may perceive themselves as a poor one if assessment feedback fails to acknowledge the strength of their compositional skills and continually focuses negative criticism on poorer secretarial skills. Such a perception may lead the child towards reluctance.

If one or more of these factors is identified as an habitual barrier to writing ameliorative action is required to assist the pupil to obviate 'blocks'. As an 'ameliorative action' the mind map might be considered to be effective where cognitive factors are identified as the most obdurate cause of reluctance. If mind maps assist pupils to record ideas quickly, then they can translate what is in their head onto paper, which releases them of the act of remembering when they come to write. Hence, a textual semantic has been made material, albeit in a short-hand embryonic form. The nature of the map with its radiant branches also allows pupils to sequence ideas, thereby relieving them of the need to organise as they write. In addition, words on the map act as a 'word- bank' to be utilised when writing. Writing individual words also allows pupils to rehearse the orthography of words of which they may be unsure how to spell. Although the mind map relieves pupils of some of the cognitive factors they still need to be able to control syntactic cohesion and, to be effective story writers, they need to be able to apply imaginative embellishment. In order to evaluate the extent to which mind maps were effective in helping reluctant writers we now turn to teachers perceptions of how pupils worked with them and then to the assessment of their writing.

Chapter 5.

Evidence from the Pupil Survey.

Several months into the first phase of the project, pupils were given a survey to elicit data about aspects of their experience with writing. One question specifically asked how they felt about using mind maps as an aide to writing. In the second phase of the project the same survey was given to pupils at the outset with this question omitted, for obvious reasons. (Copies of the surveys can be found in Appendix A). The survey was positively received by Champions in both phases of the project. They commented on how it allowed them to gain information about pupils they would otherwise not have acquired. It was the view of champions that the survey had a universal purpose beyond the project and that it could be adopted by schools as a way of giving teachers insights into pupils' attitudes to literacy.

How did pupils feel when asked to write a story?

Despite being identified by their teachers as 'reluctant writers', 50% of pupils in the first phase of the project and 49% in the second phase expressed enthusiasm for writing. When asked how they felt when having to write a story these pupils said they felt happy about it. Approximately half expressed a 'love' for writing but others said such things as;

'feeling good because everyone in class was doing the same thing';

'wanted to get good grades';

'..it is nice and peaceful';

I am next to my friends and I know my spellings;

'I do not like working with other people.'

A significant number of these responses may have more to do with the 'environmental' circumstances of the writing lesson than an affective response to writing itself. Nevertheless, this still leaves 25% of pupils who had positive attitudes to writing. One school in the second phase of the project capitalised on this finding and used the pupil survey as the means for identifying the reluctant writers for their sample. The Champion included only those pupils whose self perception as a writer was poor and excluded pupils they had themselves perceived to be reluctant. Returning to pupils' responses to the first question, 23% of pupils in the first phase and 32% in the second said they felt confused when asked to write a story; 7% in both phases felt angry; 5% and 2.5% respectively felt embarrassed; 3% in the first phase and 7% in the second felt sick. Responses in the second phase included a number of other emotions identified by pupils themselves. Around 12% of pupils admitted to feelings of annoyance and anxiety.

In most cases, pupils were able to identify specific reasons for some of these strong negative emotions to writing. In the first phase of the project, lack of adult support

was cited by those who felt confused, although the majority reason was ‘not knowing’ what to write. Absence of support was not cited at all by pupils in the second phase but lack of ideas and not knowing what to write remained the main reason. Given that pupils in the second phase were one to two years older than most of their first phase counterparts, the reason lack of adult support was not cited may be due to the maturity of the pupils and their expectation that greater self-reliance was the norm. Some pupils in the first phase who had negative feelings about writing identified poor orthographic skills or poor handwriting as the cause. The spelling issue was ‘picked-up’ by Champions in their reflective journals. One Champion working with Year One pupils noted the extent of the hindrance spelling caused when she wrote,

‘He seemed to come to a complete standstill when he came to a word he could not spell.’

And of another pupils she added,

‘He becomes quite troubled when he can’t spell a word.’

However, neither inability to spell nor poor handwriting were mentioned as reasons by pupils in the second phase of the project. Several pupils in the first phase expressed feeling scared of being ‘told-off’ for not writing enough or for not making their work ‘neat’. These deep rooted feelings often go unnoticed by teachers who are often being driven by external demands to cover a broad curriculum at a fast pace. In addition, negative attitudes to writing acquired in primary school can be so long lasting they influence attitudes in adulthood. In a recent study of self-perceptions as writers amongst first year under-graduate students almost half said they disliked writing, with a significant number citing negative feedback from primary school teachers as the cause (Gardner 2010). Negative feedback was often in relation to secretarial skills such as spelling and handwriting; other reasons given, included lack of time to complete writing tasks. Ninety percent of students in this study began primary school the same year the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (Department for Education and Employment 1998) was introduced. Rather than raising standards, as was the intention of those promoting the NLS, it appears to have ‘switched-off,’ from writing, some of those who have been able to use writing for academic success. The fact these undergraduates were primary student teachers may suggest a persistent and possibly cyclical malaise in writing pedagogy in English schools, given that their lack of enthusiasm for writing could influence their own pupils. Clearly, there is both a serious need to address the issue of how best to teach writing and a need for pupils’ affective responses, as writers, to be considered as part of the issue. In order to formulate an effective writing pedagogy and accompanying national policy on writing, there is perhaps a need for collaboration between teachers, researchers and academics in the field of literacy education.

How did pupils feel when an adult helped them with their writing?

The majority of pupils welcomed adult support for their writing. Amongst the 70% of pupils who gave positive responses, the predominant single reason was because of the help they were given with the spelling of words of which they were unsure. This was also given as the major reason by the 67% of pupils in the second phase who generally felt happy to receive adult support. However, pupils in this cohort seemed

more inclined to feel happy when they had requested support themselves, rather than being given it automatically. A small number of pupils said it made them feel less anxious about writing. Across both phases of the project, only one child said it made them feel special because (s)he received more attention. Amongst less positive responses were feelings of embarrassment, largely because the pupils did not like an adult looking at their writing. Around eleven percent of pupils in each phase admitted to feelings of embarrassment. Other responses included; anger; confusion and nausea which accounted for less than 7% of pupils in the first phase but rose to 18% in the second phase. This increase may again be due to pupils desire to be self reliant or a feeling that receiving adult support dented their self esteem. The remainder either did not respond to the question or could not give a definitive answer.

Responses to this question, once again, seem to confirm the impediment unknown spellings have on the young writer's inability to compose. This appears to suggest some children internalize awareness that spelling rather than expression of ideas is a fundamental feature of writing. This notion is discussed below in the light of conflicting evidence in this matter.

Using a mind map as a planning tool for writing?

As state above, pupils in the first phase were asked about the affect on them of using a mind map. The majority of pupils (73%) liked using them for a variety of reasons. Just over 50% of these pupils were able to give specific reasons for feeling positive about using mind maps for writing. The main reason given was its usefulness as a planning tool. This was mentioned by 27 % of those who liked using mind maps. Indicative of this group of pupils was one who stated the mind map helped you to, ‘..see a shorter finished version..’ of the text. Other reasons included; the ability to generate ideas (16%); the identification of words to use in the writing (11%); enabling them to put detail into their work (5%) and its use as an aide memoire whilst writing (5%). Whilst some pupils (5%) said they copied from the mind map into their writing, others used it to check they had included all the detail of the mind map in their work. Early entries in Champions’ reflective journals (April 2008) suggest there was a dislocation between the generation of ideas on the mind map and their translation into writing.

‘They found it very difficult to turn key words into sentences when re-telling the story...Nana (pseudonym) just wanted to copy the key word from her map onto her piece of paper.’

(Champion S – Year One

Pupils)

Within the first few sessions, Champions realised that mind mapping was not going to be a quick and easy panacea; that pupils needed extensive time to develop competence in the construction of mind maps before they could be utilised as planning tools for writing.

'I feel the focus of my sessions, just now, are about teaching the 'skills' of mind mapping rather than the outcome. I anticipate that in the new academic year we will be able to move on more quickly to improving the quality of writing.'

(Champion F – Year Three

Pupils)

This journal entry was made six months into the project, close to the end of the first academic year of the project . It was anticipated regression in learning would occur over the Summer Vacation and that Champion's would need to give pupils further reinforcement in how to construct a mind map on their return in the new academic year. One Champion wrote in detail of sessions in September of the new academic year and it is clear that her pupils, then in Year Two, required a month's consolidation made up of four, one hour sessions, before they were ready to move to the point where self-generated maps could be used for independent writing. These observations suggest that with pupils in Key Stage One, it is likely to take at least 6-8 months of 'training' in the construction of mind maps before they can work with them independently of the teacher. Several Champions provided detailed evidence of the nature of support they gave to pupils during this period and it is evident that teaching the skills of mind mapping had to be accompanied by additional strategies to then demonstrate how to apply the map to writing. One Champion (Champion F) coined the term 'shared mapping' because she began by working with the group to devise one map with collective contributions from pupils. Another Champion (Champion J) used a pre-mind mapping technique similar to 'brainstorming' to record ideas and then organise them by means of a mind map. After this initial stage several Champions moved to paired map work. One common feature of the Champions' journals was the high degree of interaction between pupils as they shared and talked about their maps under the guidance of the teacher. Aside from the use of mind mapping to aide writing, it was evident the mind maps were a great stimulus for speaking and listening and it may be that this is their major function in the early years of schooling. There was a tendency for pupils to simply copy words from the mind map in their writing without further expansion. In order to help pupils translate information from the mind map to extended writing, several Champions gave pupils careful guidance by working on one 'branch' at a time. Scaffolded support enabled pupils to then work '..their way round the map, listing items in simple sentences..' (Champion J). Working in this way led to pupils generating a greater quantity of writing than they had previously been able to, which drew positive responses from class teachers of pupils working with a Champion in a withdrawal group.

' Both X and Zs teachers were amazed at how much they had written.'

(Champion S).

Although such responses are likely to be motivating for the pupils concerned, producing a greater quantity of written work is not necessarily reflective of the quality of the writing and could lead to false impressions of the influence of mind maps. .

Whilst some groups of pupils constructed hand drawn mind maps, others used mind mapping software. Of the two programmes tried Champions favoured the adult

version 'Inspiration 8' over the supposedly 'child-friendly', 'Kidspiration' (version 2), because the former was closer to the 'Buzan style' of mind mapping. This group of Champions reported how pupils felt proud of their work because it was well presented. Both groups appeared positive about using mind maps. Those who hand drew them seemed as motivated by using different coloured pens for each branch as those who made computer generated maps. Several Champions used Eva Hoffman's (2002) mind maps as templates.

' As an introduction to mind mapping stories, I gave the children a copy of Eva Hoffman's 'The Lion and the Mouse' mind map. The mind map had already been filled in with information branches on the beginning, the middle and end of the story.... I read the fable.. and asked them to.. follow the story on the mind map.'

(Champion S).

As well as demonstrating the relationship of the mind map to the narrative, this strategy could be usefully regarded a comprehension activity since pupils are required to visualise the developing narrative and chart its progress by means of a 'concrete' artefact i.e. the mind map. If pupils are required to trace parts of the story on the map using their finger, teachers can monitor comprehension. However, this could only be achieved by means of small group work. This activity was extended by means of group discussion and pupils adding their own ideas to the map, thereby demonstrating that traditional tales are subject to change. In the following session this Champion adopted the strategy used by Champion J, referred to above and found that, with support, some pupils were able to generate written sentences from single words. Others were able to verbalise sentences but not write them. A number of Champions reported it helped if pupils ticked words they had used, as way of recording what had been achieved and what remained to be completed.

A minority of pupils (27%) confessed to not liking mind maps and even amongst those that generally favoured them 22% of pupils gave mixed responses. Some 13% of pupils disliked using mind maps because they were confused by them. However, the majority of these pupils were the one's who had given mixed responses, suggesting the usefulness of mind mapping was inconsistent. Another 10% of pupils disliked mind maps for a variety of reasons, including a preference for writing without planning and negative feelings induced by having to use the mind map. Champions also gave qualified responses about the usefulness of mind mapping. Whilst the mind map seemed to be effective as a basic planning tool it also constrained thought;

' I think using mind maps...helps to give the story a very clear structure but I also think it hinders spontaneity of thought... children are concentrating so hard on turning ..important words into sentences that they don't then add much extra detail... and the stories lack a bit of flair'

(Champion S)

This Champion concluded that the usefulness of mind maps needed to be contextualised in relation to desired learning objectives. If the learning objective is to write a coherent, well structured story, then mind maps could be viewed as a success.

However, if the objective was to write well narrated, creative stories that engage the interest of the reader, they were less successful.

The above findings demonstrate that whatever benefits might be gleaned for most pupils by using mind maps for writing, there remains a core for whom the mind map appears to be counter-productive. Experienced teachers know that no single strategy benefits all pupils and this negative finding will not surprise them. However, it does reinforce the idea that a pedagogy of writing necessitates teaching by means of a repertoire of strategies. In order to obviate the problems of time constraints and of the transition from mind maps into writing, one Champion offered the following 'writing programme';

Day One – read story or watch a DVD and discuss how the author approached the subject. Pupils produce one branch on their mind maps identifying words related to the story setting and then write a description.

