Chapter 5: A shared life

"Our creative potential (can be) released, through an "inclusional" way of seeing...with informed discernment from outside-in. This way of seeing leads naturally away from authoritarian styles of instruction based purely on precise transmission of knowledge, to "Arthurian" style of facilitated dialogue within "Round Tables"...so as to bring together, respect and learn from diverse contextual perspectives." (Rayner, 2005, p.1)

In this Chapter I explore my shared life with the significant others that I introduced to you at the beginning of this enquiry, in order to better understand the living relational standards that emerge from these relationships. Within this Chapter, I now go on to look at the evolving of boundaries between these groups in the context of intergenerational research, in which school community and research community learn together. The *round table* to which Rayner refers is our shared space, a space that has been created through joint enquiry, a space that invites others to stand on the sidelines to join in.

I believe that, as when children learn a language, others should be allowed a silent phase, choosing themselves when/if they are prepared to join the conversation. In this phase they are listening to make meaning from what they hear. Standing on the sidelines allows them choice over when, where and if to participate: choice that is empowering in itself. The Bank Street College of Education, reacting to the Literacy Excellence Act in 1999, exemplifies the following first stage for the development of language acquisition:

"Phase I: Observation

1. *Silent stage (which may be combined with emotional shock). The child is taking in the new situation and listening to the language to begin to make sense of what goes on around him/her."* (Bank Street College of Education, 2001, p.1)

I hope within this Chapter to share with you a dialogic enquiry, in which learning conversations join the pursuit of making meaning and knowing ourselves better. I remain the central voice; one which has created the conditions for this shared enquiry and that now seeks to share the narrative of this journey so that others may learn alongside it. Underpinning these relationships is the relationship that I hold with my husband, as I believe that the values we hold together are life-affirming values

that give us our motivation in our professional life and allow us to go into the educational world with confidence. Woods refers to the role of spouses as giving other perspectives:

"Triangulation is one of the main aids to validity. It is useful to have other perspectives on the life history, from, for example, spouses, colleagues, pupils or ex-pupils. If there have been "snowballing" selections or examples, there should be opportunities for cross-referencing among them." (Woods, 1985, p.17)

Woods appears to support my view that without the other's voice, the enquiry is lifeless and cannot claim to represent the truth of what has occurred. Ownership of the enquiry is shared between those involved, and each participant has the right to this ownership. I see triangulation therefore as the different research participants considering the enquiry and how it is represented. The student researchers reading this offer me a different perspective to my colleagues. My colleagues offer me a different perspective to the Headteacher. I believe that all viewpoints are unique and of equal worth, whether subjective or objective in nature. In this I disagree with Rayner:

"Very different perceptions of reality arise from immersed and detached perspectives, epitomized by the naïve outlook of a child and the rational down look of an adult. These differences can produce fundamental incongruities in patterns of relationships with one another and our living space that bring rule-based objective judgements of right and wrong into sharp conflict with natural subjective exploration and response." (Rayner, 2005, p.1)

Each group has been able to project a path back to the events involving them, and supply a unique viewpoint of that event. This, I believe, adds to the richness of the enquiry shared and allows the boundaries between these groups to merge; in effect allowing the participants to see through different eyes.

5.1 Learning with the school community

My husband and I both discovered our love for practitioner-based enquiry at Westwood St. Thomas School. During our three years working alongside each other, we benefited from dynamic space that allowed shared values through learning conversations to emerge. These were three significant years, in which we learnt *with*

others and *from* others, a process that allowed us to create living standards of judgment to live by: providing motivation for what we do.

Within that school, I believe that space was created for new dialogue as a result of the in-house teacher researcher group. Here we all removed the masks of our professional hierarchy and conversed as equals: Newly Qualified Teachers alongside Headteachers, Heads of Department alongside support staff. I have already described to you how loving relationships emerged from this dynamic space, resulting in close personal friendships and in the sharing of our wedding day with these significant others. We shared a love for researching that corresponds to Cho's (2005) notion of love in terms *of a loving pursuit for knowledge together into the world.*

The space that we shared extended beyond the school as we worked with Jack Whitehead at the University of Bath and alongside colleagues from other schools. This space opened to include students in true dialogue about teaching and learning. We were the hearers of the student voice in that school. Linking to Rayner's (2005) "*natural subjective exploration and response*" in which the subjective view is opened up as a motivation and source for enquiry, Evans (1995) describes the excitement that can arise when we allow ourselves such liberation as researchers to explore together:

