

# Foreword

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**T**he theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) dates back to the 1950s. I developed it to explain individuals' different propensities for learning. For example, young adults emigrating from different cultures to Israel have shown different levels of learning propensity in adapting to Israel's technology-oriented society. Some of these differences are explained by the nature of the cultures from which these individuals came. What is more interesting, however, are the differences in the learning propensities among individuals belonging to the same culture. In this respect, the observed intragroup differences were often greater than the intergroup ones.

Low-functioning individuals among the culturally different groups were able to adapt to the new culture's stimuli and requirements by direct exposure. Other individuals, whom we later defined as "culturally deprived," were able to benefit not at all or only very little from their exposure to the new culture. They were able to integrate only marginally.

Similar observations have been made by researchers attempting to define the cognitive structure of culturally different groups. The researchers found that there were differences that could not be explained by the culture the immigrants came from. Thus, they dispelled the all too often emitted hypothesis that certain cultures "deprive" their members. As a result, we linked the differences in learning propensity to an individuals' exposure through MLE to their own particular culture, irrespective of its nature or level of conceptualization, technology, or institutionalized education.

Culturally different individuals have become "different" by learning their own culture. This learning experience, usually gained through an MLE process, turns individuals into efficient learners. They use their previously acquired learning experiences to confront a new culture. Culturally deprived individuals, on the other hand, have not been exposed to their own culture. They have not learned to learn. Therefore, it is difficult for them to adapt to the new, more complex conditions of life, which require them to use a learning process for which they have not developed the necessary cognitive tools.

Cultural deprivation, in contradistinction to cultural difference, is a universal phenomenon. It can be observed in a large variety of ethnic, socioeconomical, and professional environments. Cultural deprivation and lack of MLE may be determined by (1) exogenous factors, such as cultural environmental conditions, where parents and/or peer groups do not offer mediation or cultural transmission; or (2) mediation that does not penetrate the mental system due to internal physiological conditions. Cultural deprivation (i.e., lack of MLE), irrespective of its etiology, exogenous or endogenous, lowers individuals' flexibility and plasticity. This makes it difficult for them to adapt to new conditions of life through a learning process.

Culturally deprived individuals need a special form and level of intensity of MLE in order to overcome these difficulties.

Twenty or more years after its inception, the theory and practice of MLE have become the focus of intensive research. Its meaning extends over large areas of interest in the human condition. Several hundred papers have looked into the relationships MLE has had with other theoretical positions in philosophy, neuropsychology, and cognitive science. These papers addressed not only the possibility of using MLE as a theory to explain the ontology of human cognitive development, but also the possibility of turning the operationalized concepts implied by MLE into guidelines for an applied system. This system would allow individuals to be more adaptable and modifiable, thereby allowing them to confront today's cultural requirements.

Work has also been done by Camusso, Cardinet, Haywood, Lidz, Klein, S. Feuerstein, Rafi Feuerstein, Burges, and Paravy that focuses on MLE's parameters and their relationships to various areas of human development.

In addition, I have contributed to the pioneering work of Yael Mintsker, Nilli Ben Shachar, and others in translating the theory of MLE into operational modalities of interaction between parents and children, caregivers and children, and teachers and students. The Learning Potential Assessment Device (LPAD) manuals include part of this work, as MLE plays a pivotal role in the LPAD. The LPAD includes samples of change in the cognitive structure of an individual. They are interpreted and used as a basis for a profile of the individual's modifiability.

The teacher's guides for the Instrumental Enrichment (IE) program also use MLE as the main modality to shape the interaction of "teacher-materials-exercises-students." The parameters of MLE are used in a focused way in the execution of the IE program.

*Mediated Learning: Teaching, Tasks, and Tools to Unlock Cognitive Potential* is a continuation of the effort to operationalize the theory of MLE, Structural Cognitive Modifiability, Cognitive Dysfunction, and the Cognitive Map. The great value of this book is that it is presented to the reader as a wonderful paradigm of MLE and the various parameters. A valuable addenda to previous works, it serves educators, parents, and counselors who are applying the LPAD or IE. It is also useful for those in community counseling situations. In general, it is an asset for those trying to find new ways of reaching out to the many people who need a real change in their interaction with their children, students, or peers.

I am gratified by the publication of this book, written by a group of people who have shown their deep understanding and true devotion to the quality of life that can be produced through mediated learning and metacognition.

—Professor Reuven Feuerstein  
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