Day Two – repeat the story and discuss characterisation. Pupils add a character branch to the mind map and consider how they will introduce the character into the story. Use hot-seating of the main character as a plenary.

Day Three – pupils plan the story, developing further branches on their mind maps. Pupils then use the maps to dramatise scenes from their stories.

Day Four and Five – pupils draw on the ideas and language generated over the previous three days to write their stories.

Clearly, this is a time consuming process but it is one that uses extensive speaking and listening to elicit ideas and language, which are recorded incrementally. The construction of the mind map is structured in manageable 'chunks.' The use of drama enables pupils to 'feel' the story as well as think about it, which could make stories more 'spontaneous'. By the end of the first phase of the project, Champions concluded that mind maps required extensive practice and that they helped pupils structure writing. However, pupils required considerable teacher support to generate the maps and then to translate ideas into written texts. Furthermore, it was evident from all journals that other supportive strategies were required to complement the use of mind maps.

What makes a good piece of writing?

This part of the survey asked pupils to circle three items they thought made a good piece of writing. The items listed included both secretarial aspects such as handwriting, spelling and capitalisation; as well as compositional aspects, including ideas, description, and characterisation. The pupils in the first phase of the project tended to identify the compositional aspects over secretarial ones but the difference was relatively slight. The item identified by 55% of pupils was 'ideas', followed by descriptions of characters, which 53% of pupils thought to be important. The next item receiving recognition was capitalisation and punctuation, which 45% of pupils saw as important. A slightly smaller number (43%) considered interesting events to be a key aspect of writing. Handwriting was identified by 38% and 37% identified spelling. The final item, 'descriptions of settings', was selected by 23% of pupils.

This appears to be a positive finding and teachers are likely to feel pleased that pupils in the early years of schooling strongly identify compositional skills to be the more important aspects of writing. However, the findings of the second phase of the project reverse what was discovered in the first phase. Results from the second cohort show opinions to have swung strongly towards secretarial skills being the most important features of writing. Capital letters and punctuation were identified as the most important aspect by 88% of pupils, followed by neat handwriting, which was identified by 83% of pupils and correct spelling cited by 76%. In contrast to the first cohort, the importance of compositional skills attracted relatively little regard by the second cohort of older pupils. Characterisation was deemed important by only 17% of pupils and description and interesting events were cited by 12% and 7% respectively. Although the importance of 'ideas' in writing was referred to by 32% of pupils, this is significantly lower than the first cohort.

The findings from the two cohorts in this study suggest a that dramatic shift occurs between Key Stage One and the beginning of Key Stage Two in terms of pupils' conceptualisation of what constitutes good writing. This is a matter for further inquiry since it suggests that as they get older pupils learn to regard writing as two sets of dichotomised skills, with compositional skills being subordinate to secretarial ones. We might speculate on the reasons for this. It may be the case that some writing assessment criteria favour secretarial skills over compositional ones and that teachers emphasise these skills in their teaching and feedback to pupils because mastery of these skills is what is required by Standard Assessment Tests (SATs) at the end of Key Stage Two. If this is the case it suggests national writing policy in England is creating young writers who see the expression of meaning in their writing as a relatively unimportant characteristic.

The importance attached to 'spelling' by pupils in the second phase is evident but in the first phase comparison with responses to the first two questions suggests a contradiction in relation to spelling. In the first phase, spelling was ranked sixth but previously pupils had identified problems with orthography as a reason for their dislike of writing. However, the nature of the first two questions is different to that of the third question. The first two questions deal with pupils' affective responses to writing; whereas the third question requires them to exercise a judgement in relation to their knowledge of narrative texts, which involves a more dispassionate response. It seems that whilst pupils understand the general principle that compositional aspects are important features of writing, inability to spell words they want to use gives them the most problems during the process of composition and significantly influences their feelings about writing, making it a possible contributory factor to them being reluctant writers in the first place. This raises important questions about the most appropriate approach to the teaching of writing in the early phase of primary education and the extent to which spelling should feature as an element of that approach. The current emphasis on the teaching of systematic synthetic phonics (Rose 2006) is an attempt to improve both pupils' decoding and spelling skills. However, systematic research suggests teaching pupils morphemic awareness may be a better approach to developing pupils' orthographic knowledge (Nunes et al 2006). Notwithstanding the spelling debate, evidence from this study suggests that in order to obviate the tendency to develop a reluctance to write, in some pupils, accurate spelling should to be 'down played'. That is not to say it should be neglected but that the development of

effective writers requires a pedagogy of writing that emphasises what is essential to composition rather than accuracy of secretarial skills, of which spelling is part.

Experience of writing outside school.

In the late 1980s the Primary Language Record (Inner London Education Authority 1989) was devised for teachers in London schools as a means of helping to gather data about the language and literacy practices of pupils in the home environment. The Record, which has fallen out of use now, enabled teachers to identify the skills pupils brought to school. Research evidence suggests that children's literacy practices outside school are influenced by socio-cultural background and that when teachers are aware of the linguistic abilities children bring to school they are more able to create a language curriculum designed to build on existing strengths (Brice-Heath 1983). Cognisant of the benefits of the survey to teachers, a question about writing at home was included in the pupil survey. The finding was that over ninety percent of pupils engaged in writing at home. There was little difference between the first and second phase on this question with 92% and 93%, respectively, responding positively to the question. This finding appears paradoxical given that the *raison d'être* for the inclusion of these pupils in the project was their reluctance to write in the classroom. However, Whitehead observes, '...children often display greater ingenuity and determination in their linguistic and general learning outside classrooms than in them.' Her explanation for this is that exposure to a wide and varied linguistic landscape outside school provides children with a greater range of options and the freedom to make personal choices. Whereas in the classroom teachers and pupils are often restricted by '...very limited models of language in use and rather artificial examples of written language designed especially for beginning readers and writers.' (Whitehead 2010:96). We might conjecture that prescriptive models of language, often imposed on teachers by external bodies, may actually lead to the construction of pupils as reluctant writers.

The kinds of texts that pupils engaged with at home included ; story writing (project 1- 56%; project 2- 43%); letters (project 1- 51%; project 2 - 27%); diaries (project 1- 49%; project 2 - 27%); lists (project 1- 40%; project 2 – 27%); notes (project -1 33%; project 2 - 24%); miscellaneous texts (project 1 – 29%; project 2 – 24%). Whereas 80% of writing at home in the first phase of the project involved more than one text type, with the result that lesser texts such as lists and notes were often complemented by an engagement with more complex texts such as stories, diaries and letters, pupils in the second phase of the project were more inclined to engage with a narrower range of texts. It is noticeable that the older group of pupils were less likely than their younger counterparts to write a range of text type, including stories, letters and diaries at home and were more inclined to focus on a single text type.

Many of these pupils received some assistance with their writing at home although what form this took was not a matter that was pursued in the survey. Of the 60 pupils in the first phase of the project, 52% received some form of help, usually from mothers but of the children receiving help 50% of those giving assistance were fathers. A second significant difference between the two cohorts is the amount of support parents and other members of the family gave to children at home. A smaller number of children received help from siblings and there was an even split between brother

and sisters giving assistance. One or two children were helped by a member of the extended family such as a grandparent or aunt.

Although the percentage of pupils writing at home remained constant across both phases, more pupils wrote independently in the second phase. In fact, the majority (57%) received no support, which suggests that as children get older they either choose to be more independent writers or parents tend to become less concerned about their children's literacy development.

In the first phase, most pupils had a ready made audience for their writing in parents, grand parents, siblings and friends. This was the case even amongst a proportion of those pupils who did not receive help with their writing. Slightly more parents read their children's writing than helped them write. Whereas 47% of mothers helped their children write, 67% read their writing and 45% of fathers were either the sole audience or one of several family members to read children's writing. This compares to 30% of fathers who assisted the writing process. A small number of pupils (5%) had no audience at home for their writing.

In the second phase of the project the percentage of pupils who had no audience for their writing increased to 34%, which represents another significant difference between the two cohorts. As with the first phase mothers (56%) were the family member most likely to read children's writing, followed by fathers (40%). Twenty-two percent of readers were siblings. Interestingly, twice as many brothers as sisters provided their sibling with an audience. A smaller number of grandparents and friends were mentioned as readers of their work.

Forty percent of pupils in the first cohort were positive about writing. Many said they liked writing for a range of reasons including it being fun, they liked describing things and they enjoyed writing stories. An equal number of pupils made no comment about writing. Of the remainder, a minority said they wanted to improve their writing skills. Ten percent of pupils perceived themselves to be good writers and only two pupils remarked they were poor at writing. Fifty percent of pupils made no comment about their self image as writers. Responses given by the second cohort were more mixed: fewer pupils responded as positively as their younger counterparts in the first phase. Only 20% said they liked writing or felt happy doing it. An equal number (20%) identified themselves as poor writers. In some instances responses were exceedingly negative; one pupil stated 'I am rubbish as a writer', another said, '..I don't like it and I don't want to become a better writer. Such damning self-images at the start of Key Stage Two is a matter of concern. However, it should be said that the second cohort of pupils completed the survey before mind maps or other strategies were implemented. It was a fault that the survey was not repeated at the end of the project so that a comparison could be made. Nevertheless, these findings suggest that a proportion of pupils become alienated from writing between Key Stage One and Key Stage Two. Exploring the reasons requires further research. This finding may help us to explain why overall standards of writing fall behind those of reading by the time pupils are tested at the end of Key Stage Two.

Implications of Pupils' Views and Literacy Practices.

One Champion reported that the results of the pupil survey had 'surprised' her (Champion S). Generally, Champions said the findings revealed a great deal about pupils that had not previously been evident to them. One Champion (Champion C) complemented the survey with individual 'conferencing' to ascertain pupils' views on literacy. Although, conferencing was a time consuming process, taking 20 -25 minutes per child, pupils appeared to '..enjoy having one-to-one time..' with their teacher. As for the teacher, she confesses to realising she did not previously '...know an awful lot about the children – especially about their interests or home life..' We return to this point below when referring to teachers as ethnographers.

The survey provided an interesting dimension to the research and enabled teachers to gain insights into pupils' literacy practices outside school, as well as their views and attitudes to writing and themselves as writers. There are perhaps three significant findings that arise from the survey. Firstly, the fact that the overwhelming majority of pupils write at home, either with family support or independently, seems incongruent with teachers' perceptions of them as reluctant writers. The question that begs asking is why should pupils who appear to write at home be reluctant to write in school? This finding suggests there may be a disparity between teachers' perceptions of pupils writing behaviour and pupils own perceptions of themselves as writers. It may be, as Whitehead asserts, pupils who are reluctant to write in class enjoy the freedom to write what they want in the home environment. Whatever the reason, the finding points to the conclusion that teachers need to have time to investigate the literacy practices of their pupils in order to make a more comprehensive assessment of their experiences with literacy. Positioning teachers as ethnographers who are able to draw on pupils' cultural capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) in order to construct a more effective pedagogy is not a new idea but it has implications for schools in terms of their organisation of human resources. The survey may be one means of enabling teachers to acquire a more insightful knowledge of their pupils.

Secondly, the finding that many pupils' conception of what constitutes 'good' writing changes from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two raises questions about why this shift occurs. It is possible that dominant discourses permeating national literacy policy influence teacher talk to the extent pupils internalise the view that secretarial skills are privileged over compositional ones and that the two sets of skills, both of which are necessary for effective writing, become dichotomised as pupils get older. If particular writing skills are promoted in the classroom above others it would seem logical that these would be the skills to which pupils attach greatest value. If this is the case, one reason some pupils show reluctant tendencies towards writing could be their relatively poor secretarial skills, since the assessment feedback they receive is likely to be in relation to these skills. Based on teachers' perceptions of reluctance, pedagogical causes were considered to be the least likely reason for a pupil being a reluctant writer. However, individual class teachers are unlikely to have in depth knowledge of the kind of teaching a pupil received from previous class teachers and are, therefore, weakly positioned as commentators on this issue. Given that formal literacy development occurs in the classroom, it would seem likely that pupils acquire dichotomised views of writing skills from their teachers, who are themselves influenced by national policy. If this perspective is the case, we might conclude that current writing pedagogy actually contributes to the construction of reluctant writers.

This would be a matter for serious concern.. We may be unable to influence national policy but we are able to change practice at local level by means of programmes of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Thought could be given to the form this might take but, based Cremin's work with practising teachers (Cremin 2008) and Gardner's work with student teachers (Gardner 2010) re-engaging teachers with their own writing, followed by reflection and discussion could be one way to re-frame writing pedagogy.

