

Chapter seven

‘Accounting for the negative’ - how the politics of oppression affected my work and how I found creative responses.

Introduction

When I worked with Poppy I was aware that my writing didn't say much about her class and wrote, *“I wrote about Poppy as if we'd been in a room on our own... Writing about one student as if the others didn't exist is like writing about the eye of the storm: it appears calm, peaceful and intense but ignores a whole lot of other things that are going on in the classroom “*. And so I went on to consider my practice with her class and then a colleague. All that went on against a background of change, imposed by government legislation, and change, imposed by the management of the school in which I work. It seemed like I was still writing in the eye of the storm. Therefore the next paper outlines those changes and how they affected me.

So far I have tried to tell the story of my work but read what Harold Rosen has written in his piece called “ The Whole Story”.

“.. there is never, never the whole story. Every story has its silences and, like all language, is governed by what must not be said, what perhaps may be said, what its author prefers not to say. What's more a story is not whole unless it gives shape (and

therefore meaning) to the events it presents. Thus in the very act of giving salience to this rather than that, the whole rawness of experience has to be managed, manoeuvred, cajoled into a form which obliges storytellers to jettison much more than they incorporate... There are no whole stories, only versions, which are better value anyway" (Rosen 1994)

My story so far has had its silences for very good reasons: the changes have caused me too much hurt. In this paper I say :

" living through those changes has been difficult and painful and in having to face up to them I have had to understand more clearly than ever before what my values are and how I can attempt to live them out' .

I hope by writing about what went on in the years I was working on the other papers you've already read, that my story will assume a better shape and therefore meaning for you.

Chapter seven

'Accounting for the negative' - how the politics of oppression affected my work and how I found creative responses.

October 1993

I began working at Greendown school in September 1987 as a teacher of English and humanities, coordinating history. In 1993 I'm still at the school although my job has changed. I'm now the head of the humanities department and have a whole school responsibility as a senior teacher with responsibility for students in Key Stage 4.

Since 1990 I've been registered as a student at Bath University and have attempted to research my own practice in order to understand and improve it. This research has enabled me to develop as an educator and so understanding my educational development has become part of that research process.

I began my research with a deceptively simple question "How can I help girls to improve the quality of their discussion in my classroom?" but over time my concerns have changed to understanding more about the kind of dialogues and educative relationships I have with students and colleagues. Sometimes my change of focus has been because of what students have said; sometimes because of reading stuff about education that I disagree with and sometimes because of the place and times in which I work. I have

learned what I hold to be important in my work: the concept of mutuality as described by Martin Buber and the idea of dialogue as described by David Bohm. I value mutuality because it demands that the educator must affirm those they have an educative relationship with in their potentiality and their actuality. I value dialogue because it expects a free flow of meaning with participants not holding on to preconceived ideas but willing to reform their ideas and make new meanings. Understanding not only that I value these but also understanding how I try to live them out in practice is part of my educational development.

In trying to be the kind of teacher I want to be I have been thwarted not only by my own flawed practice but also by contingencies like the 1988 Education Act and by the management team of head and three deputies at my school. And it's the latter I want to concentrate on here.

During my time at Greendown there have been fundamental changes in the organisation and culture of the school and that is what I want to attempt to deal with in this paper because those changes have had a profound effect on me. The changes in management and in the very culture of the school have made my work increasingly difficult and at times impossible. I have resisted writing this paper for a long time

preferring to write research papers about my work in the classroom and with colleagues but without explaining the context in which I work. However, without explaining the context in which I work I cannot expect you to fully understand the significance of that research and my concerns .

In conversation Foucault once said “ *The main interest in life and work is to become someone else you were not in the beginning. If you knew when you began a book what you would say at the end, do you think you would have the courage to write it ?*”

(Foucault. M 1988)

I believe that I have changed over the time I have been at Greendown. I'm not simply older but clearer about what I hold to be important in my work and in my workplace.

