

How do I come to understand my shared living educational standards of judgement in the life I lead with others? Creating the space for intergenerational student-led research

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Abstract

In this account I describe how the shared life that I lead with my husband Simon transforms itself into a loving energy that emerges in our educational practice. This loving way of being emerges as the energy that drives me to transform the social formation of the school to work alongside student researchers in an intergenerational and sustainable way.

These living and loving standards of judgment are shared between us, asking the other to be the best that s/he can be and valuing the contribution that s/he makes. I live out an inclusional way of being that extends across the professional and personal domain, asking me to be responsive to the others with whom I share this life.

This account attempts to explicate the emergence and significance of these standards between those in my life.

The boundaries shared between participants on this journey are fluid and dynamic. They are permeable, yet also recognise the limitations of certain relationships into impermeable boundaries.

In the current debate about personalised learning within education, I see a new language of education emerging, shared between school and student researchers that places learning at its heart. I am supporting Schon's (1995) call for the emergence of a new epistemology for educational knowledge with the expression and clarification of new living standards of judgment that can contribute to enhancing educational space.

Key acronyms used

H.E. Researcher	Researcher employed in Higher Education
DCSF	The Department for Children, Schools and Families (formerly DFES)
DFES	The Department for Education and Skills (until 2003)
The KS3 strategy	The Key Stage 3 strategy for 11-14 year olds introduced in 2003 across the Foundation subjects
BECTA	The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency
SaRs	Students (working) as researchers
BPRS	Best Practice Research Scholarships
AST	Advanced Skills Teacher
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
KEEP toolkit	Knowledge Exchange Exhibition and Presentation: a set of tools that enable faculties and students to create succinct Web-based representations of aspects of teaching and learning so they can be shared with others
(1)	First-generation student researcher
(2)	Second-generation student researcher

Chapter 1: Framing the enquiry

I am sharing this writing with you as a creative response to the emergent loving nature that I share with my husband and the significant others with whom we share our lives, in order to show how our relationally dynamic standards of judgement allow us to live, love and learn with others. I wish to show you how embracing this way of living has brought about learning in an intergenerational way: with student researchers, teacher-researchers, H.E. Researchers and the school.

Intergenerational I define as children and adults of different ages, backgrounds and experiences coming together to research.

I aim to show you, through a multi-media perspective, how I can come to understand myself and my relationship with significant others within the shared space that we occupy. I also aim to share with you how boundaries between these individuals have evolved through the participants' shared love of enquiry into the world. It is this shared journey, embracing relationships of trust with the other, which allows us to rediscover the pleasure in one's chosen life. I share a rough story of self that will demonstrate how, despite tension and disappointment, I am able to maintain and respond to a shared life-affirming energy that gives me motivation for what I do.

I aim to show how a loving form of life-affirming energy can exist between individuals, within a school and within a marriage. I believe to be making a contribution to an emerging epistemology of educational knowledge shared between people in a loving way.

The first part of my reflections of my *life in networks* (Farren, 2005) is made during a difficult year of transition for myself, as I moved into a new role as Department Leader in a new school. When I now look back at this writing, I see the tension between these key narratives of ruin and what follows. I do not see the same level of responsiveness within this first part, and have struggled to let it remain as part of the text I now share. As my tutor Jack Whitehead said, I must however embrace this early part of my writing as it reflects who I was at that time. To alter it would be to alter who I was and the truth of the account that I am sharing with you as my reader. I would be offering you instead a distorted view that would undoubtedly show a smoother story of self; looking back through rose tinted glasses.