The most alarming finding is that by the time they reach Year Three, 20% of pupils in this study had developed extremely poor self images as writers. Although self perceptions as writers appear to become more entrenched in Key Stage Two, some Year One pupils exhibited similar traits. One Champion commented on a male pupil in Year One who constantly required teacher time to check his spellings. She reports most of his spellings were correct but when she tried to encourage him to 'just write' he was reluctant to do so. Of his writing she said;

'His finished letter was super and he had lots of imaginative ideas. However, he seems to lack confidence in his own ability and at the end of the session said, " I like doing the mind maps – I'm just no good at writing.'

(Champion S).

His teacher resolved to give him more praise in order to boost his confidence. Hopefully, greater praise will have the desired effect but this example illustrates, once again, how a single feature of writing can have so much importance attached to it that pupils see this one skill as being coterminous with writing as a whole.

In my construction of the causal model of reluctance, the 'affective resistor' is the essential element to which other factors contribute. How a pupil feels about writing and how they feel about themselves as a writer is critical to their development as a writer. Two questions arise from this position; firstly, how can teachers promote positive self-images in relation to writing and thereby minimise the likelihood pupils will become reluctant and, secondly, what can be done to ameliorate these negative self-images once they have been acquired? It may be that the suggestions raised above, in relation to other findings, provide some answers. However, it maybe current approaches to the pedagogy of writing, which favour the teaching of discrete skills cause some pupils to over-identify with particular secretarial aspects. If this is the case, it would suggest a more holistic approach to the teaching of writing is required; one in which secretarial skills are subordinate to the articulation of meaning. However, this approach to literacy runs counter to dominant discourses emanating from successive Secretaries of State for Education who appear to perceive the development of literacy as a 'bottom-up' process, involving the teaching of small units of language which are then synthesised to construct larger units of written language. Whilst there is widespread agreement that literacy has to be taught and differs from spoken language, which is largely acquired, a 'discrete skills approach' fails to acknowledge and utilise pupils' existing linguistic knowledge and lexical repertoire. As is evident from Champions' reflective journals in this study, when teachers are given the time to find out about the linguistic practices of their pupils, they are in a much stronger position to effectively support their literacy development.

In short then, it is possible that by giving teachers greater knowledge of the literacy practices and attitudes of their pupils and by constructing a pedagogy of writing that develops pupils' interests and skills in writing, a classroom ethos can be created which minimises the likelihood of pupils becoming reluctant writers. This ethos needs to emphasise writing as the expression of meaning and ideas, with secretarial aspects being the means to that end, rather than appear to pupils to be an end in itself.

Teachers in the Project.

Teachers' views were captured in several ways. In addition to Champions meetings, at the end of both phases of the project 'exit' meetings were held. Champions' meetings gave teachers the opportunity to share observations and discuss findings, as they emerged. These meetings proved to be an effective means of enabling teachers across multiple settings to network and to share practice, issues and problems. The consensus amongst Champions was that the meetings were a purposeful means of their continuing professional development (CPD). In the first phase of the project, Champions provided regular up-dates on the progress of work with their pupils by means of reflective journals. Journals included descriptions of what Champions did and pupils' responses. They also provided useful insights into professional judgements made about pupils' needs. What is most evident from the journals is that Champions naturally supported pupils by means of 'scaffolding'. Scaffolded activities or strategies took two forms. It was not simply a case of learning how to make a mind map and then apply it to writing; learning how to construct the mind map had to be supported by teachers. Once pupils had developed sufficient competence in mind mapping, they then required support to translate mind mapped data into fluent texts. The journals also reveal how, by working closely with a small group of pupils over a period of time, Champions gained an in-depth knowledge of their pupils as learners and as writers. In the course of the following commentary we return to these points.

Exit Survey: First Phase.

After almost two years of working on the mind mapping project, Champions had the opportunity to reflect on their experience by completing an exit survey. Exit surveys were completed individually and required written responses. Champions were asked to respond to key questions about the project and its impact on pupils.

Champions were asked what they had learned about the pupils with whom they worked on the project. One clear finding was that it was essential pupils had the opportunity to 'tell their story before they started to write'. The importance of oral story telling as a means of developing literacy is documented elsewhere (Grugeon and Gardner 2000). This point applied to all children but was particularly applicable to pupils for whom English is an Additional Language (EAL) who generally require more time than monoglot peers to create ideas, experiment with vocabulary and to understand the features of writing.

Several Champions remarked that their pupils were very affected by the appearance of their work. Clearly pupils enjoyed the experience of working with mind maps and of using coloured pens to make them look attractive. However, there was a tendency for pupils to be more concerned with perfecting the presentation of the mind map than

using it as a planning tool for writing. This caused some pupils to make their mind maps over complicated with detail of characters and story conflicts. Several Champions reported they had to continually remind pupils to refer to their maps whilst writing. However, we perhaps need to put this comment in perspective. The pupils in this study might best be described as early writers. The oldest amongst them were seven to eight years old. In some European countries children do not start formal schooling until the age of seven and it may be over ambitious to expect English children in Years One, Two and Three to have the sophisticated skills of more experienced writers. Pupils in this age group appear not to readily make the connection between planning for writing and the drafting process, which involves recursive practise; that is continual referral back to planning notes whilst writing. This process may, therefore, need to be scaffolded by the teacher, which is what the Champion mentioned above appeared to be doing naturally.

Although, Champions had commented earlier in the project that it took longer than they had expected to teach pupils how to construct mind maps, by the end of the project they felt the work generally had had a beneficial impact on pupil confidence and ability to organise ideas. Such improvements may not be solely attributable to the use of mind maps. Pupils in the project were the focus of teacher attention and were made to feel ‘special’. In a well documented study, Rosenthal and Jacobson (1992) demonstrated how positive teacher attention impacted on pupils’ academic achievement. A separate study developed the phenomenon of the ‘Hawthorne Effect’ which refers to improved motivation and productivity in the workplace as a result of environmental changes (Mayo 1933). Increased teacher attention and the use of new coloured pens to work with might be described as environmental changes in the learning environment. One Champion implicitly endorsed this perspective;

‘... children enjoy something they perceive to be ‘different’ – that could be working in an exclusive group, being removed from class, colourful pens and doing different work from their peers.’

Commenting on improvements in one pupil’s writing, the respective Champion observed that being selected for the ‘mind map group’ had made her feel special, as had the opportunity for one-to-one to one support and discussion about her work whilst sharing it with others in the group, and with the teacher. What we may be seeing here is not so much that mind maps were the cause of these improvements but that collaborative group work and discussion about writing with the peer group and the teacher helped this writer to develop. This is very much in keeping with the *guided writing* approach recommended by the Primary National Strategy framework for literacy (dcsf online) and the thinking of advocates of well planned collaborative group learning in English (Corden 2000; Gardner 2002).

Do Mind Maps Motivate Reluctant Writers?

When asked if they thought mind maps improved reluctant writers motivation, Champions gave a qualified response. The consensus was that the technique was not equally effective with all pupils. It was considered most effective with pupils who already possessed the motivation to write but who required support to marshal their ideas. It was also the case that some pupils put too much detail on their maps, which then de-motivated them to write. The most effective maps, in terms of motivation,

were those that included basic information from which the writer could draw upon. It would also seem that the more time a pupil spent on producing the map the less motivated they were to then use it for writing. As such, mind maps proved to be a useful planning tool for motivated pupils because, in addition to enabling them to think through ideas, they also helped them to structure their writing. However, Champions reported that mind maps did not improve pupils' creativity or imagination. There was a tendency for pupils to adhere rigidly to the mind map and copy what had already been written rather than generate fresh ideas whilst writing. Any improvements in creativity were considered to be due to other factors such as opportunities for pre-writing discussion with the teacher and peer group; wider reading and development of thinking through drama. This finding is in contradistinction to Buzan's claim that mind maps unleash creativity (xxx). He bases this claim on the premise that mind maps utilise both the logical and creative hemispheres of the brain. This appeared not to be the case with pupils in this project and Buzan's claim appears not, therefore, to have universal application. It was felt that whilst mind maps were a useful planning tool, other stimuli were required to ignite pupils' creative thinking. This was a matter that was explored in the second phase of the project.

Did Mind Maps Improve the Quality of Writing?

Although mind maps did not impact on pupils' creativity, there was some evidence to suggest they positively affected the structure and organisation of writing. However, this positive effect occurred more frequently when pupils were writing formal letters than narratives, although, there were exception to this; some pupils' narratives were more coherent when they used mind maps and they were less likely to change their mind 'halfway through the story' or 'go off-track'. One Champion remarked that mind maps helped pupils to 'break down their thoughts into manageable chunks' which then enabled them to '..keep focussed when they ran out of ideas..'. Another thought mind maps provided a formulaic structure for narratives that followed a pattern and that this could be seen as a useful initial strategy for story writing. One possible application of mind maps is their use for writing simplistic, linear storylines such as 'chain stories' along the lines of the Ahlberg's 'Bye, Bye, Baby' (Ahlberg, J. and Ahlberg, A 1999). Ultimately, however, it seems that because complex narrative writing involves the interweaving of plot, narration, character and setting, mind maps proved 'restrictive' with this text type.

The Usefulness of Mind Maps.

From these findings it would appear that mind maps are effective for some pupils and not others and that they work better with some text types than others. Those pupils motivated to write but whose writing tends to lack structure would benefit from being shown how to use a mind map. However, teachers need to be mindful that pupils do not become over engrossed in the construction of the mind map and include too much detail, as this appears to detract from the use of the map as a planning tool for writing. Several schools already used mind maps as planning tools for topics prior to the project. Some of them also used the map as an assessment tool to identify the extent of pupils' learning. This usage encourages pupils to apply detail to the map. However, it appears that for writing purposes planning needs to be skeletal, rather than detailed. We might conclude from this that if teachers are to use mind maps for multiple

purposes, as described above, they also need to show pupils how to appropriately use mind maps for those different purposes. Given the earlier discussion in which it appeared mind maps assist pupils to better organise ideas when writing particular text types than others. The technique seems to be more applicable to the writing of formal letters than narratives. From this we might deduce that mind maps are better suited to texts that are sequenced chronologically than those that are not. Recounts, reports, instructions, explanations and possibly arguments are text types that would seem better suited to the mind map technique than perhaps more poetic forms of writing, which include poetry and playscripts, as well as narratives.

It was evident that although Champions saw a purpose for mind maps even those who had been ardent supporters of their use had tempered their views somewhat by the end of the project. The following comments typify these views;

‘.. I had hoped it would help with creativity but instead it encouraged them to write a list of ideas directly from the mind map without expanding their ideas.’ (Champion J)

‘..I had very high expectations... I have used it (mind mapping) for so many different purposes.. that I believed it could have the same impact on reluctant writers. I still believe , to a lesser degree, that the older the pupil and the more experienced in mind mapping they are the more motivated they could become as writers.’ (Champion F)

What did Champions Learn about Pupils’ Processes of Writing.

In addition to findings in relation to mind maps, the project enabled teachers to focus on a single group of pupils over a period of time. This enabled them to gain insight into the writing processes of these pupils. In particular, Champions noted how pupils differed in the way they approached writing and how they learned. Allowing pupils time to discuss their thinking in a group situation allowed Champions to acquire alternative perspectives of the pupils they taught. One Champion commented on how imaginative some of the pupils were. Others said they realised how important it was to give pupils time to be able to verbalise ideas. Sharing their reading and being exposed to good literary texts for their age group was deemed important in order to conceptualise what constitutes good writing. There is provision for this approach in the Primary National Strategy framework for literacy (dcsf online) but the PNS recommendation is highly criticised because it relies too heavily on textual analysis and the deconstruction of genres under the guidance of the teacher (Wyse and Jones 2008; Alexander 2008). In this study, Champions suggested that pupils needed opportunities to discuss stories they liked in order to then identify features that made particular narratives better than others. This view accords with Gardner’s Integrated Model of English Teaching which posits that the all modes of language (speaking and listening, reading and writing) are mutually supportive in language development and that talk is the ‘hinge’ connecting children as readers and children as writers (Gardner 2010: 32).

Exit meeting: Second Phase.

At the end of the second phase of the project, there was a consensus amongst Champions that the use of mind maps in conjunction with another strategy was both confusing for pupils and time consuming. They also concluded that not only was the

use of a single strategy more effective than using two in combination but that the type of strategy used was relatively unimportant. However, assessments of pupils' writing only partially corroborate these claims. We return to this matter later but suffice to say that whilst the generality of these observations hold true they do not in every case. For example, the combination of a mind map and another visual strategy tended to produce better assessed results than the combination of a mind map and a kinaesthetic strategy. Champions also suggested it was not possible to attribute improvements in pupils' writing solely to the use of mind maps. In considering the factors that contributed to the development of pupils' writing, Champions suggested the time given to pupils to think about what they were going to write was a significant factor. This finding was consistent with Champions in the first phase of the project who also found that it was important to give pupils experiences on which to base their writing or to draw upon pupils existing experiences. However, it was recognised pupils require some form of 'scaffolding', which gives them the means to identify language to be used in their writing; ideas around which to structure writing and a sequence to follow when writing. Having a planning 'tool' for writing was the key to helping pupils overcome their reluctance to write. Mind maps could be regarded as one such planning tool but other strategies such as story maps; drama and role play; film (literacy of the moving image) were equally as effective, as 'single item' strategies. It was reported earlier that some Champions in the first phase of the project had observed that mind maps often contained more detail than pupils' subsequent writing. This point was endorsed in the second phase. However, there was recognition that recording ideas on the mind map enabled the teacher to assess pupils' thinking even when ideas were not then translated into writing. This suggests that mind maps could be used for the assessment of pupils' understanding and depth of thinking even where further extended writing is not intended.