"During the Action Research enquiry, I have seen the transformation in the way that teachers think about themselves, and to believe that they have the support of their colleagues to enable them to try out new ideas. The sharing of thoughts and feelings in the Action Research group has enabled people to know that they can rethink their values, develop new concepts of teaching and that they will be helped and supported throughout the process. This has given them an excitement about their teaching and learning which has increased their motivation for teaching, and is infectious."
(Evans, 1995, p 46)

Westwood St. Thomas had become a space where new connections were made between individuals through a shared love of enquiry. Students and teachers began a dialogue together about learning, and imaginative ways of working were undertaken in the classroom. The school had begun to perform the function of a University as a centre for learning and sharing with the wider community:

"The universities are schools of education and schools of research ...The justification for a university is that it preserves the connection between knowledge and the zest for life, by uniting the young and the old in the imaginative consideration of learning. The university imparts information, but it imparts it imaginatively. At least, this is the function which it should perform for society. A university which fails in this respect has no reason for existence. A fact is no longer a bare fact: it is invested with all its possibilities. It is no longer a burden on the memory: it is energised as the poet of our dreams, and as the architect of our purposes" (Whitehead, 1962, p.138)

The school had moved towards the co-construction of knowledge alongside the university-based partner:

"*University-based partners have found themselves assessing their research partners' work rather than collaborating in the co-construction of knowledge in practice in ways which would mark a more equal relationship.*" (Edwards, Sebba & Rickinson, 2007, p.649)

"*Every time I come here, it's exciting. I don't know what to expect and I don't know what I may learn.*" (Jack Whitehead, tutor to the in-house researcher group, November 2002)

"Even though I feel shattered on a Wednesday, I still come, this revives me..(turning to Jack Whitehead) at first I didn't have the confidence in myself to talk to you as I can now, but I feel that I can talk to you on a level footing now...you are as excited as we are." (Toni Bowden, member of in-house researcher group, November 2002)

Upon leaving Westwood St. Thomas, Simon and I both retained this love for enquiry. As we arrived at our new schools apart, we both looked to again create conditions for true dialogue through research. Simon undertook this through forming a teacher-researcher group, in which twenty-five teachers took part in the first research project. I looked to students working as intergenerational researchers alongside the school and with the collaboration of an H.E. partner, building upon the strength of the Westwood model by inviting generations of researchers to work together.

"Teachers exercise power over students, senior managers exercise their power over teachers, and the smarter teachers know how to manipulate or manoeuvre around senior managers. Politics is about enquiring and using power and influence. At their

worst, micro-political environments make a school dysfunctional and prevent positive change (Sarason, 1990). At their best they interact positively to advance their organization's purpose." (Stoll & Fink 1996, p.176 in Stoll & Myers, 1996, p.201)

The core business of schools is the education of young people. I recognise that young people are also educators of teachers in that they are interacting positively to advance their school's knowledge about itself. Each school day, term and year afford opportunities for classroom practitioners to develop in new ways and to learn from this work with students. The expectation of what the day will bring still affords me a *frisson* of excitement on my journey into work each day.

The students with whom I have worked have altered the dynamics held between teacher, stakeholder and student. The responsibilities of pupil and teacher remain, yet alongside this, enquiry has served to advance the ways in which the school knows about itself. The students have changed the dynamics of their organization, asking it to respond with them in a different way. There is no power struggle between teacher and student, rather an altering of the perceptions that one has about the other. There is a two-way dialogic approach between student and teacher that, I believe, is the key to the success of enhanced interpersonal relationships in the classroom. Both groups acknowledging that they can learn from the other, so that teachers feel that the student-led research has economic worth. The nature of this influence was acknowledged by Joan Whitehead (2002) in the paper "*Students: The forgotten partnership in Educational Action Zones"* in the following way:

"*There was therefore recognition of a shared responsibility, that of the teacher for establishing conditions conducive to learning and complementing this their own positive disposition to learn through their interaction with the teacher, their relationship with their peers and their own self discipline. What is interesting is that more students were prepared to see learning as their responsibility and volunteered actions they could take to improve compared to the numbers who identified responsibility and actions residing with the teacher.*"(Whitehead, Joan, 2002, p.2)

There must be an economic worth for student-led enquiry for the school to invest in it. Teachers invest time and money into the education of students, in the hope that they may gain from this and increase their chances of economic success. Yet each practitioner needs something in return. It would be a thankless task to appear again and again in front of a class, knowing that a statement of examination results would

be the only reward. In sharing their knowledge, teachers have the right to expect their own learning to be enhanced. Creating the conditions for students to work as researchers provides a medium for the practitioner's right to learn and pleasure in learning. In terms of economic viability, we are asking students to contribute to the effectiveness of the school and its work, and in return the lessons we learn are taken on board to enhance their learning experience. This was recognised and highlighted by the recent OfSted inspection at the school:

