Chapter 4: Starting again

4.1 Year one: A living contradiction and narratives of ruin

"Learning through self-study in order to develop an articulated knowledge about practice is a further example of the manner in which self-study moves beyond the individual self." (Loughran, 2005, p.10)

Most of the following writing takes place during 2003-2004, a year of significant transition for myself as I moved into the role of Middle Leader as Head of French at Bishop Wordsworth's School. This move saw me lose the confidence that I held in my former role as gifted and talented coordinator at Westwood St. Thomas School. When I arrived at this, my third school, I found this transition very hard to manage, and much of the former confidence that I held within myself initially ebbed away. I realise now that this writing is significant in allowing me to understand how this transition influenced the emergence of living standards of judgment between these participants and myself. Part of me still yearned for my old self during this first year, the person who strolled confidently around my old school in the knowledge that I was capable of the responsibility entrusted to me. As time passed however, this yearning faded and I looked to embrace my future, with all the problems attached to it, so that I could live out my shared standards at this new school.

I now share with you three key narratives that have occurred during this year. I believe that these will show you how I have come to embrace the space within which I now find myself, and how learning with others has given me the confidence to embrace again my passion for shared learning. Part of the learning of these narratives has been to embrace these situations as opportunities for learning and to love my enemy as my critical friend in enquiry. This is a question also asked by others:

"How do I hold that ~ space open within and between self and others when someone (and I accept that I may not appreciate when that someone is me) behaves as a vampire or a cuckoo? (I very much appreciate these metaphors from Alan Rayner and Je Kan Collins)." (Huxtable, M. 2007 e-mail communication 08.02.2007)

"Our vulnerability, the source of our fear that brings enmity and war, can also be the inspiration for a loving feeling of togetherness, through which our differences can be

transformed into compassionate, co-creative relationships with one another and our vital, living space." (Rayner, 2006a, p.1)

I believe that the exploration and sharing of these narratives has allowed me to learn from these experiences in an evolutionary way. I have learned that success in the past cannot simply be repeated in the present, and that I need to appreciate the current space I share as well as the old in order that I can best serve it and it can best serve me. I have learned not to:

*" ...prepare (again) this successful strategy, thinking that what's served you so well in the past will serve you well in the future." (*Rayner, 2007, p.3)

I have learned that embracing the present is more useful than always looking ahead to the future and that living in this way allows me to embrace the pleasure from my current life. I no longer:

"..proceed with grim determination, looking forward all the way, as we humans are predisposed to do through eyes set on the front of our faces and powerful frontal lobes in our brains, which repress any sideways distraction from our fixed object." (Rayner, 2007, p.3)

4.1.1 Narrative 1: The recognition of work well done

"*I have come to speak to you on behalf of all of us. We are worried at the pace with which you are trying to change things. We just don't work like that here. It would be better if you tried to fit in more to what we have established here. We aren't all idiots you know*" (comments by a colleague in my Department in September during my first year in post)

"When I am working in this way I know that I am engaged in a relationship with the people with whom I am working that enables me to ensure that my practice responds to their needs. This means putting aside prescription and imposition and any preconceived ideas about what I think is needed.

Rather I am able to create an environment where I respond to their needs with my embodied knowledge; I need to be fully present in the moment."
(Whitehead, 2005, p.17)

One of the key standards that I believe I live out is that of recognising *work well done*, both in the sense of giving and receiving praise. This is a value that Simon and I share, mainly as a result of our shared work with others at Westwood St. Thomas School. This value I now carry with me, as does Simon, looking to create the conditions in which this value can be lived out professionally. Once having moved to my new position and school, I was at a loss with regards the recognition of good work as I had come from a school where valuing the individual and joint contributions made was everyday practice, where staff were accustomed to having their need for *work well done* recognised.

Without the other to recognise my professional work, I turned to externally set standards as a measure of my success, believing that working to achieve these would afford me a sense of recognition of my work. In the absence of shared relationships of trust with my colleagues, I was unable to learn from shared living values held with others. It is the absence of the pursuit of shared goals that forced me to look to the outside, to external lists that would allow me the sense of wellbeing in my own work. In this way, during the year in which I undertook training to become a qualified teacher, I attempted to attain the standards for newly qualified teachers. These afforded me a sense of pride in my work: I was achieving recognisable standards of judgement that could be accredited by another in the absence of shared recognition of my work.

In September 2004, I turned to the standards for subject leaders as an external measure of my *work well done*. I followed these dogmatically and tried to tick every box, believing that this would fulfil me in my role. I failed to accept that I was entering an established space in which shared values were already held between my colleagues. I did not listen to learn about these values and instead continued on my singular path, not allowing others to express their views or to create this path alongside me. Continuing on this path meant that trust could not be established between my colleagues and I. I had not earned their trust at that time and therefore I could not begin to establish my role within their shared space. It took the comments above for me to recognise this.

It was only later in the first year in post that trust began to be established between my colleagues and I, as I learnt to listen and to value what had been before. Through the establishment of this trust I again felt able to express the value that I placed on the

recognition of others' work, and began to ask others to respond with me in this value until it became a living part of our shared practice.

Similarly, in Simon's work during his transition year to Senior Leadership at Bitterne Park School, he looked to create the space for valuing the contribution that others made. He looked to nurture this value in others within the Senior Team whose space he now shared. We have both taken the shared value of the recognition of the other and have asked our new colleagues to embrace this.

I have actively worked to encourage my colleagues to undertake their own projects, and to reward them for their contributions in terms of comments and formal letters. This approach was met with surprise when I first arrived, yet at the end of the academic year I received acknowledgement cards from my colleagues; thanking me for my contribution and support. I had given and I had received. Their *work well done* was recognised, and they allowed me the same feeling of pride.