As in the first phase of the project, Champions found that pupils were motivated to create mind maps but were then reluctant to translate ideas into written text on the assumption they had 'already done the work. Under these circumstances the use of the mind maps was counter productive and may have actually reinforced pupils' reluctance to write. This finding supports the view that mind maps are useful in their own right as a means of making thought 'concrete'. However, when used as a planning tool for writing it might be advisable to make information skeletal rather than detailed.

The Project stimulated champions' thinking about wider issues concerned with the pedagogy of writing. There was a consensus amongst Champions that the educational contexts in which writing was taught had an impact on pupils' motivation to write, as well as having an affect on the quality of their writing. Such contexts included curriculum organisation and delivery. To be effective as writers, pupils need to be able to initiate and develop ideas and then translate them into meaningful texts. The crafting of texts is a time consuming process. However, opportunities to engage in extended writing were often constrained by the nature of the curriculum and tight time management. This was particularly the case in those schools following the National Primary Strategy for literacy but was less of a problem for schools that had adopted a creative or thematic curriculum, which enabled writing to be integrated more easily. It was also found that pupils were motivated to write if they had an interest in the subject matter or curriculum topic. This finding suggests the context in which children write is of greater significance than the specific strategies used to plan writing.

However, there was one caveat to everything stated above. On several occasions, one pupil refused to write. In over one hundred pupils across both phases of the project he was the only pupil who was impervious to the strategies used. His relationship to writing was far more impaired than other pupils who had been identified as reluctant writers. This pupil was experiencing deep emotional problems and it was impossible to interest him by any means. In this case the affective resistor was so powerful it blocked any attempt to encourage the pupil to write. However, the sense in which the term affective resistor is being used here differs from previous usage, which referred to feelings about writing and being a writer. Nevertheless, it highlights the fact that extreme emotional discord for a learner impacts on the ability to write at any level. We know from motivational studies that emotional and psychological well being are essential pre-requisites to effective self-determination (Maslow 1987). The case of this pupil also demonstrates how cultural ecology, another aspect of the causal model of reluctance discussed earlier, can influence a pupil's predisposition to write.

A by product of the project was the effect involvement had on the Champions themselves. One Champion stated that she had begun to talk about writing differently with her pupils. Whereas in the past pupils had identified secretarial aspects of writing, particularly capital letters and full stops, as their success criteria, which she had accepted unthinkingly, she now prompted the pupils to consider more essential elements of writing, such as good ideas. As a result, she placed good ideas at the top of the class's success criteria in order to signal to pupils the importance of this over secretarial aspects of writing. There was a consensus amongst Champions that the project had made them focus more on what pupils could do as composers of writing rather than identify their secretarial flaws.

We set out to consider the impact mind mapping might have on reluctant writers and the extent to which the strategy might enable them to be more effective as writers, but it is evident that in addition to achieving its initial remit, the project also encouraged teachers to review their own thinking about such things as: the writing process; their own pedagogy of writing; success criteria for writing and how writing is best embedded in the whole curriculum. We suggest that collaborative research between academics and classroom practitioners enhances the professional development of both parties, and that this is particularly the case when teachers are positioned as co-researchers. The methods of data collection used in this project, together with its *modus operandi*, may serve as a template for future research, involving the tripartite relationship of schools, The Bedford Charity (Harpur Trust) and the University of Bedfordshire.

Chapter Six.

Assessment of Pupils' Writing: Phase One.

In the first phase of the project we focused on two genres; formal letter writing and narrative writing. We began with the premise that mind mapping would help pupils to organise ideas and structure them into coherent texts. We also wanted to investigate if increased proficiency in the use of the strategy brought about a gradual improvement in the quality of writing. To test these propositions we applied two sets of writing criteria to narrative writing. The Assessment of Pupils Progress (APP) writing criteria was introduced to schools in 2008 through the Primary National Strategy. The criteria were intended as national benchmarks against which any piece of writing could be assessed and assigned a level by evaluating the quality of the writing using eight discrete criteria. The criteria are listed below (Table 1). Teachers' used the criteria to apply a 'best-fit' level to the text. A text could be assigned one of five levels, each divided into three sub-levels; a, b, or c. So, a level 1a would be applied to texts that satisfied all descriptors in each of the eight criteria; a level 1b would apply to texts which met approximately half the descriptors in each criterion and a 1c applied where texts met less than half the descriptors in each criterion. The intention was that pupils strengths as writers could be identified, as could their areas for development, enabling teachers to fine tune planning to meet the differentiated needs of pupils in their classes. We used the APP writing criteria because, at the start of the project, it was being recommended as the most appropriate means of benchmarking the writing of primary aged pupils.

Table 1 Assessment of Pupil Progress: criteria for writing.

- AF1 Write imaginative, interesting and thoughtful texts
- AF2 Produce texts that are appropriate to task, reader and purpose
- AF3 Organise and present whole texts effectively, sequencing and structuring information, ideas and events
- AF4 Construct paragraphs and use cohesion within and between paragraphs
- AF5 Vary sentences for clarity, purpose and effect
- AF6 Write with technical accuracy of syntax and punctuation in phrases, clauses and sentences
- AF7 Select appropriate and effective vocabulary
- AF8 Use correct spelling

The APP writing criteria is necessarily generic in form because teachers are expected to use it in relation to all writing, no matter what the genre. With the exceptions of AF1 and AF2, the assessor's attention is drawn to secretarial and structural features of the text when making a judgment. This set of criteria make it possible for a writer to have near perfect spelling, syntactic adeptness and a command of paragraphing and textual cohesion but lack creative flair, yet still attain a high grade. In contrast, writers who demonstrate creativity and imagination but lack technical expertise may be assigned a low grade. Criteria of this nature have come under critical scrutiny because they privilege secretarial aspects of writing over more qualitative features and can skew judgments of the true ability of the writer (D'Arcy 1999).

In view of this criticism, a second set of criteria were devised by the lead researcher. As with the APP criteria, this set also has eight sections. The second set, referred to as the Assessment of Narrative Writing (ANW) criteria, is shown below in Table 2. In devising the ANW criteria the characteristic elements of narrative, such as plot, character, setting and narration were abstracted and assigned descriptors to denote levels of the writer's proficiency, so that comparisons could be made with the APP criteria. Hence, each level was subdivided into three sub-levels. This made it possible to compare the levels assigned to each piece of writing using the respective sets of criteria. The ANW criteria shares two criteria with the APP criteria, although they are worded differently. These are 'Words and Grammar' and 'Textual Cohesion'; which are broadly similar to, and encapsulate aspects of, AFs 3, 4, 5 and 6. The final two criteria, 'Experience and Meaning' and 'Affective Reader Response', acknowledge the socio-cognitive perspective of writing as a process that engages both the writer's socio-cultural experience, as well as their imagination, and the affect of the text on the reader. These two perspectives of writing are not taken into account by the APP criteria. In contrast to the APP criteria, the ANW places greater emphasis on the writer's ability to effectively narrate a story and engage the reader by means of creative use of language. The one element not assessed by the ANW criteria is spelling. As discussed elsewhere, the writer's perceived inability to accurately spell was identified as a particular impediment for reluctant writers. For this reason spelling was excluded from the criteria. If the ANW criteria were adopted by schools, spelling would need to be assessed separately. Overall, the ANW criteria require more qualitative judgments by the assessor than does the APP criteria. However, because judgments are more closely related to narrative it might be argued the ANW criteria are more rigorous than the APP when applied specifically to this genre.

Table 2. Assessment of Narrative Writing Criteria.

Plot -	There are clear causal links between events, which are told in chronological order. The narrative has a plausible opening, development and conclusion. Characters are the agents of events.
Narration -	The beginnings of a narrational voice are evident in the way the writer addresses the reader. The writer narrates the story with some minor embellishment of events. The narration and plot remain similar.
Characterisation -	Several characters are introduced and brief physical descriptions are given. Basic emotional and or psychological depth is suggested.
Setting -	A sense of place and/or time is denoted by means of brief description.
Words and Grammar -	The writer uses descriptive language to depict time and place. Language is used to create cohesion and coherence.
Textual Organisation -	Ideas are well organised showing evidence of demarcation by means of clear sentence boundaries.

Experience

And meaning - The writer uses their own heuristic experiences with slight adaptation and embellishment as the basis for the story. This may include some allusions to other texts the writer has read or seen.

Affective

Reader response - The writing begins to engage the reader with some emotional response at particular stages of the story.

For obvious reasons, the ANW criteria could not be used when assessing pupils' formal letters. In addressing the effect of mind mapping on pupils' writing, we turn firstly to comparisons of the assessment of letters.

The Effect of Mind Maps on the Progress of Pupils' Writing: Formal Letters.

Baseline assessments of pupils' formal letter writing took place between January and April 2008. These pieces were written unaided and without the use of mind maps. During the course of the project, pupils wrote three further letters at various intervals after mind mapping had been introduced. The first sample written using mind maps were produced within one to two months after the baseline assessments. In order to make comparisons possible each APP level and sub level was given a numerical value. This made it possible to evaluate findings by applying simple quantitative data analysis. Each sub-level was assigned a value of 0.33. Hence, a level 1c was 0.33, whereas a 1b was assigned a value of 0.66 and a 1a was given a value of 1. Comparisons were made by looking at the variance in values assigned to the baseline sample and each of the following three samples. Zero was assigned to instances where there was no variance between the baseline and subsequent assessments. A comparison of outcomes using the APP criteria provides a useful indication of the immediate impact of mind maps on pupils' ability to structure written content. There was a time lapse of approximately a year between the production of baseline and final samples. Comparisons across this period of time indicate the longer term impact of mind maps on pupils' writing.

The immediate impact of mind maps on pupils' ability to write formal letters was positive. In only 23.5% of 51 scripts was there no difference between the level assigned to the baseline sample and the first sample, using mind maps. A small number of pupils 5.9% recorded a lower level on the first post mind map sample. However, 70.6% of pupils achieved a higher level. The majority of pupils (37.3%) secured a third of a level higher than the baseline assessment. Almost a fifth of pupils (19.6%), achieved two thirds of a level higher and 13.7% of scripts were assessed to be one or more levels higher. The greatest variance between the two samples was a value of 1.6, achieved by two pupils (3.9%) and a further 3.9% were assigned an assessment 1.3 higher. These findings suggest that mind maps had an immediate impact on the majority of reluctant writers.

We might expect there to be some variance in the quality of pupils' work between samples of writing. To account for such variations we have assumed a 'normative range of variation' of between a third of a level above and a third of a level below the

baseline score. When taking the 'normative range of variation' into account, 33.3% of pupils achieved levels above the 'range'.

There were 35 scripts in the second sample, 16 less than in the first sample. There was no change between the baseline levels assigned to pupils and the level they achieved on the second sample in 6 cases (17.1%). The majority, however, once again performed better than their baseline assessment. Of the 82.9% of scripts given a higher level than their corresponding baseline level, 31.4% were a third of a level higher; 34.3% were two thirds of a level higher (this was numerically higher than the first sample) and in 17.2% of scripts the variance was one level or above. This means that 48.5% of pupils were within the 'normative range of variation' but that the majority had improved on their baseline level by at least two thirds of a level.

The final sample consisted of 28 scripts. This sample included one pupil who scored a level one third below their baseline assessment and three pupils who had made no progress on their baseline score. Once again the majority, (85.7%) achieved scores above their baseline assessments. The larger percentage (42.8%) of pupils had improved by two thirds of a level and 25% of pupils had improved by one level or more. Therefore, 67.8% of pupils achieved levels above the 'normative range of variation'.

The data used in the above discussion can be found in tabulated form in Appendix D.

The Effect of Mind Maps on the Progress of Pupils' Writing: Narrative Writing.

There were fewer samples of narrative writing than was the case for letter writing. Only two samples of a sufficient number of scripts were available. A third sample of only six scripts was excluded from the comparative analysis. The reduction in scripts, compared to letter writing, is perhaps indicative of the amount of time that is required to plan and execute narrative writing. Letters tend to be shorter than narratives and can be more linear in terms of textual structure. In its simplest form a formal letter involves a formulaic salutation; an introductory paragraph; a developing paragraph and a conclusion, followed by a second formulaic address. In contrast, narrative writing requires imaginative cognitive processing from the outset. There are endless possible ways in which a story might start and although it is possible to adhere to a formulaic, chronological plot, the narration of a story is variable. In addition, the writer has to synthesise several elements of the genre in order to make writing both coherent and cohesive. Elements such as characterisation and descriptions of setting must adhere to the narration, which is affected by the genre of the narrative. Similarly, lexical choices have to signal nuances of character, mood and atmosphere, requiring a writer's command of appropriate register. In formal letter writing one is concerned with the register of formality. Hence, a narrower range of choices is required at word level. It could be argued that once pupils have acquired a simple textual schema for formal letter writing, this text type is relatively easier to execute than narrative writing, which is open to variations of textual schema.