"The school is engaged in a healthy debate about the effectiveness of different teaching and learning styles for its students through student research. A group of students is researching how you can judge the quality of learning in a lesson and the learning approaches that students can best engage with." (OfSted, 2006, p.2)

"The school has engaged thoughtfully in debating the effectiveness of different styles of teaching and learning through student-led research. The student research group has shared its initial findings about learning experiences with their fellow students in assemblies and with teachers. Practical exploration and discussion are valued by students, as well as having changes of activity during lessons." (OfSted, 2006, p.6)

My shared life of enquiry with students, both inside and outside of the classroom, has afforded me the joy of learning alongside the other. This sentiment continues to be something that enquiry offers to me:

"I have also discovered my "life-affirming energy" (Whitehead, 2003) perhaps for the first time; that which is reflected in a moment of time, an engagement with individuals, a feeling of pure joy at that in which one is engaged. This I feel when working with the student researchers, this I feel when I am engaged in real-value teaching and learning; the purest form of pride in my professional practice." (Collins, 2003, p.23)

These significant others show me doors that can be opened and make me believe that our shared lives hold tremendous capacity for learning with each other. These people have influenced my own educative values, and have aided me in the transition from an unengaged teacher to one for whom the prospect of engaging about educational values is truly exciting. I believe that the video clip below demonstrates my awakened joy in dialogue about educational values at Westwood St. Thomas School in 2003:

Dissertation discussion.WMV

Figure 16: Video of me being interviewed about my research at Westwood St. Thomas in 2003
In this video, I believe to be demonstrating the energy and pleasure that working alongside students-as-researchers has given me.

My transformation from an uninspired teacher in my first school to a committed and passionate practitioner occurred when I could connect with others in learning conversations and co-develop shared living educational values. Choosing to leave my first school was a difficult but necessary decision. I was trying to release myself from an ever-tightening noose that I was creating. My arrival at Westwood St. Thomas, meeting my husband and engaging in classroom research made me feel valued and allowed me to recognise the contribution that I could make if given the chance. The following paragraph is an extract from my journal the year after I left this first school:

I shall always remember the interview day at my first school. It felt like a journey home. Encounters with teachers who had taught me, returning to rooms where I had sat as a student all had the sense of the familiar. In that first year of my appointment, I possessed a great deal of energy for doing good work. This was recognised by my Head of Department and by the Headteacher at the time. I was given a glowing report on successfully completing my newly qualified year, and looked forward to the challenges that the second year would bring. I am still unsure of where it all started to go wrong, at which point I wanted to test the boundaries and lose interest in the classroom. In the first months of the second year, I no longer felt accepted by the school or by the new Headteacher in post. My sense of trust for other individuals with whom I worked had been lost. They had also lost faith in me. There was no space for supportive dialogue. No one seemed to believe in me anymore, I no longer felt recognised for "work well done". Praise turned to criticism. I knew that it was time to leave and to find the educator that I could be. (Extract from my journal, 2004)

Jackie Delong suggests that individuals possess a *capacity to influence* (2002, p.63). This describes how I was able to develop living educational values in a relationship of trust with those working at Westwood St. Thomas. Significantly, this trust was built as

a result of the teacher-researcher group working alongside Jack Whitehead and as a result of my emerging relationship with my husband.

I asked my husband: *"Do you feel that you have unlocked the capacity within me? Has this been a two-way process?"*

Simon responded:

"I think the relationship we have had professionally has been an interesting one. I think it has been two-way: we have both gained from it. I have gained a sense of intimacy from the research I do as I have done it alongside you and it has also helped to spur me on and push me: an almost competitive edge has been added to it. I think, when I reflect back, that you needed someone to believe in you professionally and this is what Westwood gave you: you seemed to be lost and very demotivated when you arrived, yet you seemed to have a capacity for doing good and wanted to make a fresh start. What I think you lacked is a work ethic that was rewarded and when you began to get rewarded both financially and in terms of success and promotion, you responded very well to this. I think you needed to learn things and maybe your previous school weren't prepared to invest in you. However, you kind of came into a family that accepted you at Westwood." (oral response to the question above, 2004)

I agree wholly in this context with the need for praise and investment in the individual as shared by Delong:

"*Part of my regular practice is that I ensure that staff members get the credit for their work.*" (Delong, 2002, p.232)

This is a value that emerged during my time at Westwood St. Thomas. Upon taking up my current post as Head of Department in this third school, it was evident that within the organization, the stakeholders did not value such open expression of good work. I felt this gap with anguish. Without the simple words of "*Thank you*", it was difficult in those first months to feel a real sense of worth for the work that I was undertaking. I craved an external validation of the claims I was making about my own professional learning. At what point do we reach beyond the childhood need of recognition and the need to feel valued and praised? I still carry that value within me

and I subsequently wished to develop a culture of value and praise with my Department.