The concept of *work well done* (Whitehead, 2003) is seen as the pride that comes from work recognised by others. As we grow older, our capacity to openly praise is reduced, although our need for the recognition of our work is not. In the shared space with others, individuals seek this acknowledgement and I recognise this need as a reason for choosing networks in which to work, love and to live. It relates to the need of human beings to relate to each other: a herding instinct to come together and be valued.

"I can still remember at the age of seven or eight, being aware of the quality of relationship and in satisfaction in work well done…having a sense of pride in that. When we had the discussion session here with the students, seeing the satisfaction in those students' faces at being recognized and having people interested in them..was fantastic." (Jack Whitehead, 28/04/2004, during the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group)

"I do have a vain streak and so when I read your letter the first thing I did was to read the piece about me." (Alan Hinchliffe, former Headteacher of Westwood St. Thomas School in a letter to me July, 2004)

Jack Whitehead recognises that as a child we enjoy being told of *work well done.* We are given satisfaction and praise at regular intervals and made to feel valued. I

recognize this simple, childhood wish within me. I believe that these feelings are an inherent part of me that I carry through into adulthood. The sudden absence of this praise explains my personal difficulty in making the transition to a new personal role. Similarly, my husband found it difficult to deal with his transition to Senior Leadership, as there was no one telling him that he was *doing it right* or that his work was valued. We both realised what we had lost during our transition from Westwood St. Thomas, yet by the end of this first year we could recognise what we stood to gain.

4.1.2 Narrative two: Recognizing Arcadia

The term Arcadia I define as moments when I am fully present within the shared standards that I hold. It is these moments that I live and breathe for and that allow me to experience the pleasure in being the educator that I am. These shared standards are in flux according to the priorities in both my professional and personal life.

I envy Jack Whitehead his easy sense of pleasure in being fully present:

"*There is this amazing sense of delight when I feel I am in what my purpose is about. When we were talking earlier and your face (addressing fellow teacher-researcher) suddenly lit up, I suddenly saw that energy...I don't need anything else, I am fully present.*" (Jack Whitehead, 28/04/2004, in discussion with the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group)

I have come to realize that the nature of these moments of Arcadia is that they can never be held for a long time. I can always smile at the memories that I have of these moments experienced, yet recognise that they are fleeting in nature. Yet these few moments are sufficient for me. They leave me fresh to go ahead on the next part of my educational life journey, to the next moment in time:

""*What cause then" said Musidorus, "made you venture to leave this sweet life and put yourself in yonder unpleasant and dangerous realm?"*
"Guarded with poverty," answered Strephon, "and guided with love."" (Sydney, 1586, p.477)

In order to experience these moments of pleasure, I need to journey onwards onto the next moment once the sweetness of the last has faded. It is the shared love that I

live out with significant others that allow me to do this. It is our shared energy for enquiry that creates a vision of the path forward:

"Vision is a specific destination, a picture of a desired future...It can truly be said that there is nothing until there is a vision. But it is equally true that a vision with no sense of underlying sense of purpose, no calling, is just a good idea-all "sound and fury, signifying nothing."" (Senge, 1990, p.149)

I draw inspiration from those in my shared life in the creation of a vision shaped by the capacity for doing good. I feel that Senge's *personal vision* is a lonely journey in which the role of others and the pleasure gained from others is not recognised. My husband however shares Senge's singular vision, believing that the capacity for creating vision is an individual task. Where our viewpoints merge is in the belief that the journey to the vision is pleasurable in itself, learning to embrace what pleasure we can from our current state:

"People with a high level of personal mastery live in a continual learning mode. They never arrive.. It is a process. It is a lifelong discipline…Paradoxical? Only for those who do not see the journey as the reward." (Senge, 1990, p.142)

Researchers with whom I worked as part of the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group shared their understanding of the pleasure that they gained from moments when they felt fully present. They agreed however that it was the journey that excited them to do research. Seeing my fellow practitioner-researchers express this so vividly allows me to understand from where they gain their motivation and energy:

"I think you've just touched on the magic word: passion. That's what it's all about, , it's what gets my gander up. No-one could work with looked-after kids if they weren't passionate. Seeing one of these children smile because of what you've done and who you are...now that makes it all worthwhile." (Bob Ainsworth, teacher-researcher, 2004, in discussion at Westwood St. Thomas School)

"It was after that moment (presentation at international syposium) that I was there..I felt I was in arcadia as I lived out my values on that stage" (Jack Whitehead in discussion at Westwood St. Thomas School in 2004)

"That feeling of pleasure flows more easily as you get older...you have been lucky to do so more many things..I go through that with my grandchildren. They are an enormous part of my life. I couldn't have had that experience at twenty-five...my expectations were vastly different. I don't think that could have been brought about by anything different than age." (Jean Bell, teacher-researcher at Westwood St. Thomas School in discussion, 2004)

Ben Okri (2003) defines this state of pleasure as one in which there is an embodied flow of the living spirit:

"*An improvement of the living spirit, an embodied flow of the living spirit...Placing your trust in that if you allowed the flow of this living spirit.. this was very much a part of what being in arcadia was.*" (Okri, 2003, p.27)

The sense of a living flow through us comes from the life affirming energy that we share with others in our lives. The enjoyment of shared success with others can only be attained if we share a relationship of mutual trust with those individuals. In this way, during my first year at my new school, I was unable to share the pleasure of shared work within my Department, given that the relationship of mutual trust was only just being nurtured. I was not yet at the stage that Woods describes below, yet I hoped that the *possible could become probable* (Whitehead, Joan 2004):

"*The relationship therefore has to be established which allows for transformation of roles and the dissolution of fronts. It has, in short, to be informal, where teachers feel sufficiently free and relaxed to be themselves. This in turn places a heavy emphasis on personal qualities, no longer guided or protected by roles, and the whole relationship has to be bound by trust. To cooperate in this joint capacity, teachers must be persuaded by the value of the project, both to themselves personally and to education generally.*" (Woods, 1985, p.14)