The reduced number of samples may also have been caused by other curriculum commitments and the possibility that, in some schools, text types other than narrative may have been scheduled for study, thereby reducing time available for narrative writing. A further issue was noted by Champions who withdrew pupils. These

Champions reported that because of time restrictions the continuity from mind maps to writing was often broken. Given the above discussion concerning the amount of time required to execute narrative writing, it is likely that this problem disproportionately affected this text type.

In our analysis of narrative writing three comparisons were made. The first involved variance between scripts using the APP criteria, as was the case with the assessment of formal letter writing. The second considered variance of scripts when levelled using the ANW criteria and the third comparison was of the variance between levels awarded by the APP criteria and the ANW criteria. By making these latter comparisons it is possible to evaluate the extent to which the organisation of writing improved compared to creative expression and vice versa.

Comparison of scripts when applying APP criteria.

Two schools collected sample one less than two weeks after the baseline sample. Of the 13 pupils involved, 5 achieved scores of between a third to two thirds of a level higher than the baseline score, whereas 2 received a third of a level lower. The remaining schools collected the first sample between two to seven months after the baseline sample. One school, however, did not collect the first sample until a year after the baseline. The different time frames reflect the amount of support different groups of pupils needed to develop the skills required firstly, to competently produce mind maps and secondly, to learn how to translate information recorded on the map to their writing.

Although there were only two samples to compare against the baseline sample, the results are in line with trends found in the assessment of formal letters. Sample One consisted of 44 scripts. There was no change in the levels allocated to 14 (31.8%) scripts but 4 (9.3%) were a third of a level lower than the baseline grade and 12 (27.3%) were a third of a level above the baseline score. Therefore, 68.3% of pupils were within a 'normative range of variation'. Of the pupils' achieving levels above the normative range, 9 pupils (20.5%) achieved scores two thirds of a level higher. The stories of three pupils (6.8%) were considered to be one whole level higher and two pupils scored even higher, with levels of 1.3 and 2.3 levels above their baseline score.

When taking the 'normative range of variation' into account, 31.7% of scripts were above the range. The pupil who achieved 2.3 levels above his baseline score, started from a lowly base of a level 1c (0.33) and was in the school that collected the first sample a year after the baseline sample. This is a remarkable improvement in attainment. On the second sample this same pupil achieved a level 2a. Which, although two thirds of a level below the previous score, was still one and two third levels above his baseline result. The second sample was collected two months after the first sample and 14 months after the baseline. In the same class two more pupils achieved scores of at least a level above the baseline result on the second sample of writing. In this particular school, there were two sample groups working with two separate Champions but the same pattern of success was evident in the second group, with one pupil achieving a level higher than the baseline score and three pupils moving up by one and two thirds of a level. The second sample of writing in this class was collected exactly a year after the baseline sample. These patterns of success were

evident in some other schools. In a second school four out of six Year One pupils achieved scores one whole level above their baseline scores on the second sample of writing, which was produced eight months after the baseline. Results of this magnitude occurred in two further schools.

Overall, results showed that all 35 pupils in the second sample made progress when compared to their baseline levels. However, 34.3% were within the 'normative range of variation'. Nevertheless, 65.7% of pupils achieved levels higher than the 'normative range of variation.'

The successful trends reported above include groups of pupils who started the project in Year One and completed the second sample at the beginning of Year Two. Earlier, we reported that Champions of this age group had considered mind maps to be problematic because younger pupils had difficulty producing them and then found they were unable to successfully translate information to their writing. This appears to be a paradox because the evidence suggests mind mapping assisted these pupils to achieve higher scores.

Mind maps were successful with a significant number of pupils in particular schools and were less successful in other schools. We might deduce, therefore, that mind maps work better, as a strategy, if other conditions are present and are not as successful if those 'other' conditions are not. Quite what these 'other' conditions might be was outside the remit of this study. This point perhaps signals an avenue for further investigation. What is it that successful schools do to raise attainment in writing and how might this be disseminated to other schools? There is research evidence from other sources that might provide a lead (United Kingdom Literacy Association/Primary National Strategy 2004; Safford et al 2004). Both these studies were concerned with boys as writers. A significant aspect of the UKLA/PNS study and that of Safford et al was the use of drama and peer talk as pre-writing activities. In their meetings, Champions' had said that collaborative group work around mind maps had generated discussion amongst pupils. What is difficult to isolate is the extent to which group talk influenced pupil achievement and whether talk was a primary or secondary influence. What might be deduced is that mind maps provided the focal point for talk with writing being the purpose.

Comparison of scripts when applying ANW criteria.

We have already noted that because of the way the APP writing criteria are designed they tend to capture structural elements of writing but neglect the more creative aspects of composition. The ANW criteria, however, were specifically designed to assess the writer's skills in narrating the story and engage the reader. The criteria thereby sought to capture what the APP criteria did not. In an earlier discussion, Champions had reported that mind maps had helped pupils structure texts but had not made a significant contribution to more creative aspects of writing. We might expect, therefore, that pupils generally achieved higher levels on the APP criteria than the ANW criteria. In order to test this premise, we now consider two sets of data analysis. Firstly, a comparison is made of the variance in levels between scripts using the ANW criteria. This will demonstrate whether or not pupils improved creative aspects of composition during the course of the project and will either corroborate or contradict Champions observations that mind mapping only improved textual structure.

Secondly, a comparison is made of the variance between the two sets of criteria. The findings of this comparison will be discussed in the next section.

Turning to progression in creative aspect of the writing process as captured by the ANW, findings show that on the first sample, 9.1% (4) pupils did better on the baseline assessment. The number achieving the same level on both samples was 7 (15.9%) As on the APP criteria, most pupils, (75%) achieved a higher level than the baseline score. The majority, 40.9% (18) were a third of a level higher. Therefore, 65.9% of pupils were within the 'range of normative variation'. Three pupils (6.8%) were two thirds higher and 18.2% (8) were a whole level higher. The most dramatic difference was a pupil whose level of achievement improved by two and a third levels over the baseline and three pupils who scored levels of either one and third or one and two thirds higher than their baseline results. Again, these results were impressive.

On the second sample, which was smaller than the first sample by 9 scripts, three pupils (8.6%) scored two levels higher than the baseline; four (11.4%) were 1.6 levels higher and a further four were 1.3 levels higher. Not only are these results statistically higher than the first sample, they are also numerically higher. On the first sample, four pupils achieved scores at least 1.3 levels above the baseline. On the second sample this has risen to eleven pupils and 20% (7) were one level higher. Only four pupils made no improvement and a further four pupils (11.4%) achieved scores below their baseline. For two pupils this was by two thirds of a level and the remaining two pupils by one whole level. Overall then, 22.8% of pupils were within the 'normative range of variation', with 11.4% below the normative range and just over 65% were above the 'range'.

These results indicate that not only did the work with reluctant writers lead to a general trend in the improvement of structural elements to writing it also enhanced narrative compositional abilities also. In order to identify the extent to which improvements in one aspect of writing were greater than the other we now consider levels of achievement against both criteria.

Comparison of APP and ANW levels.

A comparative analysis of the same scripts using both the APP criteria and the ANW criteria show that it was generally the case that pupils performed better against the ANW criteria than they did against the APP criteria, although this did not apply in all cases. On the baseline sample of 69 scripts, there was no variance between the two sets of criteria in 62% (43) of stories. Eight pupils (11.6%) achieved a better level on the APP criteria than they did on the ANW but in seven cases the margin of difference was a third of a level, this being within the 'normative range of variation' . Only one pupil achieved a significantly better level on the APP criteria, achieving a score 1.3 levels above that achieved on the ANW criteria. A greater number of pupils achieved higher scores on the ANW criteria than the APP criteria. For 13 pupils (18.8%) the margin was relatively small, at a third of a level higher. These pupils were also within the 'normative range of variation'. However, the margin was slightly greater for 4 pupils (5.8%) at two thirds of a level higher and one pupil secured a whole level higher.

Comparisons of the first sample of scripts following the introduction of mind maps indicate a trend towards greater creativity in composition. As with comparisons of the baseline sample, in the majority of cases (36%) there was no difference in the level awarded to scripts using either set of criteria. However, 22 pupils or 52.3% scored higher grades on the ANW criteria compared to five (11.7%) pupils who achieved a better result on the APP criteria. Most of these higher scores (36%) were no more than a third of a level better but six pupils (14%) were two thirds of a level better on the ANW criteria and one pupil was a whole level better. Of the three pupils who achieved more than a third of a level better on the APP criteria, two were two thirds of a level better and one was a whole level better.

Assessment of the final sample of scripts reveal similar patterns of variance with 45.9% receiving the same level, irrespective of the criteria used. A slightly greater proportion of pupils (16.3%) than in previous samples achieved a better score on the APP criteria but this was only by a third of a level. An equal percentage of pupils were a third of a level better on the ANW criteria but 21.6% (8 pupils) were better on the ANW criteria by two thirds of a level.

This comparative analysis reveals that although the majority of scripts fell within the 'normative range of variation' in each sample, the trend was towards an increasing number of pupils achieving higher scores against the ANW criteria than the APP criteria.

Discussion of Findings.

The evidence suggests that the project had an impact in terms of helping pupils improve their writing of both formal letters and narrative. Furthermore, findings show that not only did pupils' writing improve in terms of secretarial features, compositional skills also improved. In fact, a comparative analysis shows that for a minority of pupils, improvements in compositional skills exceeded advances in secretarial skills. However, in discussing these findings three caveats need to be addressed. The first is that as the project progressed the number of scripts in each sample diminished, which to some degree affects the validity of a contrastive analysis. The second is that the time span between the baseline sample and the final sample was between 12 to 18 months and some improvements may be accounted for by pupils' maturational development. To some extent maturational change has been accounted for by means of the 'normative range of variation'. The third caveat is that additional strategies were used by teachers, which have not been isolated in these findings. These strategies include: small group collaborative talk and teacher modelling of mind mapping and textual schema.

When the National Curriculum level descriptors were first devised the expected rate of progression was one whole level every two years. We might expect, therefore, that during the course of the project most pupils would improve by around 0.6 of a level. However, the project's sample was drawn from pupils whose average development was 'abnormal' in the sense they were deemed to be reluctant writers and, therefore, amongst the group of pupils least likely to make noticeable improvements in writing. It could be argued that but for the intervention of mind mapping the writing of a significant number of these pupils would have remained at worst static and at best might have shown modest improvement, at a level below that of their peers who were

not reluctant writers. We did not gather evidence in relation to progress made by non-reluctant writers. In retrospect, such data might have provided an additional comparative dimension to the research. Nevertheless, the available data for letter writing does demonstrate improvements were made, and in the case of seven pupils, or 10.6% of the whole cohort of 66, the gain was by at least one whole level. The results for story writing against the APP criteria were even more successful with 16 pupils achieving a level or more above their baseline score in a year.

These are remarkable improvements for two reasons. Firstly, it demonstrates that it is possible to not only motivate reluctant writers but also to help them improve their writing. Secondly, the improvement of at least a whole level was achieved in less time than expected. The use of mind maps appears to have made an impact on the motivation and quality of writing of a significant number of pupils in the project. What is less clear is the extent to which mind mapping, in isolation of other strategies, contributed to these improvements. The fact that mind mapping was more successful in some schools than others leads to the conclusion that, in itself, it should not be seen as a universal strategy for motivating reluctant writers. Nor does it always lead to improvements in pupils writing. As the findings above show, the performance of a small number of pupils actually regressed, suggesting the strategy is not conducive to either the learning needs of these pupils or their styles of learning. However, it does appear that it is effective if other 'contextual conditions' are present but again this point does not apply to all pupils.

In the second phase of the project we compared the impact of mind mapping to several other strategies. We now turn to a consideration of the findings that emerged from this study.

Assessment of Pupils: Phase Two of the Project.

The design of phase two of the project arose out of Champions' observations of aspects of the first phase. In particular, Champions had reported on how pupils in the early phase of primary schooling experienced difficulty translating information from their mind maps into writing and that they thought an interim strategy might be required. They also suggested mind mapping for writing might be more effective with pupils who were slightly older than the majority of pupils in the first sample. The combined effect of these suggestions was that in the second phase of the project the research sample was drawn from pupils in Year Three (7-8 year olds), with one group of Year Four; and a partial comparative study was made of mind mapping and other strategies. As in the first phase of the project, all 40 pupils produced baseline samples of narrative writing.