Throughout this enquiry, I can demonstrate how I have embraced Cho's (2005) notion of love, and show how this forms part of the complex relationship with myself and with others. I will also share with you how I have been able to create the space, for the shared love of enquiry in student-led enquiry to evolve. Of love, Lohr (2006) states:

"For me love is a sense of pleasure, acceptance, creation and connection that can be found within relationships. This applies not only in relationships with people, but also with nature, ideas and sometimes material objects. Mine is a relational and responsive way of being, seeing and learning where love is in the weft and the warp of connection." (Lohr, 2006, p.4)

Love means acceptance of my successes and failures, and it means tolerance of others' views that may differ from my own. Love asks me to embrace the unexpected. Accepting love as a way I choose to live my life has opened me to appreciation of the other. It is however a word that I have struggled to embrace in the political educational climate in which I work. Researching together in a loving way with students employs language that challenges the political boundaries imposed by our society. It is one of the examples of the creative tension felt throughout the lifespan of this enquiry. Senge's (1990) notion of creative tension and vision has often allowed me to see light at the end of the tunnel on the darkest and coldest of evenings. Senge's quest however seems a lone one. Even when I am the last to leave exhausted, I can still smile at the knowledge of the warmth that I carry as a result of my life with others.

Lohr (2006) feels the same creative tension in her recognition of love as a living value:

"However, what I am concerned with is the validation of the transformatory nature of love through praxis. When my outward actions are open to the judgement of others, as they inevitably are, and by setting (as I have shown) the same criteria for judging the efficacy of my spiritual practice and the worth of my action, love, as a living value, is an acceptable standard within the academy with which accounts of practice may be judged." (Lohr, 2006, p.6)

I wish to share with you how the unique relationship of husband-wife and co-enquirers has allowed me to demonstrate a shared life-affirming energy. This energy

allows each of us to strengthen what we do in the workplace. We ask the other to be the best that he/she can be.

My husband writes about love:

“This is the first time that I’ve heard ‘love’ talked about in the school and certainly within the senior team at Bitterne Park. I was reminded of Jack’s love and it was the same type of love that I was able to connect with: the sense of family or community love. I made the connection between community love and learning and this is the essence of the values that I hold.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.194)

Throughout my past, current and intended enquiry I aim to understand my motivation for my shared life with others. I hope to discover how shared living standards of judgement with significant others in my life give me the energy and passion with which to live, love and enquire. I want to examine the motivation that these shared values both from the perspective of my relationship with my husband alongside the shared love for enquiry developed through student-led research in my school. I wish to fully understand the intertwining of values between the professional and the personal through answering the following questions:

What is the significance of this enquiry in offering shared living standards of judgment as motivation to enquire?

Does intergenerational student-led enquiry provide a platform for enhanced, sustainable research in schools?

How does my chosen methodological approach support my claims to knowledge?

I needed to come to understand the role of the other in creating conditions that allow me to lead a more fulfilling educational life. This is in particular with regards the work of student researchers as allowing practitioners like me to better understand our common space. Johnson (2005) asks ‘*Are you happy?*’ in which she acknowledges research as *Sunday best* thinking by many practitioners. I look to bring research into the arena of practitioners through student-led research, asking classroom-based practitioners to see the students’ work as important in bringing forward new knowledge about the school. My interest in student-led research therefore partially

coming from a selfish perspective: *What's in it for me? For my colleagues? For the school?*

I have had the pleasure of being involved in student-research for over seven years, when I was asked by a Year 10 student why he hadn't been involved in my research into his classroom. This journey has seen me work firstly with students as active research participants before moving into the domain of student-led research. This change in focus has come about from the limitations of influence that active participants have in teacher-led research, when compared to the enriching learning that student researchers offer in their own right. The research moves from teacher-led to student-led domain, with the main beneficiary still being the school community that both these serve to improve. I believe that this enquiry goes far beyond Roberts & Nash's (2006) definition of the student-researcher role:

"Students-as-researchers is used to describe inquiry work undertaken by students which has the potential to impact on school improvement. Students frame projects which discover what other students do, think and feel." (Robert's & Nash, 2006, p.6)

Roberts et al have not considered the work of student researchers to embrace a range of perspectives that span the school community, nor do they allude to the pleasure and motivation needed to undertake this type of enquiry. Johnson (2005) asks us to consider how important the workplace is in providing practitioners with key elements needed for personal wellbeing, and I relate this to the joy of learning rediscovered through a child's eyes. She also leads us to consider the connections between the lives of the electorate, and I believe that student-led enquiry brings the electorate together in conversations about learning.