When I started my research I did not know what I would learn and how I would change because of it. I certainly had no idea that it would require courage. I simply knew that I wanted to research my own practice and in doing so understand it better and improve it.

In trying to understand my practice I have learned something about the very values I hold as a teacher and as a human being: those of truth, justice, democracy and equality. I understand that I want to achieve genuine dialogue and attempt mutuality with those I

work with. When I started my research I would not have been able to clearly identify and explain those values in the context of my work. I might have been clearer about what I believed about truth, justice, equality and democracy as a citizen but I would have had little concept as to how I attempted to live them out in my everyday classroom practice.

My research has taken place in a comprehensive school at a time of immense change in education because of government legislation and of fundamental changes in the organisation and culture of my school because of school management decisions. Living through those changes has been difficult and painful and in having to face up to them I have had to understand more clearly than ever before what my values are and how I can attempt to live them out. When the way I attempt to practise those values has been called into question and criticised by colleagues I have had to make a decision about what to do. I want to show how I have transcended the criticisms of others and clarified what is important to me. In clarifying what was important and what could be let go, my values and purposes became stronger. The negation of my values in my workplace has enraged me and yet strengthened me because I see more clearly what is important and how to go about achieving it.

This paper then will try to show how my school and I have become something they were not in 1987. I was appointed to Greendown in September 1987 as a teacher in the

School of Humanities and Communications. I worked in a multi- disciplinary team consisting of an English, Humanities, Special Needs and a Foreign Language teacher. We were responsible for two half year groups divided into mixed ability classes and were accommodated in one large team area and one other classroom. The flexibility of this structure meant that we could organise our teaching to suit our perceived needs of the students and the curriculum.

Our handbook explained the organisation like this:

“ One of the issues we have always explored at Greendown is: how do children learn? We do not know. Of course we realise they do not all learn in the same way at the same time. Experience has taught us that curriculum, time, staff as they are traditionally organised in most schools are often a barrier to diversity, cooperation and flexibility with the consequence that learning can become of secondary importance. It is our firm belief that the modular curriculum and the organisation of time and teams at Greendown has helped to provide some of our most rewarding and exciting classroom experiences.” (Handbook 1990)

Working in such a team was new to me and I loved it. I was expected, encouraged and challenged to try out new ideas in my teaching . The weekly timetabled team meeting meant that we could review what we had done and plan for what was ahead. I found the team to be supportive. With three classes and four teachers we could put one class with

the linguist in a separate classroom and have the other two classes with the other three teachers in the team area and teach them together or in smaller groups. Sometimes all the classes would be together and practise their foreign language with all of us. I learned about my own practice by watching others teach reading, poetry and drama and in the way they talked to students. We became a creative force supporting each other to improve our practice. I was fascinated by how the linguist in the team worked with the students I taught for humanities, while he discovered he was brilliant at role play when he became the priest in our medieval village that the team created while studying medieval England. Of course there were tensions and disagreements within and between teams but I remember those years as ones when I delighted in my work.

It's rare to be so close to others in teaching. Teaching is often described as lonely because you're the only adult in a room full of young people but it wasn't like that in Greendown. I was rarely the only adult in the classroom as there was usually at least one other teacher and a welfare support assistant. I liked the way the tutor of a group of students was timetabled for a session to be with their students in my session because then my discussions with the tutor about their students was more informed and useful. Those years are characterised for me by open, often challenging discussion with supportive colleagues. A group of local advisers visited the school in 1988 and their

report, which highlighted areas they thought the school should consider for improvement, was generally positive.

“ Ideas about teaching and learning at Greendown are forward looking and put the student at the centre of the learning process...

Using any set of measures that can be applied to schools Greendown rates highly. There is a strong leadership, a shared value system between staff and between staff and students and the curriculum can be said to be value driven... The small team approach to the delivery of the curriculum with its built in curricular meetings for discussion and development, is an excellent model...

Greendown is an exciting school with a staff committed to make a determined effort to provide a coherent approach to education within an integrated framework... The staff are a carefully chosen, dedicated group with much talent and expertise to offer... There's a unity of purpose and a real sense of caring... These are exciting years ahead.”