These shared moments when we are fully present can also be compared to the physical interpretation of arcadia as represented by the Garden of Eden in Genesis. In this description the pleasure flows from the growth of nature, as I see pleasure flowing as I seek to build relationships of trust with significant others:

"*And the LORD GOD planted a garden eastward in Eden...and out of the ground made the LORD GOD to grow every tree that was pleasant to the sight, and good for*

food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil." (Genesis, 1954, Chapter 2, verses 8-9)

My husband wrote in response to this:

"Also link this to the sense of Jerusalem and its significance: Blake wrote Jerusalem as a Romantic response to the growing urbanisation of Britain and the loss of the cottaging industry. It's also significant that we are having this at our wedding: it's for me about building your Jerusalem (Arcadia) wherever you are: at present my Arcadia is within Westwood (St. Thomas School, Salisbury), but I need to build this at Bitterne (Park School, Southampton) when I leave. Blake reflected on the need to build Jerusalem, as we cannot expect to move from one shared space to another and find that the work has already been done on our behalf. Nor would we wish it to, as then we would be isolated from the pleasure of shared creation." (April 2004, in response to my writing)

I agree with Simon's comments on the need to *build* Arcadia in our present context. A person must feel part of the building process to enjoy pleasure from its completion. There is a flow of energy as individuals move to new contexts in which they seek to construct new relationships, whilst carrying the pleasure of the old within them. This movement keeps us fresh, and allows us new contacts with whom to learn. Shared ownership of Arcadia is vital: all involved need to feel part of its creation in order to truly embrace what it becomes. Adam and Eve chose to leave Eden, for it was not their arcadia which had been built, but rather another's vision. They ventured forth to create their own. Paradise was not lost to them when they left the garden: it had never been theirs' to own.

When the teacher-researcher group at Westwood St. Thomas came together in 2001 including Jack Whitehead, Simon and I, there was no pre-conditioned way in which the group was to work. A shared love for enquiry emerged as we each sought to improve practice. As enquiries were completed and individuals moved onto new schools, some of the vibrancy was lost to the group. The group needed new blood, new energy to be revitalised and failed to find this as funding sources through the Best Practice Research Scholarship (funded by the Department for Children, School and Families) dried up. A new generation was needed and could not be found, hence my belief that intergenerational enquiry is the key to sustainability.

In my new post, I needed to find energy through a collective vision at Bishop Wordsworth's School. I often felt that I had missed the boat in creating a shared vision and that the journey had begun leaving me at the quayside. Like Adam and Eve I needed to build a new arcadia to provide me with energy and passion.

At Westwood St. Thomas I had found my arcadia for a while in the work of the teacher-researcher group, but outside of this the creative tension between *vision* and *current situation* (Senge, 1990) was ebbing away, leaving me with a sense of complacency in which there was no challenge. It was time to move on.

Day writes about this stage of a teacher's development as:

" ...reaching a professional plateau...where the now well-established cycle of repetition...provides security but may paradoxically lack the variety, challenge and discovery of earlier years. It is a time when many teachers are likely to seek new challenges, either by taking new responsibilities in the same school or by moving schools for the purposes of promotion." (Day, 2004, p.159)

Samons, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart and Smees (2007, pp.681-702) ask if teachers necessarily become more effective over time. I recognise that my effectiveness is intrinsically linked to my motivation over time. I have to *want* to be effective and therefore my professional domain must provide opportunities to motivate me to be effective in what I do. This motivation also crucially comes from the other. Who is there to share success and challenge? Who is there to encourage and support? Sammons et al. (2007, pp.681-702) continue by stating that teachers *fit into* one of four states: positive stable or unstable and negative stable or unstable. The negative stable I feel identifies with Day's professional plateau, in which there is security yet a lack of challenge and excitement. How a teacher responds to this state is crucial, in either working to move forward and onto further challenges or whether to remain unchallenged in an increasingly stale environment. I believe that teachers need the other to help them identify when stability is unfulfilling and in seeking to identify new challenges.

"*I could see you as an AST in a few years time...with the government's move to Primaries all having MFL in place by 2010...primary schools are crying out for some support."* (comments I made to the Primary MFL coordinator during a school trip to France in 2007)

The other has supported me in challenging myself to move on towards new challenges. This other includes the students in my classroom. Were I to remain static in the way I deliver lessons, I would not offer the best learning opportunities to those in my classes. Sammons et al. state that:

"Teachers who are committed are defined as having an enduring belief that they can make a difference to the learning lives and achievements of students through who they are, what they know and how they teach" (Sammons et al., 2007, p.696)

This statement for me denies the role of the student in influencing who that teacher is and is to become. The dynamic shared between teacher and student is two-way and to deny such would be to deny the influence of the other. The cycle of learning and enquiry as both teacher and student is continuous. It is the teacher's decision to respond to or deny this cycle.

Marshall (1995) talks of *living life as enquiry* and describes the way in which one area of professional life becomes emptied of energy or develops a more habitual format of enquiry, whilst others emerge afresh to take its place. There is a continuous cycle of renewal that keeps an enquirer alive. I feel that we often need a new scent, a new landscape when our arcadia is too close. This is why, on a perfect Summer's evening, I look across a green field filled with sheep grazing and trees swaying in the wind, and quickly become bored with the scene. I look for imperfections, and seeing none, move on.

Figure 13: ***The countryside surrounding my home village on an early Summer's evening***

Phillips (2004), in his transfer paper for the University of Bath, talks about a *birthing* of the self, an unprepared-for event in which new discoveries are made. This relates to my own feelings of those small but significant moments of reaching a shared Arcadia. Each *birthing* allows me to reconsider what this Arcadia is. It allows me to realize that these moments of attainment cannot be pre-planned yet can be hoped for. Each is a pleasant surprise of which I live in perpetual anticipation. Each gives me motivation for further enquiry. It is through this understanding of my shared life that I can embrace those moments when I find myself in Arcadia, when I am fully present, before looking forward to the next.