Rayner (2006a) describes this change as teachers moving from a *detached standpoint* with regards student research, to one of *immersion*:

"The growth towards this dynamic framing is accompanied by a feeling of empathic rapport that I can only describe as 'joy'. And this joy is something we can all feel in our everyday relationships whenever we 'let ourselves go' and open up to one another. No longer do we seek perfection within ourselves as independent individuals, but instead comprehend our diverse and changeable forms as expressions of the space we all include and are included by. And this diversity is seen not as a source of differences that conflict, but of differences that complement one another." (Raynor, 2006a, p.1)

Accepting student-led research as part of collaborative research has brought about a new debate about existing research paradigms. It is clear that this type of research does not fit neatly into existing categories of research. This is neither practitioner-based nor academic-based, yet still retains the same objective as both: to improve education:

“One of the great imponderables is whether child-led research can continue to grow within existing adult research parameters or whether we need to begin to consider a new paradigm to accommodate it. What is clear is that research by children is fundamentally different from adult research about children and we cannot use the same norms of reference nor the same terms of measurement and assessment. The time to begin that deliberation process is now before we are overtaken by a wave of child-led research which we are ill-prepared for and have not properly considered how to receive it, measure it or value it.” (Kellett, 2005, p.31)

Fielding and Bragg (2003) view student inquiry work as allowing students the opportunity to escape from a dominant identity of the passive and powerless objects of adult decision; instead making and become creators of knowledge in their own right.

I argue, in this account, for the work of students-as-researchers to evolve into an intergenerational way of working that enhances their enquiry. This evolution allows student as researcher work to become sustainable and embedded within the school through the constant renewal of participants and a passion for enquiry.

I consider how this work benefits the school, the wider educational community and the academic field¹. I go beyond the involvement of students-as-researchers as advocated by researchers such as Kellett (2005a, 2005b) Ruddock and Flutter

¹ *“Within the education portfolio, there is a marked tendency for senior policy makers to bring ‘pupil voice’ into the policy conversation as a means of achieving school improvement and higher standards of attainment, rather than as a matter of UN convention, citizenship and rights. The Department for Educational Standards (now the Department for Children, Family & Schools) publication, “Schools building on success” (2001), for example, suggests that pupils should be involved in decisions not just about their own individual learning, but about their class and school as a whole. This is to be achieved through the establishment of school councils and regular surveys of pupil attitudes” (Gunter et al, 2007, p.3)*

(2004) and Fielding and Bragg (2003) by looking at the sustainability of this type of enquiry in schools through intergenerational research. There is no “*off-switch*” that can be employed once students have begun to work in this way, and I wish to consider the long-term effects of students working as researchers. Within Chapter 6 I will share with you a relationship with student researchers spanning seven years. I look beyond the benefits to students of working as researchers, and look instead at the benefits for the school and for the stakeholders within it.

This type of enquiry, as advocated by researchers such as Kellett (2002, 2003, 2005a, 2005b) Frost & Holden (2006) and Frost (2007), will support the sharing of this type of work through webspace *between* students *by* students in their work as student researchers. I believe that students need to write in their own language about the importance of their work as researchers. I end this enquiry with their voice to highlight this. Whilst researchers may write in the third person about student research processes and outcomes, Kellett agrees that students themselves are the best medium for this type of guidance:

“Children observe with different eyes, ask different questions – they ask questions that adults do not even think of -, have different concerns and have immediate access to peer culture where adults are outsiders. The research agendas children prioritize, the research questions they frame and the way in which they collect data are substantially different from adults and all of this can offer valuable insights and original contributions to knowledge.” (Kellett, 2005, p.8)

This allows students to learn from each other, and in this way expands on my work with intergenerational student researchers, in which co-mentoring and co-enquiry between students have been essential. Kellett asks that student researchers undertake research in a responsive way, developing their own methodology and ways of enquiring that respond to their enquiry. This responsive approach to student-led enquiry has been an essential part of what has been achieved in this enquiry. Presenting students with a given methodological approach would limit the richness of what they bring to the enquiry.

The mentors asked questions that challenged the students to consider where the research was headed and the strength of their methodology. This led initially to confusion and even resentment that we were not providing them with the “*answers*”,

yet is an aspect that has seen the student researchers grow enormously in confidence and in the ability to develop their own ways of working.