(Advisers' report April 1988)

The management team of the school was part of all this for the head and deputies were members of teaching teams and attended team meetings. This meant that they had first hand experience in the current concerns of classroom teachers. They did not appear to me to be distant figures and seemed interested and supportive of the kind of work I was trying to do.

A group of HMI made a visit to the school in June 1988 and made a verbal report to the management team who wrote an account of the HMI's observations. They wrote “ *The*

ideas offered for future development were helpful and should enable each member of staff and each curriculum school to develop the methodology and planning to improve our current practice..." A number of issues of concern were raised such as the use of specialist teaching, progression in modules and so on but the management team communicated a trust that issues would be considered and acted upon. Their report did not demand that staff work in a particular way but raised what the HMI saw as problematic for discussion: *...' There are clearly a number of areas which we need to work on. Each of these is well within our expertise and the general staffing and team structures already in existence, for example, we need to look at the whole issue of writing - its purpose and 'correctness'. When do we look at accuracy, spelling etc?... Other areas will no doubt come to mind as we progress... Lastly, we must refer again to the very first thing that the HMI said - the direct reference to the hard work, dedication and professionalism of this staff.'* (report HMI visit June 1988).

My first years at Greendown were a time of questions, reflection and action. I was not engaged in systematic research and had not yet been introduced to action research but it was a time of what I would now call reconnaissance and exploration of my practice.

In my first year at the school I worked in a team with Andy Larter . We wrote an article about our work that shows the kinds of concerns we had then. The article was entitled *"The answer is often another question: towards a heuristic curriculum"* and began with a quotation from M.F.D. Young :

“Perhaps the organisation of knowledge implicit in our own curricula is so much a part of our taken for granted world that we are unable to conceive of alternatives” (Young 1971). It continued “Is there an alternative view of the school curriculum? We think there is and that we are working towards such alternatives at Greendown. This article is about some of the theory and practice of teaching and learning that goes on here. We constantly ask ourselves the question, “ how do we attempt to improve the process of education?’ so that all we do is under scrutiny and not taken for granted”

(Larter and Holley 1988)

In trying to improve my practice I felt encouraged by others. At this time the very culture of the school was one of cooperation; the ‘we’ of our question “ how do we improve the process of education?’ was *all* the staff: management and teachers. Between 1989 to 1991 I began to research my practice in a much more systematic and public way because of the newly formed Action Research group at school and my registration as an MPhil student at Bath University. To me, this seemed a good way of coping with what was happening to education because of government policies.

After the 1988 Education Act, the imposition of the National Curriculum and proposals for teacher appraisal a few of us at Greendown felt the need for some kind of mutual support

group to explore questions about our educational values and the nature of teaching and learning. Andy Larter had completed his MPhil at Bath University and suggested that a colleague from there, Jack Whitehead be invited to talk in a meeting about classroom based action research. Ian Matthews, the headteacher, gave his full support to the setting up of such a group and he attended the meeting.

By January 1990 ten teachers were registered for a higher degree: nine at Bath and one at Portsmouth Polytechnic. We were funded by a combination of the school INSET budget; the LEA and TVEI. Those ten were the core of the school's Action Research group but others were welcome if they wished to join the discussions.

All submissions to the University of Bath had contained this statement:

“ Action enquiries of staff associated with Greendown and other local schools have focussed upon questions concerned with improving the quality of students' learning. The implementation and evaluation of our institutional development plans contain a commitment to monitor and evaluate the quality of our students' learning. [The enquiries have] been agreed with the Head and management team and should contribute to this evaluation.”

Clearly then, the institution backed the work of the group. Each member of the group had their own research question. Mine was "*How do I improve the quality of group work on oracy and gender?*". The head and one of the deputies had also registered. The head's question was "*How can I improve the quality of evaluation of student progress and create strategies for monitoring this progress in my work as a headteacher?*".