4.1.3 Narrative three: Learning to love the enemy

Winter provides the following warning about collaboration:

"*Collaboration is notoriously ambiguous: collaborators may be friends or traitors-it all depends on who they are collaborating with.*" (Winter, 1998, p.12)

I do not share Winter's definition of collaborators as traitors. I believe that individuals who outwardly may appear to support the research yet inwardly are looking to challenge it, actually strengthen the process. During the student researchers' whole-school work, I was surprised that one teacher in particular had agreed to work with the boys and share her classroom practice with them, as previously she had seemed sceptical of the value of their research. This narrative I now look to share with you.

Over the course of this particular enquiry, the students filmed lesson extracts, interviewed the teacher herself and collected learning diaries from the students within her focus class. As the students were reviewing the data that they had collected from her and from the other teachers they were working with, I learnt that this teacher had sent a letter of complaint to the Headteacher about the conduct of the students during the research process. This was the first time that I was aware of her feelings on this matter, and following the initial shock and feelings of anger, the students and I began to respond to the issues raised. This was achieved through dialogue between the students, myself and the teacher concerned alongside a written response to the letter itself. Extracts from the original letter and the responses made are included below:

Part 1: extracts from the original letter

Dear (Headteacher)

I would like to voice my concerns over the organisation of this year's student project. I have learnt from colleagues that it was initially set up whilst the students were in Year 7 before I was in post.
When speaking to the pupils informally they seemed unaware of what they were doing in the project and what their long term plans were. Direction was often given to them by Mrs. Riding but an overall strategy was lacking. There were long periods of time where they would not be working and then there would be an intensive week which seemed to put pressure on some of the weaker members of the group such as Student A who has struggled over the course of the year with his workload especially after taking part in the school production….
In conclusion, I do not know what information was initially presented to all staff and what the implications were for the individual students. I have continually struggled with the manner in which they talk to me and I do feel that they have gained an air of superiority because they stand up in a staff meeting and educate us on what we should be doing in lessons.

Part 2: Extracts from my response to the initial letter
Dear (colleague),

Firstly, thank you for sharing this letter with me. I have found this feedback very valuable and would like to respond to the issues that you have raised within it.
It is indeed the case that the amount of activity in the research project has varied over the year, with some periods being intensely busy and others being very quiet in light of other school commitments and the school year. All students who have participated volunteered to do so, and I would not (and indeed could not) force students to participate. It is however unfortunate that one of the group, whom you have mentioned, has taken on more than perhaps he should. Any student has the option of opting out of the project if needed. The students you mention have recruited five Year 10 students alongside the two sixth-form students originally involved in order to share the workload between them. This was also intended to gain from a breadth of experience across Year groups within the school.

The direction of the project, as indeed was the case with the first MFL (Modern Foreign Languages) research, takes shape as the project itself develops. Although

the students had devised a working plan and an aim for the project that they wished to undertake, this inevitably has evolved as their research has progressed.

As regards the concerns over the attitude expressed by the students, this remains for me the most worrying of concerns. The whole basis of this project is to look at practice across the school with regards learning, and certainly not to undermine teachers within the school. The importance of this was expressed by myself, by the University tutor who has been working with them and by the sixth-form students involved in the project and it is indeed the first comment that I have received of this nature. Without the goodwill of teachers such as yourself, this project would not take place and any involvement in it should enhance the relationship between teacher and student which is so much a fundamental part of the success of this school. The students are looking to open up a dialogue with you to go over any concerns that you may have and to hopefully move forward.

Part 3: Extract from the final correspondence

Dear Karen

Thank you for replying so quickly. Your comments gave a clearer impression of the overall aim of the project and this would have been good to know in November, especially since I only started working at the school in this year and missed the work that you did with the pupils in year 7.

I have waited until now to write down my comments as the pupils are coming to the end of the project. I still give my consent for all the work that was completed with me to be used in the project. I merely wrote my comments to help with future projects. Thank you.

Reflections on this narrative

The understanding that has emerged from this process has supported me in loving my potential enemy: recognizing that their view supports the enquiry in critiquing itself and being strengthened in the claims that it makes as a result. This colleague asked that the students look at the way in which they communicated with research participants. She asked that they be clear in terms of their project aims. Both these requests have allowed the student researchers to strengthen the way in which they embrace this role. I return to the value that my husband and I share: asking the other

to be the best that he/she can be. I feel that my colleague challenged this value through her comments, in that she asks the student-led enquiry to be the best that it can be.

Through this understanding, bringing the other into this enquiry and living alongside them, I hope that my own views are validated through their reflections. I set out on this enquiry, not with pre-set ideas of what student-research could become, but rather embracing the excitement of not knowing. I look between the space of *A* and *not A* to see what will emerge from the student-led research:

"Much as we may yearn for more naturally simple and sustainable ways of living and loving, objective rationality makes us fall out of correspondence with our natural human neighbourhood (cf. Taylor, 2005). Far from making us 'impartial' in our observations and judgements, as many might think, it actually leads us to take a very partial - selective and prejudicial - view of our world and one another. We define 'things' as discrete objects that cannot be anything other than themselves and use this as the basis for the divisive logic of the excluded middle – 'to be or not to be'. Through this logic, we inevitably set everything in opposition to everything else because, by definition, there is no way in which anything can be both 'A' and 'not A'." (Rayner, 2007, p.3)

In the final presentation of the research findings to the whole staff, the teacher whose correspondence is included above thanked the students for their work with her. You could see the pride in her eyes as examples of her work were highlighted: examples that had been proven to support students in their own learning. She stated that she now felt she had evidence for the impact that her classroom practice was having upon the students in her class. This teacher was a valued critical friend of the process: as far from a traitor as is possible. This teacher was "A" in being a critic of the research and she was "not A" in being a critical friend; instead occupying the middle position between the two. In similar ways, the H.E. Researcher has worked from the outside and inside perspective of the research. I have also occupied two roles. I have immersed myself in the process of student-research whilst retaining my integrity as a teacher at the school.