At the end of the first half-term within my new post, I approached each member of the Department to thank them for their contribution and support during my first two months in post. As I thanked one colleague, I remember how she touched me on the arm and said that the team were all behind me. This moved me nearly to tears, as through this period, this was the first positive feedback that I had received. Something in the physical nature of her brush on my arm also made me feel warm and secure: a return to the childhood need to feel safe and welcome. Following this gesture, the emotive and physical space that I sought to share with others began to emerge:

"There are certain men in Africa who shake hands with you and afterwards you don't feel well. There are certain people in Africa who give you peculiar objects, and once these objects have touch your palm a sleeping paranoia awakens in you, and washing your hands a thousand times with carbolic soap or herbal potions can't rid you of the sensation of being spooked. So it was with the message that was passed on to me. I wasn't the same again." (Okri, 2002 ,p.26)

I looked to extend the influence of this value within the school. In discussion with the Headteacher in October 2003, with regards the re-designation of the "*Investor in People*" award, I engaged in the opportunity to make my thoughts recognized. I stated how the open culture of thanks was regarded so positively at my former school and how this was something which I felt could contribute to the positive validation of an individual's work. These comments and others' on the day mean that Departments now receive a letter of thanks for their contribution to the school and a "*golden day*" has been rewarded to each member of staff in recognition of the contribution they make to the school.

"The governors wish to make it known that they thank you for your continued input and development work within the school, and wish you the very best of luck for your ongoing projects." (extract from letter sent to me by the Headteacher November 2006)

Valuing the other within the organization of the school extended to include students as potential co-researchers in 2001 at Westwood St. Thomas. A significant moment

in my personal learning came when a Year 10 student, Shane, had read my research upon the Internet, and had recognized his own unacknowledged comments within my account of learning in the classroom. His reaction to this was one of anger and frustration. He stated that he would have wanted more involvement in the research and to have his ideas acknowledged. I later documented the affects of this profound event upon my own values, which has made me insistent on recognising students as co-enquirers and now instigators of research:

"By including the students' voice within the research, this has allowed me insider knowledge into their perceptions of learning. This inclusion has allowed the research to be tailored towards the needs of the students, and has produced dialogue of an informative and insightful nature between teacher and student. I would credit the use of students as co researchers in any further research that I undertake with regards to my own education practice."
(Collins, 2003, p.56)

This writing highlights the incredible journey made within my understanding as a researcher, and the recognition that students have a voice that needs hearers to emerge. Involving students as named participants and co-researchers of the research substantiates the claims to knowledge that I make."
(Collins, 2003, pp.15-16)

Shane's view is reflected in Alderson's comment that:

"Respect for children's participation recognizes them as subjects rather than objects of research, who 'speak' in their own right and report valid views and experiences." (Alderson, 2000, p.4)

and

"To involve children more directly in research can rescue them from silence and exclusion, and from being represented, by default, as passive objects, while respect for their informed and voluntary consent can help to protect them from covert, invasive, exploitative or abusive research." (Alderson, 2000, p.4)

Anderson and Wood with reference to the Bedfordshire Schools Improvement Partnership (BSIP) however highlight the problems that can arise from working with students in this way:

"(Students) are potentially the most important source of information about the impact of developments in teaching and learning..however, student comments may be treated with some caution believing they cannot accurately and easily understand the dynamic of the classroom or articulate the complexity of a social science like education." (Alderson & Wood, 2003, p.24)

I disagree wholeheartedly with this statement, as students *are* the very dynamic of the classroom. They are the lifeblood that enables teachers to develop practice. The people who best understand the dynamics of the classroom are those within it, experiencing the learning on offer. Changing dialogue from *them and us* to *we* allows a better understanding the complexities of the classroom environment. It also has crucially an impact upon this environment. In this way, following the third presentation to the whole staff, the student researchers commented:

"After our third presentation to staff, we began to notice changes: the white background on the interactive whiteboard had now changed to black in several lessons-it was now easier for us to see. Also, some teachers began to move around their classroom more, exploring the little known area of the back row. Those sat at the back had more confidence to ask for help as a result, even if they had previously enjoyed their anonymous status!" (third-generation researcher, November 2006)