The deputy's was "*How can I evaluate the existing teaching strategies in my school and then introduce and evaluate the value of active learning strategies?*".

I wasn't that bothered about what they were researching: what interested me was that they were prepared to attend Action Research meetings, write papers and discuss their work. My sense of equality delighted in the kind of open questioning that went on in the group when young, newly qualified teachers could question the headteacher about his work. When Ian Matthews wrote "*My problem as a head has always been to try to find out exactly what type of learning experience students are receiving, whilst at the same time acting as general manager of the whole institution*" (Matthews 1990) he expected a response from the group and at the end of his paper he was explicit about what support he wanted by writing "*I would like some feedback on this issue of 'positive attitude to school'..... I would also like the group's guidance on what you expect to see I need to improve my questionnaire.....*"

This business of opening up our work to each other in this way was new and exciting to me. It wasn't always easy because there was a delicate balance to be struck between maintaining a friendly, supportive attitude to each other and being critical of our work in a way that helped us to make progress but even when it was difficult I knew it was worth doing. We seemed to be striving to engage in what David Bohm called 'real dialogue' when...

"If people are able to engage in a real dialogue, then there can be a free flow of meaning, in which there can arise a creatively new common pool, that allows the group to move together in a coherent and intelligent way. This will happen when people are able to face their disagreements without either confrontation or polite avoidance of the issue, and when they are willing to explore together points of view to which they may not personally subscribe..." (Bohm 1989)

At the same time as the group was being established the management team were considering ways to evaluate teaching in the school. In a document prepared for the Staff Meeting of 17th September 1989 a system of review and development was proposed. The document was to all staff from the management team in it these statements were made:

"Review and Development at Greendown recognises that school is a social context and teaching a highly personal activity within a dynamic setting. Review and development ...

therefore strives to be a participative process of mutual understanding and the building of a shared vision for the future.

Many of the dominant forms of evaluation in teaching are individualistic, create competitive relations amongst teachers and minimise dialogue. At Greendown we plan in teams, teach in teams, have open plan areas and can build on a tradition of an open and constructively critical community. It makes sense therefore that the Review and Development systems build upon these shared structures.”

A working party of staff was set up to put together a review and development structure and their report was accepted after full discussion by staff and management.

I liked the proposals for Review and Development because it linked in with my research work. All staff were given a review and development planner and nothing in it contradicted what I was trying to do in researching my own practice:

“A review and development planner

- 1. What do I want to get better at as a member of Greendown staff?*
- 2. What have I experienced or seen that gives me that concern?*
- 3. What do I intend to do in order to improve in this area of my work?*
- 4. How will I find out if I have improved my work? What can I use to show that my students' education has improved?*
- 5. How will I describe this process so that it informs colleagues of what I have done?”*

Review and development was for all teaching staff from the head to the newest member of staff. I saw it as an attempt to get everyone to account for what they were doing and to state how they were going to improve it and it encouraged and demanded dialogue.

Those years between 1987 and 1991 marked an important time in my educational development. I was learning about my practice through my research in a school where the research process appeared to be understood and was part of an institutional development plan. As I tried to understand how to improve the quality of dialogue between myself and my students I was aware of the same processes when I talked to colleagues. It wasn't an easy time in many ways as the deputy head in charge of the School of Humanities and Communications was ill and eventually left so that there was a lot of extra routine work to be done as well as the immensity of the task of dealing with government policy on education.

The end of 1991 was significant for me as it seemed to mark the time when Greendown began to change in ways I did not like. The school seemed to be taking on a new direction that I was uneasy with and I'd like to explain what went on and why I felt as I did. I don't want to even try to explain the motivation of others for that is for them to write about. What I'm bothered about is how the actions of those in the management team

who felt they were working in the best interests of the school resulted in me feeling that my values were being denied in practice.