The pride showed by my colleague showed the importance of knowing that her work was well done. She was developing her own practice in that year as a Newly Qualified Teacher and looked for this to be the best that she could deliver. She has

seen her work through the students' eyes; their pleasure in her presence which goes beyond viewing classroom practice as a set of baseline skills:

"*Being competent in teaching as a technology and teaching as a moral practice is part of a professional's practice but if the view of teachers as skilled technicians in the classroom whose only purpose is to implement the set curriculum prevails, then the complex art and science of teaching may be downgraded to possession of a cluster of baseline technical skills."* (Day, 2004, p.5)

4.2 What have these narratives allowed me to learn?

Sharing the living contradiction that I represented in my first year in post has allowed me essential reflection on the living educational standards that I hold with others. It has allowed me to recognise the importance of relationships of trust with others that allow shared space for true creativity and pleasure in our shared lives. It has shown me the role of external *static* standards and internal *living* standards in allowing me to understand work well done.

Jack Whitehead wrote to me:

"One of the qualities I've noticed that seems to serve you really well in strengthening your learning is your humour." (e-mail received, May, 2004)

Bateson leads us to consider how humour can be seen as an educational standard of judgement shared between individuals:

"I relate humour to evolution. The mere fact of humour in human relations indicates that multiple typing is essential to human communication. In the absence of logical typing humour would be unnecessary and perhaps could not exist. This is the significance of the experience of humour as a standard of educative relation." (Bateson, 1980, p. 124)

The reference to humour as a *standard of educative relation* allows me to consider how, when we are unable to live out our values such as in this first difficult year, we feel the presence of this absence. I still carried within me my shared values, still gained strength and motivation from them, until a time when the quality of relationship that I share with others allowed me to live these out. For me, sharing

humour is an essential part of a qualitative relationship I need to have with others in order to feel fully present. Trust needs to be established before I can interact with humour. It is a sign that I feel comfortable in the shared space we hold together.

I believe that through sharing these narratives with you I can show true learning and reflection of the person who I am and wish to be. I share with you how the presence of the absence, in shared living standards of judgment, has opened my eyes to the significance of the other in experiencing pleasure and humour in professional lives. Jack Whitehead responded to this writing in the following way:

"Your writings enable me to feel invited alongside you in your enquiry and to offer responses that I think Pat D'Arcy would recognise as aesthetically engaged and appreciative responses."(e-mail received from Jack Whitehead, July 2004)

"*In hindsight I could have…"* is a phrase that comes easily to my lips, asking how I could have made events more purposeful and constructive if the reflections I have now made were available at the time. Beforehand, this hindsight was a singular action and a linear path that excluded others:

"In our selective interpretation of history and evolutionary process through "post-hoc hindsight", a linear path is back-projected from present to past, and only those characters or events that occur sequentially along this path are acknowledged to have contributed to the historical lineage of cause and effect. The path becomes a regression "line of best fit", selected through the exclusion of other possibilities, which become regarded as "peripheral", "vulgar", non-mainstream" or even as wasteful "failures"." (Rayner, 2007, p.7)

This selective interpretation is a non-inclusional way of being that I have learned to avoid, asking instead that others consider these past events from their own perspective. Through this reflection, a shared path leads back towards these events. The path then becomes a network, for often others' reflections create new thoughts that lead off into different directions. This way of being acknowledges others' importance and their way of seeing, in order that reflections made are inclusional and invite the other in.

"*If I look at the Department when you arrived and the Department now, it was as if you were at war with what we had done previously. You seemed to want change for*

change sake, to make your own mark and you wanted to do it alone without talking to us…You have now slowed down and take the time to talk with us and to listen…the office is simply a happier place to be." (colleague in the MFL Department reflecting on my first year in post recorded in my journal)

"*I'm leaving the school now and it will be strange if there is no student research going on in my new school...what you don't at first appreciate you then come to accept and even! be part of in time.*" (comments made by my colleague involved in narrative two shortly before she left the school in July 2006, recorded in my journal)

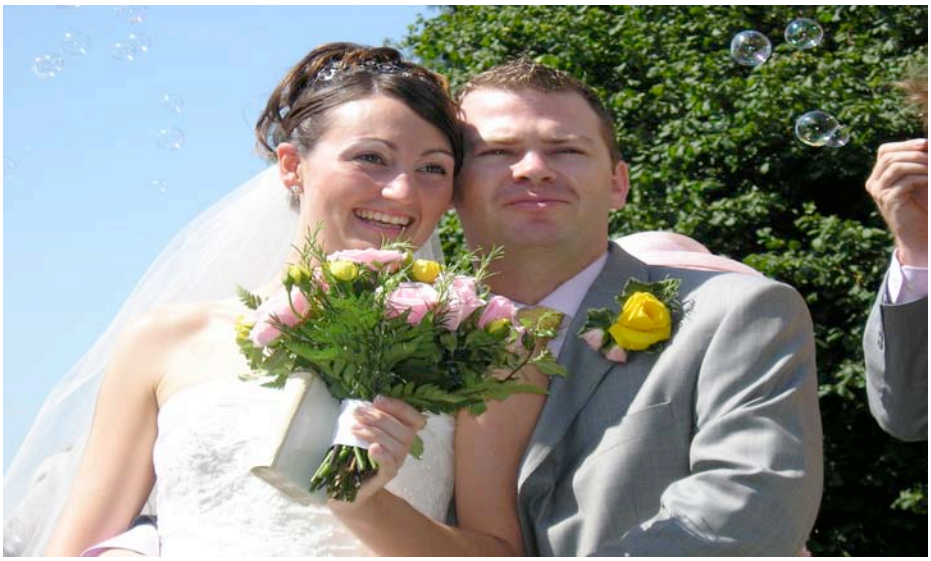
4.2 Emerging shared values within the personal-professional 2004-2005

"Although it is not always possible to predict the turning points in teachers' work and lives when intervention is needed to nurture or re-ignite passions for teaching, (an example) that might be considered (is) leadership that is transactional or transformational (concerned with fostering learning communities through participation and dialogue)." (Day, 2004, p.161)

We ask not, 'what can I do about this' as a context-free agency, but 'how may I respond receptively in this situation?' (Rayner, 2007, p.10)

I entered the academic year in September 2004 with a renewed sense of hope and excitement. Perhaps this is so for every practitioner, the sense of self-renewal and making meaning of the previous year through the summer. Putting a sense of perspective on the experiences one has undergone with others, and re-establishing vision for the year ahead. This summer break was particularly one of evolvement, following my marriage and the joy and fulfilment which a life-changing event such as this can bring.