Students have a language for sharing their learning experiences, both with each other and with their school. As I listen to their dialogue and learn from it, I find myself enriched as a result. Asking students to use another's language to account for their learning removes the ownership of these comments from the students themselves. Instead, a research community needs to form in which a shared language between children and adults emerges. Whilst Anderson and Wood (2003) therefore recognize the importance of involving students as participants in research, their ears seem closed to the language employed:

"The students' voice relies on durable structures, appropriate protocols, expectations and a thorough preparation of staff and students to benefit from reflecting on practice. If students can be trained to offer measured, informed and articulate opinions then who better to feed back on learning and teaching than the students themselves" (Anderson and Wood, 2003, p.24)

I believe, in reference to these comments, that it is the hearers of student voices who need to learn to listen in a different way. If students are given set protocols on what evidence they may provide as valid, then we are inviting them into our world on our own terms. Instead we need to create space in which claims to know can emerge between research communities and in which we acknowledge the role of students as primary knowledge holders about learning:

"Children are the primary source of knowledge about their own views and experiences. They can be a means of access to other children, including those who may be protected from access by strange adults, such as Muslim girls."
(Alderson, 2000, p.13)

I believe that we need to sit alongside students on the *inside looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) when working with them in order to fully appreciate what they are trying to communicate. This is a way of working that has seen teachers, students and stakeholders move closer together within my current school. The students are asking teachers to listen to them in a different way, and the teachers are asking that the students' claims have evidence to support them.

Upon arrival at my current school, I did not recognise the need for students and teachers to establish relationships of trust together before being able to engage in dialogue about learning. I naively expected that this space was already in place, as within my former school. This recognition came about during the sixth-form student review of teaching and learning carried out in the Autumn Term of my first year. As part of this review I asked representatives of students in each teaching group to complete a questionnaire highlighting their own learning.

Before handing out this questionnaire, I did not consult with my colleagues or the students in order to establish trust between them for this process. Two days later, the questionnaires arrived back. The responses were on the whole positive about classroom practice and learning, and were an encouraging and engaging read. Comments also included "*the pace of lessons*" described as "*sometimes too slow".* As I shared this feedback with the colleagues concerned, one colleague took the comments to heart and was upset at the negative way in which her classroom practice was viewed as a result.

She commented at the time:

"I do not agree with this comment, as the students within the group are of mixed-ability, and we need to cater to all, not just some of them…The students were given no guidance on how to complete these forms, and I feel this type of feedback reflects negatively on us as a Department."

Following this feedback, the relationship between colleague, student and I was strained. This was a situation that only eased after some time. Trust through dialogue was not established between teacher and student before I asked the students to respond about their learning. The emerging trust that the colleague had in me was impeded as a result. The right conditions for dialogue about learning needed to emerge in a more inclusive way. I subsequently looked to student-led research as a means to create this trust through example; showing that they could act as responsible researchers until such time as teachers were ready to involve themselves.

The journey that has been undertaken both by the students and I since this experience has been significant in allowing this space and trust to emerge. I hope, that by sharing the significance of the experience above with you, you will come to appreciate how the development of the student voice work within the school has been a true evolution of the relationship between the school and its students: from scepticism to trust and engagement.

"*This experience is more about you learning about yourself than that of your Department.*" (a comment by my husband at the time of the sixth-form feedback in 2003)

This event showed me the importance of creating space for new ways of working before asking others to trust and enter into it. I began to see the experiences outlined above as a desire to work towards *personal mastery* (Senge, 1990) in which I wanted to create the space for living out the value of valuing the other. In this way, Senge talks about the connection to others and to life itself as being one of the qualities of "*personal mastery*". The motivation to recognise the other comes from the dynamic of my relationship with my husband. Without our shared value of trust I doubt I would have the same energy for creating the space in which this trust can emerge. Without the love that has surrounded me in my pursuit of this value, my pleasure in seeing it emerge would be a lonely sentiment.

Senge breaks down *personal mastery* into two activities:

"Clarifying what is important to us and secondly continually learning to see current reality more clearly." (Senge,1990, p.141)

I believe that the first has been possible as a result of my relationship and dialogue with others. Others support me in seeing more clearly and in asking me to provide evidence for what I claim to know. I am accountable to others who can ensure that the claims to knowledge I make are true and just.

My husband believes that a true individual quest for personal mastery is possible, and that it is this singular vision that supports the establishing of outstanding schools. In response, I believe others need to be invited to develop this vision and to believe in it, in order to experience the Arcadia of *being fully present* (Whitehead 2006) within it.