In 1992 a number of events and decisions took place in Greendown over which I had no control : the appointment of a new deputy head to lead the school of Humanities and Communications; an HMI inspection and the introduction of a new monitoring and evaluation scheme. These, combined with government legislation in education affected my life in school. 'Clinging to the wreckage' is a good description of how I felt at this time because my research had progressed to a point where I was confident about the nature and need for true dialogue between those engaged in trying to understand and to improve their practice and I was becoming more confident about holding up my practice to public criticism. However, my development was taking place in a school where management, their language and decisions seemed to me to be closing down the possibilities for dialogue and creating a culture where it was increasingly difficult to be open about error.

The changes taking place in school were part of what was happening outside it. To some commentators government legislation including the 1988 Education Reform Act were part of a social revolution. When I write of a social revolution I have in mind that described by

Stuart Hall in the last issue of "Marxism Today" when he wrote about the effects of Thatcherism in Britain.

"Thatcherism's 'success' means that we are still living in the aftermath of its social revolution: in particular of that new social regime which Thatcher installed in civil society and public and institutional life".

Hall argued that Thatcher had a long term project of reconstruction in society which he described as a 'hegemonic form of politics' after Gramsci. The project was to make 'the market' the organising principle of social life and

"the main thrust of reform is most vivid and penetrating in the public sector. There is not a school, hospital, social service department, polytechnic or college in the country which has not been so remodelled. The practices of daily life, the professional ethics, the language which is spoken in meetings, the way documents are prepared, work routines designed and priorities defined and fixed have been totally reframed".

Hall saw the new managers speaking the discourse of "managerialism" influencing the ways institutions like schools worked :

"Most people spend their waking hours learning the new language of cost effectiveness, quality audits, performance indicators and the rest of managerial newspeak... Ways of thinking, formulating strategies and defining objectives which reflect the actual practices they are engaged in have become 'lost languages', and a whole new form of institutional newspeak has been born"

In this year the language and practices of the school certainly changed. Until the end of 1991 I had been a *coordinator* of Humanities with *responsibility* for history working in a *multi - disciplinary team* of teachers *teaching* an *integrated* course of humanities and English in the School of Humanities and I was working to a *Director* of the curriculum school: by the end of 1992 I was redefined as a *Head* of Humanities, subject *leader* for history working in a *department of specialists to deliver* a curriculum based on the Programmes of Study defined by the national curriculum. English and Humanities were no longer to be taught in an integrated way and teams and team meetings were swept away by departments and department meetings. The curriculum school was re-named the School of Humanities and *Language* managed by a *deputy head*.

To me there is a qualitative difference between a coordinator and a head of department; a team and a department; having a responsibility and being a leader; teaching and delivering. The words 'coordinate, work in a team, having responsibility, teaching' seem to expect cooperation, participation, talk and judgment: while the words 'head, department, leader, delivering' seem to expect efficiency and hierarchy.

The new deputy head of the curriculum school outlined a planning structure in which he wrote that units of work or modules should now be outlined and '*submitted*' to him for

approval and that while teachers should use *'their individual strengths in teaching'* if they wished to teach in a way other than that in the module plan they should seek approval from those who wrote the module. That kind of control dismayed me because it seemed to show a lack of trust in people to exercise a professional judgment about their work. In the language he used there was a shift to a hierarchical model of management . I did not expect humanities teachers to 'submit' to my judgment and I would not 'submit' to anyone else's.

There was a real conflict for me in such a structure as the importance of dialogue was central to my work and to my research . Those administering such structures denied the importance of dialogue for the management was not interested in creating meaning through dialogue with others, only in imposing their own meaning upon others.

In March 1992 the school was inspected by HMI and their critical report accelerated the pace of management's changes in the way the school was run. Staff were told that the management team intended "*a review of many of our procedures, working practices, organisation and staff structures*".