Narrative writing was the exclusive genre for the second phase because it was considered to be a more complex form than letter writing. Half the cohort was taught to use mind maps and produced two narrative scripts using the technique. The other half were taught a variety of other strategies. Six pupils were taught how to use story maps; five were taught the basics of literacy of the moving image; five used role play and the remainder were taught through the general medium of drama. After two scripts had been produced using one strategy, the second strategy was added. In the

case of pupils listed immediately above the second strategy was mind mapping and in the case of the mind mapping group the second strategy was either film, drama, role play or story mapping, depending on which strategy had been selected by the school in which they were taught. A further two scripts were produced using the combined strategies. Baseline scripts were written either late in the Autumn Term 2009 or early in the Spring Term 2010. The remaining four scripts were written at various intervals during the Spring and Summer Terms, with the final script written in mid-July. In effect there was a time span of around seven months between the production of the baseline and final script.

We now turn to a brief explanation of the alternative strategies used by Champions. Film or literacy of the moving image involved pupils observing short clips of film and analysing how the components of film were used to construct and narrate story. The six components of film chosen were taken from resources produced by the British Film Institute (BFI) (2001, 2003a, 2003b) and included: setting, story, sound, colour, character and camera. Pupils were asked questions such as how is the camera used to tell the story; what effect does colour have on the viewer and so on. The former involved a rudimentary exploration of the different functions of camera shots, such as long shots; extreme close ups etc. The intention was to develop pupils' observational abilities and enhance Drama and role-play have been shown to enable pupils to write with greater emotional depth, empathy and detail (xx). Story mapping shares similarities with story boarding but whereas in a story board each picture is the same size, the size and shape of pictures in story maps are indicative of the importance of particular episodes of the story to the whole. By means of story mapping pupils learn how to pace the narrative (Bearne and Wolstencroft 2007).

The data produced has made it possible to compare and evaluate the effectiveness of individual strategies in isolation, as well as in combination with mind mapping. At this point it might be as well to mention that most pupils were below the expected level of achievement for their age. Based on national SATs results, the majority of pupils in the second term of Year Three would be expected to be at writing levels between 2a and 3c. Those in Year Four ought to be functioning around Level 3a. Of the six pupils in Year Four only one was at this level on the baseline sample and the others were a whole level below expectation. Amongst Year Three pupils the range of writing abilities was from 1a (three pupils) at the lower level to 3a (two pupils). A further three pupils were functioning at the age appropriate level of 2a. However, the majority of pupils were below the level expected for their age; three pupils were at level 2b; nine were at 2c; eleven at 1a and two were at 1b. What these findings show is that reluctant writers are not confined to pupils in lower ability groups but can be found across the ability range. This finding is in contradistinction to some online sources which have a tendency to associate reluctance to write with writers' having one or more learning difficulties. A further observation worth noting is that all EAL pupils were between a range of one third and one and two third levels below the expected level, with half of the 14 EAL pupils being one whole level below expectation.

Findings: mind maps as the initial strategy.

There were 17 pupils in this group, one of whom was assessed at an age appropriate level on the baseline script and two who were a level above expectation. There was

slight variation in levels assigned to scripts in the first sample of writing using either the APP or the ANW criteria. Six pupils achieved the same level on both the baseline script and the initial script when the APP criteria was used and there was no variation between the two script samples using the ANW criteria in five instances. Five pupils improved by one third of a level and one by two thirds of a level against the APP criteria and six pupils improved on the ANW criteria; four did so by one third of a level and two by two thirds of a level. These advances over the baseline score were modest in comparison to those who achieved less well. The levels of six pupils, when assessed using the APP criteria fell by between two thirds of a level and one and two thirds of a level. The variance when using the ANW criteria was even greater with the biggest fall being two whole levels below the baseline score. A further four pupils' scores fell by at least a level below the baseline assessment.

Although there was no variation in levels between the baseline and the second sample using mind maps in four instances on either assessment criteria; the number of pupils whose writing deteriorated increased. On the APP criteria, eight pupils received levels below their baseline score; in three cases this was a third of a level below the baseline; four were two thirds of a level below baseline and one pupil was one and a third levels below. Of the four pupils who achieved better results, one was by one whole level and the remainder were by a third of a level. A similar pattern of achievement occurred using the ANW criteria, although five pupils achieved better results than their baseline score by either a third or two thirds of a level.

These results appear to contradict the findings of the first phase of the project, which saw pupils generally improving against both criteria. One explanation for this might be the amount of time available to teach pupils how to use a mind map for writing. In the first phase of the project teachers had more time in which to 'coach' pupils in the use of mind mapping. In one case, the time lapse between the baseline sample of writing and the first sample, post-mind maps, was a year. This enabled teachers to give pupils a more thorough grounding in the use of mind maps.

The third and fourth samples of writing were collected after pupils had been introduced to an additional pre-writing strategy. Overall, pupils in this group performed slightly better on these samples of writing than they had when the exclusive pre-writing strategy was mind mapping. However, this was dependent upon the type of additional strategy applied. The best results were achieved when the second strategy involved either a visual stimulus or a visual means of recording ideas. The converse was true when the additional strategy was kinaesthetic, as in the case of drama. Almost all the scripts awarded lower levels than the baseline sample were from pupils using mind mapping and drama as the pre-writing strategies. Only one pupil achieved above the baseline score on both assessment criteria but this was only by a third of a level. In a further case the result was the same as the baseline level. On the final sample of writing, three of the six pupils in this group were a whole level below their baseline score and one was a third of a level below.

Although this is a very small sample of pupils on which to make generalisations, it would appear, in this instance that mind mapping followed by drama did not improve pupils writing. These seem not to be complementary strategies, therefore. However, the same cannot be said of mind mapping followed by either story mapping or film. Story mapping was the additional strategy for six pupils, most of whom were EAL

learners. Of this group one pupil achieved a level above the baseline score on both criteria. A second pupil was a level above baseline on the APP criteria and a third of a level above on the ANW criteria. Two pupils were two thirds of a level above baseline on the APP criteria and a third above on the ANW criteria. An additional pupil was one third above baseline on the APP criteria with no difference being shown on the ANW criteria and only one pupil scored below the baseline by a third of a level on both sets of criteria, although this was on the final sample of writing. On the second and third samples this pupil had achieved a third of a level above baseline on the ANW criteria and zero variance on the APP criteria. One pupil in the group that had been introduced to film as the second strategy performed badly across all samples of writing except the baseline script. His negative scores were, on average, a level below his initial level. The remainder of his group, however, all achieved higher scores than their baseline results on both criteria. However, achievement on the APP criteria was slightly in advance of outcomes on the ANW criteria. Two pupils were a level above baseline on the fourth sample, using the APP criteria. On the APP criteria, for one of these pupils, the score had been consistent since the second sample of writing but had improved on the ANW criteria, suggesting that for this pupil the use of film had consolidated achievement in terms of textual structure but had also helped to improve creativity in terms of composition. For the other pupil both scores improved. Two other pupils also improved but the pattern was not consistent. One pupil achieved two thirds of a level higher than baseline on the APP criteria and a third of a level higher on the ANW criteria. In the other instance there was no variance on the APP criteria but the score was two thirds of a level higher on the other set of criteria.

Findings: alternative strategies followed by mind mapping.

There were 22 pupils in the group that used mind mapping as the second strategy. Drama and role play were the initial strategies used by half the pupils in this group; five pupils used film and six pupils were introduced to story mapping. In view of the above findings that mind mapping followed by drama proved ineffective, we have considered the outcomes from this group separately. We begin by presenting the assessed outcomes of the 11 pupils who used drama and role play as the initial activity to see if their results improved from the baseline assessment. We also wanted to see what effect the addition of mind mapping would have on their writing.

On the first sample of narrative writing six of the eleven pupils improved their score by one third of a level; three pupils made no improvement and two pupils saw their scores deteriorate. One was by one third of a level and the other was by two thirds of a level. These results were achieved using the APP criteria. On the other criteria only three pupils showed any improvement; one was by one third of a level and the other two were by two thirds of a level. Five pupils achieved lower scores than the baseline. In one case this was by a whole level and the remaining four were split evenly between one third and two thirds of a level below the baseline result. Three pupils saw no change in their score.

Results on the second sample were generally lower than those on the first sample. One pupil refused to write anything. This was the only instance in the whole project of a pupil failing to produce any writing. It is possible that this pupil simply disliked

drama. His scores on the first sample were well below the baseline by two thirds of a level against the APP criteria and a whole level against the ANW criteria. His subsequent writing, using drama and mind mapping improved over the second sample but he did not achieve results above the baseline and on the ANW criteria he remained a third of a level below baseline. Of the pupils whose results were better than their baseline score, four were one third of a level higher and one was two thirds of a level higher on the APP criteria. On the ANW criteria only two pupils achieved higher results than the baseline by two thirds of a level. Two scripts on the APP criteria and four on the ANW criteria were awarded the same level as their baseline scores. Five pupils were graded below their baseline score on the ANW criteria and three on the APP criteria. The levels of two pupils fell by one third of a level and one pupil by two thirds of a level on the APP criteria; the respective results on the ANW criteria were, one and three.

Although these results showed, at best, only modest improvements for some pupils, they are generally better than when drama was the second strategy. Nevertheless, the outcomes lead us to suggest that no matter which strategy is used first, drama and mind mapping do not combine well.

Now we turn to the effect film and story mapping had on writing, followed by mind mapping. Both strategies had a dramatic initial impact on both secretarial and compositional aspects of writing. Pupils introduced to film tended to show greater creative flair in their writing. When assessed against the ANW criteria, three pupils scored one and a third levels above the baseline score; another pupil was one whole level above and two pupils were two thirds of a level above baseline. Only one pupil made no improvement against either criteria. The improvements made by this group when assessed against the APP criteria were less dramatic but still significant. One pupil achieved an advance over the baseline score of one and a third levels; one was two thirds of a level above and two improved by one third of a level. The writing of the group introduced to story mapping also showed improvements. On the APP criteria two pupils improved by one whole level; one pupil scored two thirds of a level higher; another was one third of a level better than the baseline score and one pupil made no advance. On the ANW criteria two pupils made no improvement but three improved by two thirds of a level. Although this group of pupils did not make the same degree of improvement as the group introduced to film, English was not their first language. When this fact is accounted for we might argue that these improvements were equally as dramatic.

Although these improvements were not sustained to quite the extent shown in the first sample of writing, levels awarded to the second script were generally above the baseline. However, three pupils in the film group reverted to their baseline score on the APP criteria and one did so against the ANW criteria. Only two pupils in the film group scored above their baseline level on the APP criteria; one by one third of a level and the other by two thirds of a level. These results were replicated against the ANW criteria although one pupil did achieve one whole level above baseline but another was a third of a level below their original score. The story mapping group fared better. Every pupil made progress when assessed using the APP criteria and only one pupil remained at their baseline level against the ANW criteria. Improvements on the APP criteria ranged between one third of a level (one pupil) and a whole level (one pupil); two pupils scored two thirds of a level higher than the baseline result. Using the

alternative criteria two pupils achieved a level higher than baseline and one was two thirds of a level higher. These findings are impressive, not only because half the pupils in this sub-sample were EAL learners, but also because these results were achieved within less than six months.

The issue to explore next is what effect adding mind mapping had on these achievements. We begin by examining the impact the additional strategy had on the third sample of writing. The film group tended to continue to demonstrate success on the APP criteria, although one pupil's score fell by two thirds of a level below the baseline result. Three pupils achieved a result that was one third of a level better and one was two thirds of a level better than the baseline. The spread of results were more widespread against the ANW criteria. The highest achieving script was one and a third levels higher than the baseline; one pupil scored two thirds of a level higher; another one third of a level higher and two made no progress. The introduction of mind mapping appeared to have a similar impact on the grades of the story mapping group. One pupil's level fell by one third and two pupils made no improvement when assessed on the APP criteria. Using the same criteria two pupils made progress by two thirds of a level. On the alternative criteria, three pupils made no progress but two did; one was by two thirds of a level and one was by one whole level.

By the time they had produced the fourth and final piece of writing several pupils in the film group had made considerable progress. Of particular note were the pupils who achieved results that were two whole levels above their baseline score. One pupil achieved this result on both criteria; the other did so against the ANW criteria. Another pupil had improved by one and two third levels on the ANW criteria and one by two thirds of a level. The only pupil not to progress saw their grade fall by one third of a level against these criteria, with zero variance on the APP criteria. Of the other pupils whose final script was better than their baseline score, two improved by two thirds of a level and one did so by one and a third levels. The results of the story mapping group on the final script were broadly similar to those achieved on the third sample. Three pupils showed no progress had been made since the baseline against the APP criteria and there was no variance for two pupils against the ANW criteria. One pupil's grade fell by a third of a level over the baseline against the ANW criteria after previously improving by two thirds of a level. One pupil improved by a third of a level against the APP criteria and another did so by the same degree against the ANW criteria. In addition, one pupil improved by two thirds of a level and one by a whole level on both criteria.

Discussion of findings.