I need to explore my own role within the student-led enquiries. I believe that I have been responsible for creating the right conditions and space for student research. I stand as an advocate for this type of work, creating the necessary space for student research to take place. I placed myself in the firing line with colleagues through firstly focussing student research on my own classroom practice. This way of working allowed others to stand on the sidelines and judge, secure in their own position, whilst asking them to consider this kind of research. I believe in creating confidence through example, and that the quality of learning outcomes produced by the student researchers will inspire other colleagues to become involved. I will share with you such a journey, beginning with myself as a sole advocate for student research before growing to include work with the school.

The role of H.E. Researcher however still remains crucial in the quality control and validity of the project. Coulter (1999) talks about the need for:

“...the two solitudes (of academic-research and practitioner-research) to meet...”

and

“...the discussion moving from focussing on generating knowledge necessary for scholarly research to examining the dialogue itself...” (Coulter, 1999, p.5)

In working together with an H.E. Researcher, the student researchers have had access to an *outside, looking-in* (Rayner, 2006b) view of their research. There has been an opening of dialogue between the academic research community, practitioner-based researchers, students-researchers and the school. The scope of voices included within this approach has allowed the focus not to be solely on the outcome of the research, but the excitement of the possibilities of the process itself. It has been possible to see how these communities working together enhance this type of dialogue. An H.E. Researcher has worked with the students in a mentoring role that has allowed those new to research to find their own direction through targeted questioning and response. This relationship I will explore later within Chapter 6.

It is my intention, through this enquiry, to share with you the dynamic life-affirming standards by which I live my life. Significantly, this will centralise on those standards shared between my husband and myself and how this quality of relationship supports our choices in what we chose to do professionally. We both believe that the shared values we hold can enhance our professional lives, and we therefore seek to live out similar values in the workplace.

I aim to show how a loving form of life-affirming energy can exist between individuals, within the school and within a marriage, and how this collective energy emerges in a joint energy for what we do.

1.1 Asking the other to be the best that s/he can be

I want to be the best that I can be in my personal and professional life. This is one of the dynamic living standards of judgment that I live out with my husband. We ask that the other uses his/her gifts and talents in the sharing of life with significant others and fundamentally in the giving of life to our daughter and our professional motivation.

My husband and I see this living standard from a different perspective: the "we" and the "I". Simon sees the "I" as a distinguishable quality, the starting point is a separate entity standing alone before drawing upon his/her shared life. I am immersed meanwhile within the "we", seeing my qualities as a result of a shared life. This is the distinguishable quality between two enquiries that share the same living standards of judgement. It is through our writings that we are learning to respect this difference, learning that we do not need to assimilate our viewpoint to that of the other, but that we can gain strength from his/her perspective:

"I believe that you need to understand yourself first before you can look at your relationship with others." (comment made by Simon to me in June 2005)

Simon and I ask how we can improve the systems within which we live, in order that we can recognise the other within them. Simon looks to do this within the domain of teacher-led research whilst I am looking to student-led research as a vehicle for improvement. Space is created for enhanced relationships between students, teachers and school stakeholders in which research for improvement is the key motivation bringing people together. The space expands to include academic researchers and generations of old and new researchers working together. The

intergenerational approach to this space allows established researchers to become excited about learning again and the young to reach new levels of understanding and insight. My hope in sharing this enquiry with you is for the influence of this dynamic space to be extended: to other students, schools and researchers, so that the excitement felt through shared learning about education is embraced:

"This understanding leads in turn to some new and exciting ideas about what it means to be human in a complex, rapidly changing world. These ideas are based on regarding the human 'Self' as a dynamic coupling of inner and outer through intermediary aspects, in much the same way that we can understand a river system as a creative interplay of stream with landscape mediated through its banks and valley sides. Each aspect simultaneously shapes the other." (Rayner, 2006b, p.4)

It is human nature to hold conversations with others. This thesis has been for me the re-awakening to the joy that learning alongside others brings to me. Before I always relished the opportunity to learn both professionally and personally, yet it is only now that I have opened my eyes again to an *inside looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) view of learning as advocated by Rayner (2006b) that allows me to immerse myself in these learning conversations:

"A learning conversation is a planned and systematic approach to professional dialogue that supports teachers to reflect on their practice. As a result the teacher gains new knowledge and uses it to improve his or her teaching."