The frustration at the living contradiction I found myself to be during my first year in post has allowed me to recognise the:

"...juxtaposition of vision (what (I) want) and a clear picture of current reality (to) generate...creative tension: a force to bring them together, caused by the natural tendency of tension to seek resolution." (Senge, 1990, p.142)

I recognise that this juxtaposition is necessary in clarifying what is of importance. How an individual reacts to a living contradiction is a measure of how strong he connects with the values that he holds. Jack Whitehead (2006) refers to a Buddhist researcher (Adler-Collins) with whom he works who perceives mistakes as opportunities for learning. Referring back to the creative tension that I held within my first year as Head of Department, I felt that I was not able to embrace these "mistakes" as opportunities at the time. Mistakes were something to bring about feelings of guilt and to hide behind, yet eventually challenged me to seek the space in order to live out my values. Senge (1990) describes my situation then as a:

"...rubber band which is stretched between vision and current reality. What does tension seek? Resolution or release. There are only two possible ways for the tension to resolve itself: pull reality towards the vision or pull vision towards reality.

Which occurs will depend on whether we hold steady to the vision." (Senge, 1990, p.150)

I believe to be sharing with you through this writing how the strength in the relationships I share has allowed me to embrace this creative tension and to seek resolution where mistakes occur. I am learning to embrace my enemy as a critical friend, making meaning from events in which I show errors of judgement. I hope through doing this, that I can live in a hopeful and not remorseful way. I aim to see opponents to student-led enquiry challenging the work they are undertaking, in the hope that they may strengthen it as a result. I identify with Rayner's statement as a way of living that I believe to be moving beyond:

"We sentence ourselves to a loveless life in adversity in which we are up against 'it' and against 'them', forming alliances only through our identification of common enemies who we can take sides against. We sacrifice our capacity for love to an oppressive struggle for power that can only be resolved by the elimination of one or the other. We 'take arms against a sea of troubles' in the vain belief that we can 'by opposing, end them." (Rayner, 2007, p.5)

Delong (2002) talks of conversations with oneself as a means to make meaning from events and conversations that have occurred. These conversations that I hold allow me to go beyond the immediacy of an event and reflect upon its value, particularly in adverse situations. I believe that one voice lives in *current reality* (Senge, 1990) whilst a second looks beyond this to *personal vision* (Senge, 1990). The use of these two voices I see as a means of embracing *creative tension* (Senge, 1990); one voice reminding me of where I am headed and what really matters; reflecting on the other's hasty actions. These *conversations with myself* take place in my car on the journey to and from work, whilst I am running in green space and in the dying moments of the day.

In my first year as Head of Department the mutual trust and support that I needed did not yet exist within my workplace. I was battling against a tide I had not been part of. Without a feeling of shared vision, I felt I was choosing to *pull my vision toward reality* (Senge, 1990), accepting the current situation within the Department as the space of which I could be a part. It was only through the strength I shared with my husband that allowed me the motivation to create a shared vision within the Department. As

he reminded me, I learnt which battles are worth fighting and which do not merit such exertion.

Marshall (1995) recognises the role of women senior managers when they are acting as change agents[7] in situations that prove exceedingly difficult. She describes that these women, new to their position, had all been successful in previous roles. This reflects my own position at the time. She cites their extreme persistence in the face of unpropitious circumstances and lists certain characteristics these women shared, some of which I identify clearly with. These included becoming over-committed to work, as well as losing other sources of perspective in their lives. The strength that I drew from the relationship with my husband however allowed me to forego the feelings of isolation that she describes. My journey was never a lone one and he was always on that difficult path alongside me.

Figure 17: Image of my classroom at 18:00 on a winter's evening
I believe this image to reflect the space left to me at the end of a school day, which allows me to reflect on what has been and to make sense from non-sense.

Marshall (1995) cites one example of a Director of Nursing who was too committed to potential organizational changes to heed her own concerns and to trust her gut reaction that was telling her to slow down "*there's something wrong here*" (Marshall,

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[7] I have acted as change agent in this process, creating the space for students to research in this way. I have looked to an equal power relation between student researchers and school stakeholders in which each supports the role of the other. In asking the question *"Student-led research, yes. But what's it all for?"* I am looking at the intrinsic motivation for students working in this way. To enhance the position of the student body, yes, yet a partnership needs to evolve between this group and the school in which both can benefit and learn alongside the other. It is this purpose for student-led research, beyond the benefits to students of developing the student voice, which is omitted by Kellet:

"This brings us to a consideration of children as researchers in their own right, or 'active researchers' as is the preferred terminology in this paper. Such initiatives acknowledge the importance of affording children and young people a voice which is listened to and heard by adults." (Kellet, 2005b, p.5)

1995, p.9). I recognise myself in this example. I was too focussed on introducing the National Strategy in my first year in post (see Chapter 4) to see that this was the wrong time to be doing this. The support structure of trust and a shared vision about the strategy was not in place. I was bullheaded in my approach, devoting hours to developing the new scheme of work despite my colleagues' protests. My own *gut instinct* my *inner voice* was screaming at me to slow down and reconsider, but at the time I could not see. I was blinkered in the role of a change agent trying to be efficient without being effective.