What these findings demonstrate is that one group of pupils made progress when story mapping was introduced but the introduction of mind mapping generally accrued no additional benefits for them. Earlier, we found that pupils who used mind mapping as the initial strategy made greater improvements when story mapping was introduced as the second strategy. The obvious conclusion is that with this group of pupils story mapping had a greater impact on their writing than did mind mapping. For the majority of pupils in this sample English was an additional language. If we look for reasons why mind mapping had no benefit for these pupils we might suggest that the two strategies; mind mapping and story mapping were too similar in what they sought to achieve as pre-writing strategies. As explained above, the story map involves a

skeletal pictorial outline of the plot; pupils can add words as they develop the structure of the story. Champions in the first phase of the project had reported that mind mapping improved writing because it enabled pupils to develop textual structure. The same function is performed by a story map. But it appears the story map may be a more powerful visual aide-memoire than the mind map. It may be that the linear nature of the story map is easier for pupils to follow and to translate into writing than is the radiant and less pictorial representation of the mind map.

The converse appears to be true when combining film literacy with mind mapping. Although pupils generally made progress when introduced to film as a stimulus for writing, they made greater progress when mind mapping was added. In one instance, a pupil had improved by two levels on both criteria within less than a year using the combined strategies and another improved by the same amount against the ANW criteria and by 1.3 levels against the APP criteria. However, results from the group that used mind mapping as the first strategy and film as the additional strategy suggest the order in which the two strategies are applied is significant. Greater improvements were made when film was the first strategy than when mind mapping was the first strategy. In considering the reasons for this, we might deduce that film was effective in helping pupils to generate ideas and that the mind map then enabled them to organise those ideas into a coherent structure, which they could then translate into writing. We might make a tentative suggestion that film is effective in generating ideas because it is predominantly a visual medium. Many of our thoughts are pre-verbal and there may be a degree of compatibility between visual representation of story in film and the visual nature of aspects of thinking. It has been suggested that when we write we have to transfer ideas from a pre-verbal state to a linguistic one (Myhill 2009: 48). The use of film may help pupils to visualise narratives and the constituent elements of narrative, such as setting and character, whereas the mind map may act as an interim scaffold, helping the writer to the translate pre-verbal thought into language.

Chapter Seven

Conclusions and Recommendations.

In this final chapter, we provide a summary of the project's key findings and produce recommendations for the identification of reluctant writers; future writing pedagogy; the use of mind maps in the primary classroom and the conduct of future research projects. Given the recent publication of a White Paper on education, we also propose a possible model of evidence based ITE and CPD emanating from our experience of holding Champion's forums.

Reluctance, Reluctant Writers and the Causes of Reluctance.

Whilst the majority of pupils, identified by their teachers as reluctant writers, had assessment 'scores' that were below age appropriate levels, this did not apply in all cases. Reluctant writers can, therefore, be found at all ability levels. In this study we identified a number of characteristics that typify reluctant behaviour towards writing and found that most reluctant writers exhibit multiple characteristics. However, a minority of reluctant writers might be defined as perfectionists and it is the desire to produce perfect writing that is the sole characteristic of their reluctance. We offer a word of warning when identifying a reluctant writer and suggest that careful observation is required to ensure that the individual's compositional strategies are not confused with a reluctance to write. Myhill (2009) has identified five compositional processes that are typified by alternate periods of pausing and writing. Writing requires the synthesis of multiple cognitive skills and processes and, for some writers; lengthy periods of thought are required to process new 'chunks' of text. In our definition of reluctance, therefore, we suggest that a reluctant writer is someone who exhibits habitual barriers to writing leading to incomplete or superficial writing over a period of time.

We explain the causation of reluctance in terms of a multi-dimensional model, central to which is an 'affective-resistor'. The affective resistor is indicative of the writer's affective resistance to writing and is characterised by the individual's attitudes and feeling towards writing as well as their self view as a writer. Several contributory causes can influence the affective resistor, which we identified as: physical factors; cognitive factors; pedagogic factors and cultural ecology. Some of these contributory causes are easier for teachers to discern than others. Physical factors include such things as fine motor control and the physical struggle that some children experience with writing. It also encompasses the physical environment. For example, we know that some professional writers have idiosyncratic preferences about the places in which they work and the same may apply to children. For some children, sitting at a desk might not be the best place for them to write. In the process of getting to know their pupils teachers might consider the preferred writing behaviour of their pupils and may wish to experiment with the environments they create for writing, as well as allowing pupils to find their optimum physical position for writing. As suggested above writing is a complex business requiring the simultaneous enactment of multiple skills and cognitive processes. One writing sub-skill was identified as particularly influential; lack of confidence to spell words the writer wants to use is a strong impediment to writing and can lead to a pupil becoming a reluctant writer. This seems to be particularly the case when the pupil receives negative feedback about their

inability to use appropriate conventional spellings. Continual negative feedback appears to cause the pupil to perceive the sub-skill of spelling and the totality of writing as coterminous, resulting in a self view of a poor writer. Pupils appear to identify the sub skills of spelling, punctuation and handwriting as the most significant features of writing as they move into Key Stage Two; whereas in Key Stage One they more readily see writing in terms of the compositional features. This change in pupil perceptions suggests that an emphasis is placed on the pre-dominance of secretarial features of writing in the teaching of writing. We might speculate that this is caused by assessment criteria and learning outcomes that privilege secretarial features of writing over compositional ones. This explanation demonstrates the contribution made to the affective resistor by pedagogic factors and shows how closely aligned pedagogic factors can be to cognitive processes. The final causational factor, cultural ecology, refers to influences that are external to school but which affect writing behaviour in school. For example, it was found that a significant number of reluctant writers described a perfectionists were as they were due to high parental expectations. We might also include as cultural ecology national policy on the teaching of writing in terms of a socio-cultural discourse that influences the thinking of teachers, parents and ultimately pupils.

What We Learned About Mind Maps for Writing.

Whilst, in itself, mind mapping may be a useful tool for systematically recording ideas around a given subject, the finding that pupils in KS1 can take up to 6-8 months of 'rehearsal' before they are able to independently construct mind maps negates their use as a 'ready made' panacea for the planning of writing with this age group. In order to become competent in the use of mind mapping pupils in this age group required a considerable amount of teacher support and scaffolding.

Although the use of mind maps was generally found to improve pupils' ability to structure writing, teacher observations suggest there was a tendency for pupils to replicate in writing what had been written on the mind map without further embellishment, resulting in writing which was technically accurate but lacking in flair and imagination. In addition, it was also found that some pupils produced very detailed mind maps but did not translate the detail into their writing. When using mind maps for narrative writing, pupils should keep information simple rather than making a detailed plan. The joy of narrative writing is in exploring an unfolding virtual reality rather than replicating what has already been decided.

In contradistinction to the teacher observations referred to above, comparative assessments of writing based on two distinct assessment paradigms suggested a tendency for more pupils to achieve higher scores on narrative writing criteria, which assessed pupils' ability to create characters, descriptions of setting and affect the reader, than the more generic writing criteria, which assessed secretarial skills. Although a significant number of pupils improved as 'creative' writers, we cannot conclude these improvements were solely attributable to the influence of mind maps. The research took place at a time of curriculum change and there was significant contextual variation across educational settings. It may be these variations, rather than

mind maps per se that accounted for different rates of pupils' progress across the ten schools involved in the project.

The second phase of the project investigated the impact on writing when mind mapping was added to, or preceded, another pre-writing strategy. Pupils 'performed' better when the mind map was accompanied by another visual form of 'scaffolding', such as story-mapping or cine-literacy, than when accompanied by kinaesthetic forms of 'scaffolding' such as role play and drama. The order in which mind mapping is used appeared significant. The use of film, followed by mind mapping had a more positive impact on writing than when the process was reversed. We also found that although the majority of EAL pupils in the study improved when using mind maps, they tended to respond more positively to story mapping than they did to mind mapping, which would lead to the conclusion that story maps are more effective than mind maps with this group of pupils. Story maps were not used with monoglot English users so we cannot conclude they would be as effective with this group of pupils, although we might speculate that they would be. Conversely, pupils' writing tended not to improve when mind mapping was used in conjunction with either role play or drama, irrespective of the order in which the strategies were employed. This finding was surprising, given that several teachers in the project had professional experience of the effectiveness of pupils writing in role. It is possible that drama provides the writer with affective immediacy, stimulating creative potential with language, which is lost when the 'actor' disengages with that immediacy to chart thinking in the more formulaic approach of the mind map.

Champions in the second phase of the project suggested that creating the right learning contexts for writing; ones that engage pupils' thinking and allow them time to plan, develop and evaluate texts, may be of greater significance to writing development than the particular strategies used. There appear to be resonances here with a process approach to writing which utilises writing workshops (Graves 1983). Writing workshops are child centred and are '...rooted in the children's interests and culture.' (Wyse and Jones 2008:125). In addition, champion's discussions suggested future writing pedagogy should emphasise the importance of compositional aspects of writing, with secretarial aspects viewed as subordinate skills.

There were several additional findings which emerged from the research that were not part of the brief of the investigation. Nevertheless, we report them here because they are relevant to teachers and their practice.

Working collaboratively with a teacher on a mind map initiated speaking and listening which could provide teachers with a useful means of assessing pupils' ability to think, as well as their use of language. In the case of reluctant writers, such a strategy could provide teachers with a view of a pupils' potential as a writer.

Whilst the majority of pupils appeared enthusiastic about using mind maps, 27% said they disliked them and a further 22% gave a mixed response, which suggests that although they generally liked them they had some reservations about them. From this we might deduce that mind maps suit the learning styles of a sizeable number of pupils but not all pupils.

Mind maps are likely to be particularly effective with pupils who need support to organise their ideas.

Mind maps may be more suitable for planning transactional forms of writing such as recounts, reports, information texts, explanations, instructions and arguments than narrative and poetic texts.

What We Learned About Pupils' Attitudes to Writing and Writing Outside School.

The pupil survey provided teachers with insightful information about literacy practices outside school, as well as pupils' perceptions of writing and their attitudes to it. There was a significant change in pupils' perceptions of writing between the end of KS1 and the beginning of KS2. Whereas in KS1 pupils generally identified compositional skills to be important this changed in KS2 where pupils, in large numbers, perceived good writing to be located around the secretarial skills of spelling, hand writing and punctuation.

Over 90% of pupils identified as reluctant writers freely engage in writing at home. In the majority of cases this involved writing across different text types. However, as pupils move into KS2 they engaged with fewer text types.

Over 50% of pupils in KS1 received adult help in the home with their writing. Of this percentage there was a fairly even split between adult help being given by either parent. However, KS2 pupils generally received less adult help with over 60% receiving no support with writing in the home. Pupils had a 'ready made' audience for their writing, with parents, siblings and, occasionally, members of the extended family reading their writing. In KS2 a larger number of family members read pupils' work than assisted them with their writing.

This type of ethnographic data could be used to inform literacy practices in the classroom. The pupil survey could be used to generate quantitative data, across schools, in order to better inform teachers of the out-of-school literacy practices of their pupils, as well as their attitudes to writing and self views as writers. Attitudinal patterns could be identified, providing useful information for schools across Bedford in order apply targeted ameliorative action aimed at improving pupils' writing.

A Model for Future Research and Teachers' Continuing Professional Development.

The recently published Government White Paper, dealing with the future of education signals a potential change in the relationship between universities and schools concerning teacher education. The proposal to create 'teaching schools', which will take responsibility away from universities for initial teacher education (ITE) would make for a significant shift in practice and one that would require careful management of change. New models of practice in the training of teachers would need to be established if academic rigour is to accompany the development of professional competence. The White Paper appears to re-emphasise the role of universities in

teacher's continuing professional development (CPD). Although the balance of responsibility for ITE may be shifting towards schools, a strong partnership between schools and HEIs will need to be maintained. One way forward to ensure that the quality of ITE provision is not lost may be to develop models of evidence based practice within teaching schools and clusters of schools in partnership with teacher academics in HEIs. Both ITE and CPD provision might successfully be developed through such evidence based practice.

The Mind Mapping Project included a methodological approach that might be emulated in future models of evidence based practice. Champion's meetings gave teachers an opportunity to share and to reflect on practice by means of peer lead discussion. The following points summarise good practice observed in the development of this project and serve as a starting point for future partnerships between schools and HE providers:

- Champions' meetings provided a forum for professional dialogue around key themes between colleagues across a range of schools.
- These meetings were chaired by the lead researcher who initiated discussion; asked searching and relevant questions grounded in research findings and literature.
- Meetings enabled teachers to enhance their knowledge by developing evidence based practice accompanied by reflective analysis.
- Through collective professional dialogue and the positioning of Champions as co-researchers it was possible to efficiently collect data from multiple settings, which strengthened the validity of findings.
- The management committee with clear terms of reference enabled the project to run smoothly and effectively.
- Involvement of all stakeholders in the management of the project enabled effective communication to occur, leading to mutual co-operation and trust.

End note.

This research is indicative of the potential learning that can be acquired through a collaboration of teacher academics and teacher practitioners. This kind of evidence based practice is not only a benefit to pupils but is also a benefit to the professionals through enhancements to their own learning and professional practice. We would like to thank, once again, the Trustees of the Bedford Charity (HarpurTrust) for providing the funds that made this research project possible.