By May 1992 a series of "Indicators of Professional Competence (classroom performance)" had been formulated and were to be used by the management team in an

evaluation of teachers in a series of classroom observations. Their aim was to improve the quality of education at the school but instead of quality being defined and improved through practice and dialogue, quality was defined by the management team and that definition was imposed upon us all. In a letter to parents this new system was described like this:

“ Greendown has in effect been redesigned to enable better staff and student performance... one result of this has been the introduction of systems for ‘ quality control ‘ to regularly check and assess the quality of teaching”. (1992)

This system of quality control consisted of the management team naming a student and then monitoring some of the sessions s/he attended in a week. Monitoring a session meant the head or a deputy sitting in a session and filling in a series of statements on a form. Teachers were supposed to be seen before and after sessions for some kind of discussion although this was not always possible in practice because of the busy lives every one led. At the end of the designated monitoring week a general report was written on what had been seen and specific concerns were highlighted for heads of departments and teachers.

The performance indicators were these: they were divided into basic and higher

indicators. The basic ones began:

1. The lesson began on time
2. A class register was taken
3. Students were made aware of the lesson objectives

and continued through 14 points when the higher indicators took over:

15. The teacher had planned the room layout to facilitate the particular teaching strategies to be employed.... and so on for 25 points.

This kind of monitoring was not popular amongst staff for there was a view that such a system was punitive and it could not support professional development. It contrasted badly with the appraisal system that was in place in the school where the emphasis was on support and development.

At this time I was engaged in appraisal work with one of the humanities department and we were spending a lot of time discussing how to define quality and how to support students in their writing. The process of appraisal threw into sharp contrast the whole business of monitoring. Monitoring, as I saw it, was a system of surveillance which measured a teacher's competence against a set of criteria defined by the management

team: appraisal was about reflective understanding, collaboration and dialogue between teachers. Management saw monitoring as being '*objective and hard edged*'. I was told by the head that dialogue and support was '*soft*'.

I tend to agree with John Elliott in his writing about Performance Indicators when he said that they were of little use in teaching because ... "*what makes the difference between excellence and mere technical competence are highly personal and idiosyncratic elements which individuals bring to the way they perform their professional roles. The notion of PIs cannot accommodate this fact*" (Elliott 1990)

I don't think I was interested in anything different from the management team: the improvement of the quality of education of our students through the development of the professionalism of staff. We were in conflict about the way that could be achieved.

It seemed to me that the management team was not only reconstructing the teaching staff as a staff of technicians who had to operate various systems but was also reconstructing itself as an elite administrative group. I like the way Stephen Ball has described what management entails because it fits so well at Greendown. He calls management :

"a professional, professionalising discourse which allows its speakers... to lay exclusive claims to certain sorts of expertise... and to a set of procedures that casts others, subordinates, as objects of the discourse and the recipients of those procedures...

Management is a theoretical and practical technology of rationality geared to efficiency, practicality and control... It represents the bureaucratisation of the structure of control via job descriptions, line management relations and the establishment of fixed flows of communication “[Ball ,S. 1990]

My job brief for the academic year 1992 to 1993 specified my job title, salary and duties.

It fixed, as Ball says, line management relations, communication channels and

bureaucratized the control structure. My duties were split up into sections : General

duties were:

“reflecting the school aims in all aspects of teaching and other duties; teaching and assessing students’ progress and contributing to meetings and discussions and adhering to the management systems necessary to ensure the effective development of the work of the school as a whole”.

My other duties as a head of department and Key Stage Senior Teacher were also

specified as were my lines of accountability. As a teacher and a head of department I

was accountable to the head and one of the deputies and as a Key Stage Leader to

another deputy. There was no mention of my accountability to those people who worked

in the Humanities department or in Key Stage 4. Accountability was only upwards.

Humanities teachers and tutors in Key Stage 4 were told they were accountable to me.

Accountability seemed to represent the bureaucracy of lists: and this bothered me for

accountability seemed to link me to other people and yet at the same time it left people out of the reckoning.

The Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality helped my thinking in his writing *..”formalising accountability through legal, organisational or political structures gives no guarantee of quality. It may clarify who is responsible for what and give a possibly spurious impression of efficiency. but unless that is matched by an internalised commitment to improved performance - a combination of professional values and emotional and moral force - there will be mismatch and tension but little creativity”*. [Day 1992].