Throughout the long, dark evenings of that first year I would look around the Department office and wander through the classrooms when everyone had left. It was at these times where I was able to make meaning from events and dialogue. These quiet moments of reflection allowed me to draw upon the strength of shared values between my husband and I as I sought to make things better. I connect with Day (2003) as he writes:

"Teaching is by definition, a journey of hope based upon a set of ideals. I, as a teacher, can and will make a difference to the learning and the lives of the students I teach and the colleagues with whom I work-despite an acute awareness of obstacles of motivation and commitment (my own and others), the socio-economic circumstances of students, resource constraints, and policy factors over which I have no control..Arguably it is our ideals that sustain us through challenging times and difficult circumstances; and it is our ideals which commit us to changing and improving our practice as the needs of students and the demands of society change." (Day, 2003, p.20)

In response to Day's words I recognize also the impact that colleagues and students have upon my set of ideals. They allow me to develop ideals alongside them, in order that the journey of hope is a shared one. Embracing the obstacles that we face as opportunities to learn is a difficult process, yet the strength and motivation that we gain from the significant others with whom we live and enquire supports us in doing this. Therefore, in my relationship with Simon, we continue on a shared journey of hope together that we can improve the schools within which we work alongside colleagues and students. We ask that the other faces up to challenges and responds to them, knowing that in doing so we emerge with a renewed sense of the commitment to our shared living values.

5.2 Learning within shared space

Personal renewal and making meaning from events and dialogue is a process that I believe every researcher undertakes in both conscious and unconscious thought. This shows the great capacity of the self to be regenerative in adverse circumstances, in which the learning from significant events becomes clear. This energy for renewal that each individual holds comes as a result of the strength and motivation that we draw from our shared lives.

For my husband this renewal takes place when he is writing. It is on the half-hour car journey that he makes every day on his return from work. For him, this is creation of sense from non-sense, of the realization of work well done and of further improvements to be made. In conversations with himself, he is able to make meaning and plan the path forward:

"*Through my first person account I am able to utilise reflection in a methodical way that allows me access to working through the issues that I face within my day-to-day experiences.*" (Riding, S. 2008, p.167)

For me, renewal is a combination of actions. Being within the physical space of the workplace, sharing those boundaries where decisions are made, is important. Before I remove myself from that domain, the physical reality and proximity of the shared office and classrooms support me in the immediacy of reflection. This is not a static physical environment, but a living breathing space which evolves through action and reflection. The ghosts of events and conversations continue when the lights have been turned off.

"*I seek to turn puzzles, problems and curiosities into cycles of enquiry-meaning evolving processes incorporating appropriate, and repeated, movements between action and reflection-which will allow me to take them further and explore them in practice. Otherwise they may become stagnant or, worse still, turn into mantras of worry.*" (Marshall, 1995, p.4)

Rayner (2005) refers to:

"*...the dynamics of space and time in the evolution of natural form.*"
(Rayner, 2005, p.4)

I hold the meaning of natural form within this to be the presence of a person within their shared space at any given time, shared space in which the *presence of the absence* (Rayner, 2005) can be felt. Rayner continues to say that we must:

"*...transcend orthodox logic based on discrete objects or "wholes" complete within themselves and so transacting within pre-set limits...through the inclusional logic of distinct ever-transforming relational, and hence, incomplete, "places".*"
(Rayner, 2005, p.4)

I take Rayner's notion of *inclusional logic* and compare this with my husband's "*living myself through others*" (Riding, S., 2003). They both argue that the self needs to consider the other as part of one's natural domain. The self evolves beyond pre-set limits through interaction and therefore understanding with other people. Each person evolves dependant on the contact that s/he has with others and the dynamics of the space in which his/her shared lives occurs. Each individual is reliant on the physical and emotional connections made.

Alongside dialogue, I believe that physical actions renew our connection to the space that we occupy. It is our grounding. On a weekday evening after leaving work, I ache for the physical and emotional release of running. Even on the coldest and darkest nights, I feel a physical need within me to re-balance myself with the Earth. This is a time when the day is re-run outside of the physical domain of school and office. Rhythm of foot and breathing allow me to find the connection with the physical. I run and relax into my thoughts. They come thick and fast, as an unbundled incoherent flow, or a repeated scene with different scenarios played and re-played. These are conversations with myself to make sense from non-sense.