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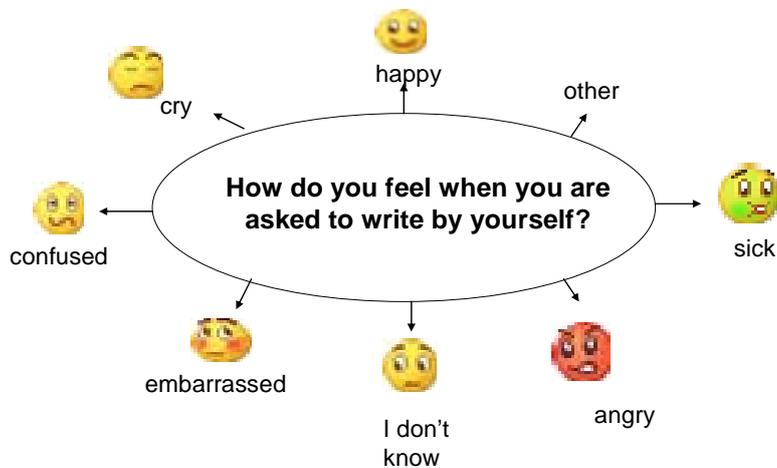
Appendices.

Pupil Survey: Attitudes to Writing May 08.

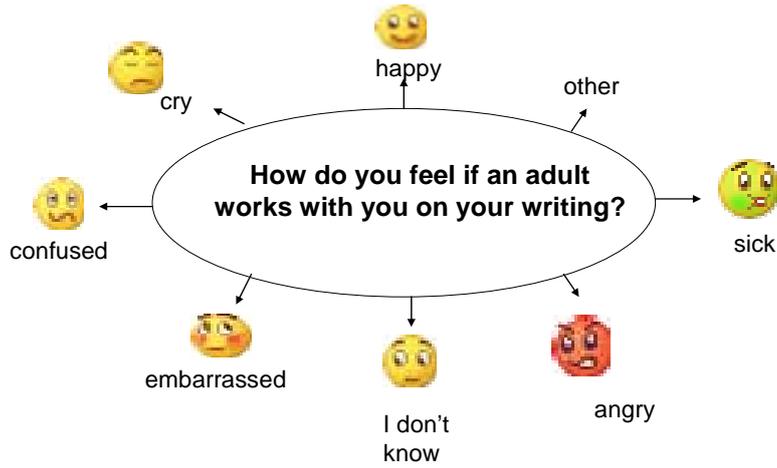
Pupil's name _____

School _____

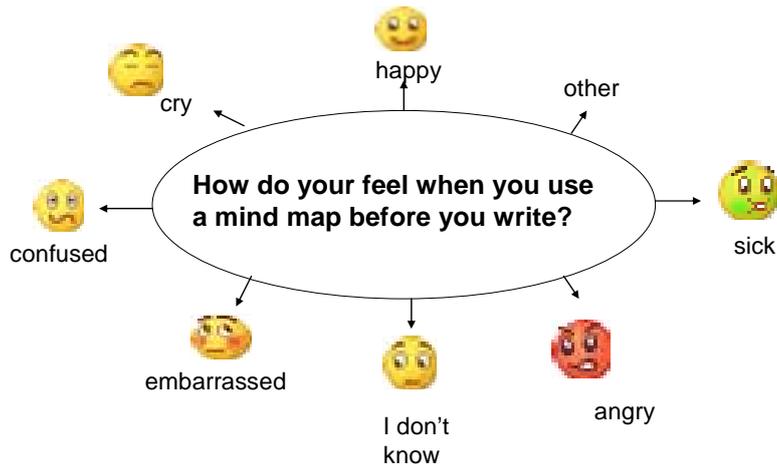
Year Group _____



Try to explain why you feel this way?

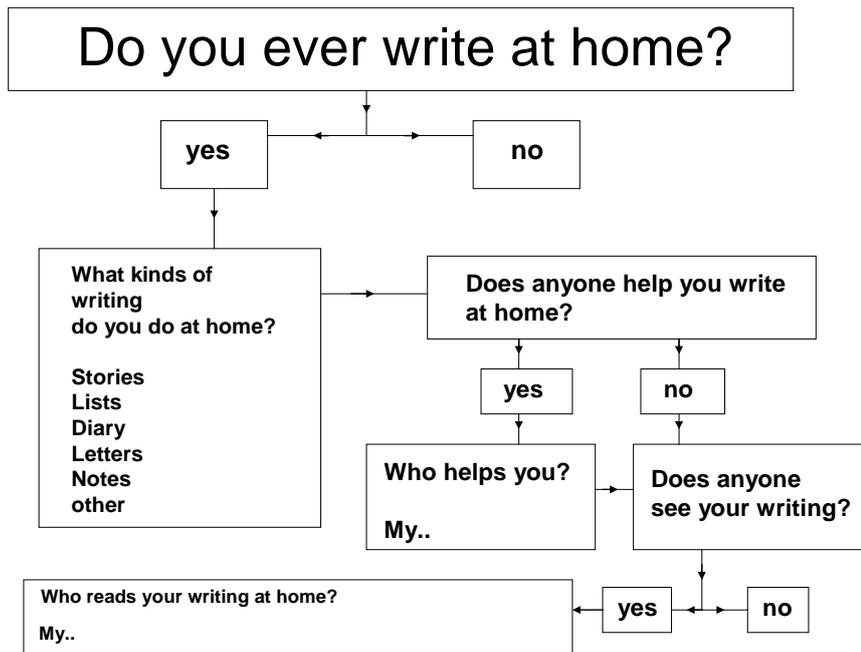
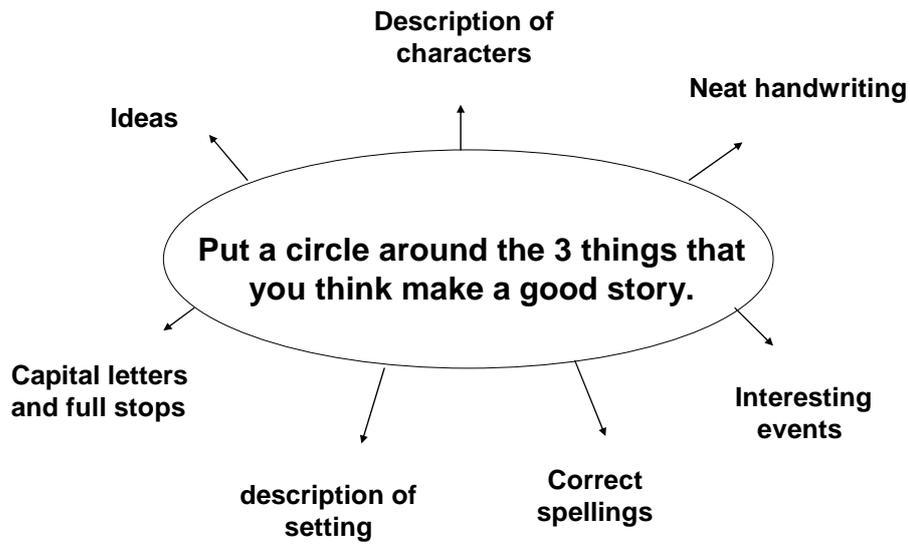


Try to explain why you feel this way?



Try to explain why you feel this way?

Story Writing



Is there anything else you would like to say about writing?

Is there anything else you would like to say about yourself as a writer?

Thank you for your help



Appendix B
Characteristics of Reluctance to Write. – Please tick the boxes that apply

	Pupils' names.					
Characteristics						
Low self esteem/ poor confidence as a writer						
Perfectionist						
Difficulty with spelling						
Good ideas but difficulty translating ideas into written text.						
Difficulty remembering what to write						
Difficulty developing writing - quantity or quality.						
High parental expectations						
Low parental expectations						
Sub- cultural e.g. not 'cool' to write						
Restricted life experience						
Restricted reading repertoire						
Past teaching of writing						
Teaching approaches not suited to learner's style of learning						
Too great an emphasis on secretarial aspects of writing						
Poor fine-motor control						
Generally poor presentation skills						
Difficulty with physical act of sitting in one place to write						

Name of School

Name of Champion

Appendix C

Appendix D

Assessment Criteria – narrative writing.
(Oct 2009)

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Plot	Narration	Characterisation	Setting	Words and grammar	Textual organisation	Experience and Meaning	Affective/reader response
L5 The plot is well developed and includes an aperture, inciting moment, development and climax, leading to a plausible ending. Characters are both the agents of events and the cause. Events vary between those which propel the narrative forward and ones which provide detail.	The writer uses narrational voices that are believable, creating tone, mood and atmosphere. The story unfolds at a varying pace and engages the reader by shifting attention between nuclei, that propel the narrative forward and catalysers that embellish the narrative. The writer uses simple foreshadowing and flashback as narrative devices.	Characters have emotional and psychological depth. Their actions, thoughts and language are plausible and there is a symbiotic relationship between characters' actions and the plot.	The use of settings convey atmosphere and create emotional cadence in a sustained way throughout the story.	Language is used to provide in depth descriptions of characters and settings. Language is used to evoke affective responses in the reader. Dialogue helps to reveal the thoughts and feelings of characters and informs the reader of the nature of relationships. Textual connectors are used to create cohesion and coherence.	Related ideas are sequenced and developed showing clear causal links. Discourse connectors are used to ensure smooth transition between parts of the story.	The writer uses their knowledge of the world and other visual and/or print texts imaginatively to enhance meaning.	The story is a believable and authentic 'virtual reality' into which the reader is drawn. The reader is able to picture scenes, characters and events vividly and is affected by the writing.
L4 There are strong causal links between events. In addition to a definite beginning and ending, the plot includes: the development of a problem leading to	The writer experiments with different narrational voices and engages the reader by orchestrating key events. This influences the pace at which the narrative unfolds through the juxtaposition of events	Characters speak and think with authentic voices making them and their relationships believable. Main characters cause events to happen.	Settings are vividly described creating atmosphere.	The writer uses varied language to vividly evoke images that make for convincing characters, settings, and relationships. Dialogue	Ideas are sequenced logically within clear textual boundaries/paragraphs. A limited range of discourse connectors are used to produce textual cohesion.	The writer draws upon their own experience and that of others to create believable settings, characters and events.	The reader is compellingly involved with the unfolding narrative because the writer engages them in shifting emotions.

a single conflict and resolution .	that propel the narrative forward and ones that embellish aspects of narrative. Events are presented non-chronologically.			is believable. The use of language adds to the emotional cadence of the narrative.			
L3 Causal links between events are plausible. The plot has a simple structure, including a clear beginning and ending. There is some interaction of character and plot leading to tension and conflict.	The writer engages the reader's interest by altering the sequence of events. This mainly involves flashbacks (analepsis). Pace is varied appropriately between events that propel the narrative and ones that authenticate the story through description and atmosphere.	Characters interact in authentic ways, demonstrating understanding and feeling.	Several locations are referred to as events develop. Each is depicted briefly.	Language is used to vividly evoke setting and character. Word choices help to create atmosphere and narrative tone. Narrative discourse connectors are used adeptly, including conjoining events across time and place. Dialogue is used to develop character and relationships.	Ideas are sequenced in a logical way. Sentences are demarcated but include textual cohesion. Ideas are grouped .	The writer adapts everyday experience and or intertextual knowledge to create meaning.	The writer sustains the interest of the reader through-out the story by making them emotionally involved.
L2 There are clear causal links between events, which are told in chronological order. The narrative has a plausible opening, development and conclusion. Character	The beginnings of a narrational voice are evident in the way the writer addresses the reader. The writer narrates the story With some minor embellishment of events. The narration and plot remain	Several characters are introduced and brief physical descriptions are given. Basic emotional and or psychological depth is suggested.	A sense of place and/or time is denoted by means of brief description.	The writer uses descriptive language to depict time and place. Language is used to create cohesion and coherence.	Ideas are well organised showing evidence of demarcation by means of clear sentence boundaries.	The writer uses their own heuristic experiences with slight adaptation and embellishment as the basis for the story. This may include some allusions to other texts the writer has	The writing begins to engage the reader with some emotional response at particular stages of the story.

s are the agents of events.	similar.					read or seen.	
L1 The narrative has a clear beginning . There is a sequence of events with some causal links. Endings may be sudden have tenuous links to previous events. Plot line is linear.	There little difference between plot and narrative i.e the story is told as a set of chronological events. Events tend to be narrated quickly. There is a single narrational voice.	A main character is named and basic information is given about the character. e.g. <i>age, basic physical description such as height, colour of hair.</i>	Places are named using either proper or common nouns. e.g. <i>the park, Bedford.</i>	Word choices may be repetitive and meaning is conveyed through the use of simple sentences linked mainly to the narration of events.	Ideas are presented sequentially showing some evidence of sentence-like demarcation	The writer has drawn on everyday experience as a basis for the plot line. Ideas are communicated effectively but simply.	The writing conveys a little emotional depth.

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