Figure 14: ***Simon and I on our wedding day with our shared hope for the future shining in our eyes***
I believe this image to reflect the energy that our shared life gives us.



In early September, I rejoiced at the way in which two colleagues new to the Department were affecting the learning ethos and commitment to change in a positive way. The shared space that I sought to open up in my first year in post was now accessible through engagement with these colleagues. There was a sense of finding a shared way forward. At the end of the school day, the Languages office was our shared physical space. It was alive with voices sharing ideas and opinions. I grew courage in this new shared space to talk about my educational vision. These conversations allowed the Department to explore the National Strategy, recently introduced for Modern Foreign Languages by the Department for Children, Schools and Families and to try out new ideas as a result of our shared courage. Together we were experiencing the excitement of being on the *inside looking-out* (Rayner, 2006b), sharing the successes and failures of joint projects:

*"It was an exciting time for me, that Autumn Term. After years of drifting between temporary posts, I finally felt that I was part of something exciting. I could engage with you and the team about what we were trying out, not afraid to admit my failures or talk about my successes. I was finding my own voice again with which I could speak. It was our work together that helped me to find this." (*comments from a colleague who joined the French Department in September 2004)

"When I arrived in the Department in September, I could smell the dust in the unloved office and had to walk around piles of books to be able to get to my classroom. For

me though, this was unimportant. Books can be stored away and dust cleaned, particularly with the office refurbishment that took place soon after. More important was the excitement that I felt at the possibilities ahead of us. Gathering together at points in the day, we started to learn about each other and to open up about what we hoped to improve. I became really energized through our conversations; I remember even coming in on Saturdays to carry on what had been started. I was so energised." (Head of German, new to post in September 2004)

Brundrett & Terrell (2004) talk about being explicit in terms of personal values, and how this helps in shaping leaders' practices:

"*Leaders who want to build an emancipatory organizational culture that encourages collaborative learning or professional learning communities focus on encouraging staff and caring for students, encouraging dialogue, encouraging openness and risk-taking, and maintain relationships whil(st) wrestling with ambiguity and professional disagreements.*" (Brundett & Terell, 2004, p.19)

The following example I believe exemplifies how during this year I was able to build on the courage gained from my relationships with others to deal with professional disagreements. This example shows how I was also able to listen to learn and not to proceed on a singular path. I believe it highlights I could draw upon the positive energy flowing between us as a source of motivation.

In October 2004, the day before a review meeting relating to performance management, my colleague said:

"*Perhaps in that meeting tomorrow we can go over this whole lesson-writing thing.*"

My heart sank as I knew my colleague was not convinced by the idea of the short term planning of lessons within the National Strategy framework. Driving home, I remembered however how important and vital I believed this work to be in giving our students better learning opportunities. I drew upon a conversation I had shared that day with another colleague who was exploring the same strategy with positive results, and found strength through our shared words and energy. I drew upon the positive comments made by the students in my class with whom I was introducing this and found strength.

The next day my colleague and I walked to the meeting benignly chatting about the weather, both realising that we needed to address our conflict of interests on this issue.

In the meeting:
Colleague: "*Yes, one of my targets was related to this three-part structure of lessons. I must admit though that it is so different from what I am used to. I feel that I am spending so much time on lesson planning for Year 7 that I have not enough time to plan and mark for other classes...Also, it is so difficult to realistically fit starter, objective and plenary into a 40 minute lesson...when you've probably lost five minutes in arriving and settling them anyway.*"

My response: "*I agree that 40 minutes is not long..usually if I do lose some time at the beginning I use the register as the focus for the starter activity, asking them to respond in a different way, or..selecting a few students to be "hotseated" to complete the activity…It took me a year of working from medium term plans to find out why we need short-term planning, a year of looking at the objectives I needed to cover, scratching my head and wondering how on the earth I was going to deliver this or that…I realised I was writing short-term plans anyway, but these were not recorded...there was no system in place for sharing these. I'm now converted. Having a plan there ready means no scrabbling around for transparencies or worksheets: everything is to hand. The boys are getting the same diet in terms of what they are learning, and even better, we can share this knowledge and support each other.*"

My colleague: "*This has only been a week I know…I need to give it longer. I would still like the freedom though to deliver my lesson how I see best, and to use these plans as a guide instead."*

My response: "*The plans are intended to be just that...guidance on how you could deliver lessons...the importance here is not the activities within the lesson...moreover that the purpose behind the lessons is carried across a year group...same diet."*

After the meeting I reflected on the fact that a year ago I would not have been able to share my values so clearly and with so much passion. I was convinced at that time of the worth of short-term lesson planning, drawing upon the views of others as a

source of strength. What I was saying was from the heart. I felt as Jack Whitehead did:

"At that moment, I was there, I was in Arcadia." (Jack Whitehead in discussion at the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group, 2004)

My colleague responded:
"*But doesn't writing these short-term plans make so much more work for ourselves?"*

I responded: "*I cannot lie and say no. But it is only a replica of what we are doing in our planners for every lesson. This is just formalising the process, and giving us the option of learning from what others have done.*"

I felt *fully present* as I left school that day. I felt that I had shared my values with conviction: a sense of childhood joy pervaded me in the pride of *work well done* (Whitehead, 2005), of progress being made in the educative conversations that we were able to share.