Similarly at the weekends, I have a thirst to walk and touch nature. These are days when there is a lengthened period of renewal and of reflection. Instead of the *presence of the absence* (Rayner, 2005) at the end of the school day or the immediacy of the jumbled thoughts such as those whilst running, there is a calmer sense of re-ordering. These are days when my husband asks: "*Why do you want to go walking by yourself*?" particularly on a cold and wet November day, but it is the need for green space to help create order, calm and hope. I have more images of this scene from the awakening of Spring, the glory of a Summer's evening and the russets of a golden Autumn day. It was however important to me that I share this

winter's scene for you, for this is when I feel most alive in this environment and most at home.

Figure 18: Reflection and co-creation whilst looking across my favourite valley near my home
It is within this space that I can connect and make meaning from the contacts that I have had in my shared life. I re-connect with this green space as allowing me fresh perspectives on old dilemmas.

It has taken a lot of persuasion for my husband to join me on these walks. He is now discovering his own renewal process through contact with green space. These shared walks allow us time to reconnect as husband and wife, and to make sense from the non-sense of the week. He recently said: "*It doesn't matter how many times you walk the same path, there is always something new to discover";* I connect this with the learning conversations we undertake at these times.

Laidlaw (1996) talks of the importance of walking in the countryside as the regeneration of herself and her life of enquiry:

"*When engaged in a challenging and creative activity I also need to keep feeding myself aesthetically and I do this by walking in the countryside surrounding our home. I find that engagement with the beauty of the world in this way reminds me of my place within it. I become grounded by my sense of belonging to and having a place to be that connects me to everything else. As I walk I am acutely aware of my surroundings and myself and how the two are intertwined. For some reason this engagement with the natural world gives me a sense of purpose, a sense of being, a sense of belonging.*" *(Laidlaw, 1996, p.59)*

Rayner (2005) looks at our human need to see space and boundaries as *connective, reflective and co-creative*. I believe the relationship I share with nature reflects these three qualities in the same way as does my professional life.

Figure 19: A bright sky on a winter's day brings clarity and hope to my thoughts

Within these three terms offered by Rayner, I feel that the merging of professional and personal boundaries is part of this renewal process. *Connection* is the deep breath at the top of a valley whilst admiring the view. It is the conversations with student researchers about our ongoing enquiry. *Reflection* is the consideration of how a scene changes throughout the year. It is the re-playing of a conversation within the mind to seek meaning from it. *Co-creation* is the evolution of shared living values between students, teachers and stakeholders through enquiry. It is the selective picking of blackberries in autumn to allow others the chance to grow.

Jack Whitehead (2006b) refers to the cosmos and the representation of the physical environment. Looking around his office, the first thing that strikes me is the sense of ordered chaos, of a need for quiet disorder. The next are the images supplied by Alan Rayner on the wall, and the descriptions of these underneath. How many times, I reflect, does Jack seek a visual escape or a re-ordering of his inner calm through these images?

The next item I seek out is the work of Jack's research students in pride of place on a high shelf. Names such as Kevin Eames, Jackie Delong and Moyra Evans: writings familiar to me yet people with whom I have never shared physical space. Jack is the lynchpin that holds all these people together, and who allows interconnectivity between us all. He is the physical and psychological link, giving us each ideas of how to connect with the other, and then seeing the fruits of this connection develop. The evolution of a multimedia form of representation of enquiry, including e-based technology, allows these researchers to connect in a way that text alone does not. Jack validates this in the following way:

"Visual narratives are needed to bring both living logics and expressions of energy with values into valid explanations of our educational influences in our own learning." *(Whitehead, 2007, p.1)*

"Visual narratives can communicate meanings of energy with values with the living logics in explanations of educational influence in learning that are contributing to the creation of world of educational quality." *(Whitehead, 2007, p.2)*

Through my writing I aim to convince you that the journey that I have undertaken with others allows each of us involved to co-create and to find energy through this process. The research community with whom I learn and share provides this space. Each event and conversation that takes place changes the dynamics of this space. People leave and others replace them, yet the presence of their absence remains in the shared values developed within the group. This space lives and breathes, allowing a renewal of motivation and energy alongside it.

Summary of this Chapter

After considering my life with these significant others and the school, I now turn to the emergence of shared living values between student researchers and myself in an

intergenerational way. Without the energy and motivation gained through the relationships described to you in this Chapter, this would not have been possible. The shared life that I have led has afforded me the passion and love to enquire with student researchers in the way I now describe to you.