(General Teaching Council for England, 2004, p.1)

The GTC views these learning conversations as something planned and systematic, although I argue that it is through unplanned, spontaneous conversation that we gain the most. I believe that it is contact with others in classrooms, on corridors and at home that creates a spark of excitement between those involved.

This enquiry is centred on how these conversations bring about shared educational living standards of judgements. I use the term living to explain that these standards evolve through the enquiry and also between the people involved. The ownership of the enquiry belongs to those involved in it and it is these significant others who hold us to account for what we do and how we choose to represent the enquiry to the outside world.

I look to the relationship with my husband as the basis for creating these living standards of judgement, and seek to understand how through these relational standards we live and create together. Asking the other to be the best that he/she can be, in that his/her educational work reflects this standard and makes him/her worthy of the other. This recognition of the other affords us a shared life-affirming energy in which we love together in Cho's (2005) explanation of love as *enquiry into the world together*.

Within this enquiry I aim to live out Simon's standard of "*living myself through others*" (Riding, S., 2003) that he employs to better understand the systems within which he works. Simon believes that in order to live out this standard, an individual must first understand himself. It is only through consideration of how he has become the educator he is that he can then work with others in the name of improvement. Simon writes:

"This story is included in order to demonstrate my own value that I place on the importance of understanding the life history of an individual in relation to the practitioner and person that they are. I have applied this story to my own practice in order to understand why it is that I have made certain decisions within my practice and also within my own life. It is my belief that my autobiographical experiences have positively driven me on. Within my thesis I deal with a number of key moments: of being a school refuser; of meeting and marrying my wife; of learning of my father's lung-cancer, being three of them. These experiences, both positive and negative, I use to help me demonstrate my own learning through living and how this learning continues to contribute to my understanding of the world and my place within it."
(Riding, S., 2008, p.15)

Simon then goes on to show he connects with others in his enquiry:

"I want to clearly argue that the values I hold are based on the relationships that I have with others and that it is through these relationships that my values qualify themselves and respond to the living environment I am part of." (Riding, S, 2008, p.24)

The juxtaposition within our approach can therefore be defined as:

I to We (Simon)

We to I (Karen)

Both viewpoints ask us to open up ourselves to the other: to see others with different viewpoints, not as a threat, but rather as an alternative that adds energy to our enquiry. Similarly Lohr (2006) highlights her relationship with her husband as a way of accepting that another can be different, but that we individuals can still open up to their viewpoint and their way of thinking in a positive and energising way, as we accept that a loving way of enquiry accepts difference and challenge:

"I wanted to listen to what Paul was saying. I value what he says, not the way that he says it. As he is speaking I hold a sense of love in my body; it is an embodied vision. I stayed in touch with a sense memory of how Paul is willing to help me by agreeing to have a video'd conversation. I began to understand this as the tacit enaction of eros. Because we live together I have tried to understand how he sees the world; I have tried to get under his skin. I want to understand how he uses language and emotion so that we can communicate better. I began to understand this is as the tacit enaction of agape." (Lohr, 2006, p.15)

This emerging understanding has allowed us to create shared space with others in which generations of researchers and practitioners work alongside the other. The boundaries of our defined roles evolve so that real dialogue about learning takes place.

In Simon's work, this has involved setting up a practitioner-researcher group within a school that has not traditionally welcomed teachers working in this way. He has opened this space successfully to generations of practitioner-researchers from Newly Qualified Teacher to Middle Leader, and considers how this space can be sustained over time. He brings academic-researchers alongside practitioner-researchers so that they may engage together in an enhanced form of dialogue about learning.

In my work, I have created the conditions within a traditional grammar school that permeate traditional boundaries: bringing the outside research community into the school and taking the research outside. Within this space generations of academic-researchers, student researchers, practitioner-researchers and the school work with each other in a new way. Each member of this shared space gives yet also receives new knowledge. The pursuit of academic success within the systems of curriculum and the school day remain, yet alongside this the role of research seeks to enhance

this educational space. In this all stand united: student-researcher, practitioner-researcher and academic researcher.