"*In schools (individuals) are constrained by the histories of their institutions, by the other people around them; and by the demands on them from their social and macro-policy contexts, such as National Curriculum guidelines. Leaders wield more power than others in pursuit of their vision and values of successful teaching and learning and organizational practice. However non-promoted staff, support staff and students also wield power in pursuit of their visions through coordinated action." (Brundrett & Terell , 2004, p.24)*

The Department's shared reflections on the strategy bought about the consensus some three months later that every teacher is an individual and could not simply follow another's lesson plan. I realised that the path I was creating in promoting short-term lesson planning was one which some colleagues were unable to share. A different path needed to be found:

"*You must choose your battles carefully. Which ones you must fight and which you walk through, not through defeat but through seeing a different way forward, are the sense of a developing leader who sees clarity over bull-headed belief.*"(My husband in conversation over an English Heritage cup of tea, March 2005)

I realise now, as a result of collaborative action, that each individual needs the freedom to act, yet guided and comforted in the knowledge that what they undertake is of value.

Greenbank (2003) reflects on the roles of values within educational research. He states that researchers should be:

"...*open and honest about how values influence their research.*" (Greenbank, 2003, p.792)

but that:

"...*value statements, biographical details and reflexive accounts..can be seen as over-indulgent and may lead to marginalization of research participants.*"(Greenbank, 2003, p.795)

Within the work of doctoral theses such as Delong (2002) and Evans (1995), there is a heavy accent on how work with others affects their values. In undertaking this research, their shared life with others allows them to see themselves more clearly. Including the voices of these significant others allows them to reflect and to validate the claims that they are making to knowledge. Greenbank (2003) and Coulter (1991) share the importance of the voice of the other in enquiry. I believe that individual researchers owe this to their participants, as without our shared lives with others, the narratives we recount would not exist. They are the lifeblood for our enquiry and for our values.

"Change can only take place effectively when the self is engaged because change is part of a rolling programme, which is always that "accounting for oneself" involving an intra-subjective dialect in which the researcher transforms her understanding of her own practice as she attempts to present it in a public form."
(Evans, 1995, p.20)

Evan's quest to understand her own practice seems a lone one in which the attempt to understand the transformation in her practice is a solitary event. I argue that conversations held with others are the foundation through which transformation of understanding is achieved. Presenting the knowledge gained through enquiry is the reason for sharing this enquiry with you, yet the primary audience who can validate

this account are those who have been a part of the process. Without the dialogue that has taken place between the intergenerational researchers that have come together in this enquiry, the claims to understanding that I make would not have occurred. These learning conversations are ones in which knowledge is transformed and meaning is made. They allow the individual researcher to reach an understanding of her role in shared enquiry, alongside recognizing the influence of others.

Practitioner-researchers such as Delong (2002) and Evans (1995) bring living educational theories to their research that define the claims they are making. These lived values come as a result of their professional and personal shared lives. I refer to my life with my husband Simon as the central relationship from which I draw strength in my professional life. Together we share relationally dynamic values that emerge as a result of our lived experience with each other. Delong (2002) talks about her family and relationships in a way that lends to the account a sense of wholeness and of ownership of the learning that has taken place:

"My theorizing emerges naturally from the narratives of my life as a superintendent in a self-critical process of judging my work in terms of its coherence within my values as standards of practice and judgment and from public accountability by sharing my stories. The assessments and evaluations of friends and family... have informed my practice and theory." (Delong, 2002, p.6)

Whitehead talks about how our personal lives shape our pedagogical understanding:

"As my wife came downstairs on Sunday morning, I was responding to e-mails in the living room. She greeted me, and I her, yet I did not take the opportunity to turn away from my correspondence and engage her with my attention as she deserved. I did not show how much I valued her, and I wonder how many occasions my colleagues have experienced the same lack of engagement from me. At that moment, I was not worthy of her." (comments during a tutorial meeting at Bath University, July 2006)

On the reverse side, Senge (1990) talks of the pleasure that the professional can bring:

"*To seek personal fulfilment only outside of work and to ignore the significant portion of our lives which we spend working, would be to limit our opportunities to be happy and complete human beings.*" (Senge, 1990, pp.144-145)

I argue that in order to experience fulfilment we need to share our personal-professional successes and challenges with others. We need to look within our shared space in order to experience fulfilment, as it is our contact with others and our shared conversations that bring about this sentiment.

At the end of a day during term-time, Simon and I return home to the kitchen-table. Each day we seek this opportunity to share our day's successes and frustrations with each other: needing the other person to listen and respond to our narrative. This point in the day is very special for both of us. It allows me to better understand Simon as an educator and to learn how he is shaping a shared educational vision. It allows me to enjoy his successes and hear his frustrations. Significantly, this time allows us to reconnect with each other and the shared values that we hold.

During these end of the day reflections, Simon and I reconnect within our shared space. These conversations often show us playing out different roles in the dynamic space that is our relationship. We are speakers and we are listeners. We move to fill different roles at different times, allowing us to respond to the others' needs. Publicly, we have also worked together to present complementing roles in joint ventures. This was never more so apparent than our joint presentation on the importance of teacher-research at BECTA in 2005. Simon spoke full of vigour during this presentation, speaking with passion and dynamism to his audience. He demanded that they pay attention to what he had to say.

Jack Whitehead described the footage of Simon at that time as:

"*He could easily be a successful Headteacher, an Education Officer arguing his point. There is utter conviction in his words and gestures that do not allow the audience to disagree with his statements and views*" (comments made after reviewing the video footage, 2005)

As we froze the footage, the contrast is stark between Simon and I. Simon invigorated with open body language, whilst I stand still in the corner of the screen, giving Simon my full attention. When I stand to speak, my words are quiet in contrast

to his. I exemplify the value of teacher-research through the video footage that I share with the audience. Simon spoke without images or video to support his words, allowing these instead to be his evidence.