My job brief also required me to take part in appraisal and said that I was “ *subject to a monitoring process intended to identify and develop good practice as defined by a series of performance indicators*”. My job brief thus cast me as subject to certain procedures.

If the management defined what good practice was through a series of performance indicators and I disagreed with the definition what was I to do? ‘Good practice’ was used as a neutral or technical term and so questions such as “good practice for what?” were not allowed for. Logically, if management defined good practice then my version of good practice cannot be included if it disagreed with theirs. As Ball writes in management

‘... the assumption of consensus is unequivocal. It is in these ways that effectiveness and management are linked to the political discourse of Thatcherism by a common positivity. Together they constitute a powerful ‘ interdiscursive configuration’ which has thoroughly displaced the weakly articulated concerns of comprehensive education -

equality, talent development, tolerance, and participation - with a strongly articulated concern with efficiency, the social and economic requirements of industry, competition, and national interest... management is a form of organisation that celebrates rationality. It is couched in an ideology of neutrality, but in practice it is a 'political technology'. [Ball 1990]

My job brief for the academic year 1993 to 1994 was a bigger document with even more definition of roles. As part of the senior staff I was told in the document that the school system laid out would be managed by senior staff because “ *Each member of staff has a personal job brief. These are designed so that the whole management system is fully integrated to deliver governors objectives as expressed in key areas of management. A meeting system and line of management ensures the efficiency of this integrated and overlapping organisation.*”

I found all of these things I've described difficult to cope with. I felt overmanaged and constrained in my work. The management systems gave a false impression of efficiency but I worked with teachers who shared my confusions and frustrations with those 'systems'. I knew that I viewed the establishment of efficiency and the development of a 'good' school through such management systems as a fiction. To accept the fiction would have been an easy option but to do so would have been a denial of many of my values and I didn't think I could live easily with that.

The academic year 1992 to 1993 was when I had to decide what was worth being bothered about at Greendown. Throughout the year, day -to - day contingencies of my working life involved me in conflict with the management team, made me angry and upset and I felt that I was fighting for too many causes on too many fronts. Fatigue was setting in too and I was not finding enough joy in my teaching. Faced with the certainties of management my own uncertainties sometimes seemed like weaknesses. In clarifying what was important and what was not I think I became stronger. Over time I let go the feelings of anger about such things as the disintegration of English and Humanities, the splitting up of multi - disciplinary teams and the imposition of monitoring. I decided to concentrate on what was possible to achieve and to show an alternative way forward. I had to accept, and this was difficult, that the creative culture of Greendown which had sustained my early work on dialogue and educative relationships no longer existed and to hold onto these things was to be a part of a counter- culture. It was possible to hold onto some of them because of the support of colleagues.

It seemed to me that it was not enough to speak out for an alternative way of working to improve the quality of education at the school, I had to show what I meant in practice. Those who insisted I was accountable to them told others they were accountable to me but how could I turn that around and show how I thought accountability should work?

And if I disliked the way dialogue was denied by the management where was I showing what dialogue could look like?

These ideas were being formed during the time I was appraising a member of my department. That work helped me see things a bit more clearly and I wrote this in an account of what we did “ *In writing this account of my practice I am attempting to show what it is to work with students and colleagues to improve our work in school. In the telling of this story I am holding up my work to public criticism because I am accountable for the work I do and my accountability links me to others, students and staff. I believe that my integrity as a teacher and head of department can only be sustained by willingness to be open to informed criticism of my work and to be held to account in this way.* [June 1993]

The organisational changes that have been made are shown in the school's documentation of those years, 1987 to 1993. In that documentation there are systems and job titles but their effects on people are missing. I don't think it is valuable to leave humanity out of accounts of education. I don't want to be a silent object within a structure that takes up so much of my life. I believe that practitioner research accounts can tell another story of the way schools work and that's what I've attempted to do here. The management team have not held up their practices to criticism. I think that they should.