My heart pounded with nerves as I spoke, hoping that I was persuading the audience about the value of practitioner-based research. I drew strength from Simon at this time, strength from his demeanour and his physical presence. He was asking me to convince the audience of the quality of my work and I in turn responded. I wanted to show myself worthy of the faith he had placed in me.

"*Being worthy of the other*" is what Simon and I ask. Being worthy in our professional role, in our role as practitioner-researchers and as husband and wife. In our relationship, we each give a lot to each other yet demand a lot in return. We are asking each other to be the best that we can be. This two-way commitment is something I in turn demand from the student researchers with whom I am learning. I believe that I am giving them time and space within which to work, and I ask for personal learning in return. I expect to return to the classroom with a better understanding of the classroom as a result of their work.

I therefore believe that the shared values we hold allow us to seek and acknowledge fulfilment, allowing us a point of foundational strength. An individual's experiences and life choices determine the values that one holds. From our earliest childhood, we are in contact with others, sharing their values and learning from them. The life path we create brings new experiences and new contacts. Values emerge alongside this shared experience, some remaining for life whilst others emerge as one shared space ends and another begins.

Figure 15 The woods behind my childhood home where I spent a great deal of time exploring

My grandfather taught me that you can always be surprised by the most familiar of situations.

The value of a *love for learning* I believe to have held since childhood. As often as I could, my grandfather and I would walk in the woods behind the family home. Even though I felt that I knew these paths and trees like the back of my hand, he would encourage me to find something new. This could be new shoots on a plant or the den of a woodland creature. Today I enter my workplace hoping to learn something new each day. My love of learning stems from these childhood walks and conversations. I will always carry this value with me as a result of these shared experiences with my grandfather.

Valuing the other is a value that has emerged through the course of my professional life. I worked with Alain Hinchliffe, the former Headteacher of Westwood St. Thomas School in Salisbury for three years. Through his engagement with me: always thanking me for my work and noting the contribution that I was making to the organization, he has instilled in me how important it is to value others. I carry this shared value with me now into my new school as I carry it with me into my personal life with Simon, with family and with friends. Through this I believe to be living out Senge's (1990) perception of the importance of the professional in the personal.

Alan Hinchliffe responded to this writing in the following way:

"It does seem to be clear...that "recognising the achievements of others" and "communication/consultation" are positive forces which need to be encouraged in leadership at all levels…It was an approach discussed and my prompting of this came from a perceived weakness in a previous 360 degree appraisal. That is what I am trying to work on here (within my new school), based on the evidence that it can be the best way forward." (letter received in July 2004)

At any one point in time, I am operating within the boundaries of my shared values, dependent on the activity and the individuals with whom I am engaged. It is the living out of these values that brings me happiness; happiness shared with those who embrace this value.

Through dialogue with others I can live out such sentiments, I can learn, enjoy and find a path to proceed. Where others challenge me, they challenge me to find the

strength to validate my faith in a project or idea. Working and living with others, I have access to their extensive knowledge that allows me to learn from them and to improve my own practice as a result:

"*None of us is as smart as all of us.*" (Blanchard and Bowles, 2001, p.60)

"My learning and relationships are created and sustained out of the dialogic processes that are natural and indeed crucial for my ontology." (Delong, 2002, p.49)

Through this writing, I have exemplified some of the shared values that have emerged through my life with others, in order to validate the claims that I am making. I am not fully aware of all the values that I hold as some are held at a subconscious level whilst others are on the cusp of being realized. Evans (1995) lists the values that she believes to hold:

"When I started my action research enquiry in September 1991, I recognised the following values:

- *I valued equality of opportunity, in which teachers should be able to talk, share thoughts, feelings and experiences, in order to help them to be effective in their teaching*
- *I valued offering the opportunity for teachers, and children, to develop the self so that they could become autonomous learners*
- *I wanted to be part of a thinking and creative school culture*
- *I believed that pupils should be part of a culture which inspires them to love learning, so my responsibility was to help teachers develop this culture*

I wanted to be living these values in my practice, but I was concerned that I was not always doing this, and I explore this contradiction further in chapter 3." (Evans, 1995, p.8)

I argue that to list our values is to exclude the evolving *living* nature of them. To write a list requires a conscious thought process that excludes those values held at a sub-consciousness level or those being realized in our current work. Attempting to provide a list of these values does not recognise how continued lived experiences serve to make these relationally dynamic.

4.3 Reflections on the two years that I have shared with you

The reflections in this Chapter were made through the first two years of my role as Middle Leader at Bishop Wordsworth's School; two years full of difficulties and surprises, hopes and disappointments. My reader may ask how this contributes to original knowledge. It is my hope that you have been able to realise the importance of shared experience in forming living standards of judgment. It is my hope that you are able to reflect on the standards by which you choose to live.

I believe that we all live in relationships that serve to challenge and support us as individuals. Without these shared experiences, we would be unable to share the joy and frustration arising from them. I have focussed upon my relationship with my husband as the central relationship from which my shared living standards of judgment emerge. This I explore further in Chapter 8.

I have also looked at the opposing viewpoint that challenges my learning. Simon perceives his professional self as able to live outside of the life he shares with others whilst I stand immersed in my shared life. This differing viewpoint strengthens and challenges our claims to know: whilst walking in the countryside, driving home or settling to sleep. I hold onto the importance of these standards at all times: in meetings, in class and in discussion with colleagues. Simon is there alongside me, asking me to be *the best that I can be*.

I argue that in order to understand ourselves we must first look at our life with others. To reconsider Johnson's (2005) question:

"*Are you happy?"*

I believe that sentiments such as happiness are only truly realised when we can share them.

I now look to move beyond these narratives to reflect upon the learning journey that I have undertaken in this current school with others. Through this journey I believe that living standards of judgment have emerged, shared between the participants and the school community.