My actions and thoughts come as a result of my relation with others. Each conversation influences me in some way. In no way is this more evident than in the shared space between my husband and I. When apart, I carry the values of our relationship with me, and this influences my thoughts and actions. We ask the other, to be receptive to those who do not necessarily share our values or standards of judgement. I can demonstrate that we have both moved from a position of exclusion to reception of the other. We have both learnt to embrace contrasting viewpoints, including each other's, as ways that strengthen our enquiry.

Whilst I remain in the security and challenge of this circle with my husband, our shared space is interconnected to the space representing our professional life and the space we share with others. In writing this thesis, I ask how this interconnectivity can best be understood, can serve to enhance the space that already exists and can lead to a future where the *possible becomes probable* (Whitehead, Joan, 2004)

Part of this interconnectivity has been the evolvment of the space that I share with students. As a teacher, I was aware of myself teaching but could not see as a learner alongside the students in my class. I looked through this enquiry to gain a two-way dynamic in the classroom: learning and teaching. I learn from students as they learn from me. I stand in front of the class as a teacher and look to provide knowledge, yet through student research I also don my carnival mask of co-researcher and learner alongside the students. Creating the space for student contribution to the school allows them to support the environment in which they find themselves and to give something back to it.

This student-researcher space empowers students to ask questions and to ask individuals to recognise the contribution that they can make. One of the key narratives that I will share with you is their work with a teacher who asked the question "*Yes, but what is this all for?*" after the students presented their findings from the foundational project. The reaction of the student researchers and my own to this question shows how the group has embraced their potential enemy as a critical friend.

Through my work within the school, I look to create the necessary space for students

to work independently as researchers. I look to recognise the capacity of the other, of the student as a learner and a sharer of knowledge, as a human being. I am looking to bring about a loving quality of relationship that exists between students themselves in the *pursuit of knowledge together* (Cho, 2005), and between students and teachers that both celebrates and encourages our human nature to learn.

The students' work has allowed them to enhance the space in which they find themselves and has allowed classroom teachers to become excited about the new knowledge they see with their own eyes. Whilst I do not claim that this level of excitement has been embraced at every level of the school community, I will share how their work has moved from my own classroom to whole-school.

I am looking to explore the impact of student voice beyond a superficial level within a school. I am looking at *what's in it for me and the school*. I believe that if I can show that there are real gains from this type of undertaking within schools, then school communities may again examine the role of student voice that they encourage beyond a superficial level. Crucially I look towards the sustainability of students working in this way with their school community through an intergenerational approach.

I have worked with student researchers over a time period spanning seven years, both at my former school (Westwood St. Thomas) and now at my current school (Bishop Wordsworth). The work with student researchers has been conducted in different ways at the two schools, but with the same founding principles. I focus here upon the enquiry at Bishop Wordsworth's School, as my previous research has documented the Westwood St. Thomas story². I believe that whilst the process of student research is different in every school, the avocation of student-research within the school community can have the same profound effects. I believe that students themselves working in this way can learn from each other, and that by opening up a vehicle of communication between students from different schools and backgrounds, a new and exciting network is being created.

Within their work, my own role has been to advocate intergenerational student-led research. Working with generations of students-as-researchers together has shown

² Refers to my Master's Module as "*How can I improve students' self awareness through self-evaluating and re-drafting in MFL?*" (Collins, K., 2003) retrieved from <http://people.bath.ac.uk/edsajw/mastermod.shtml> on 16.04.06

how living standards of judgement can be reached, not simply between the students themselves, but also between the students and the school. Coulter (1999) talks of dialogism and its role within community and educational-based research. He looks at how examining dialogue itself from participants of a research community does not simply provide us with solutions about policies and the best way to proceed, but can provide us with the opportunity to consider the voices of others in real terms. I relate this to the notion of carnival as proposed by Bakhtin (1991) and the ideas of Rayner (2006b) with regards the inclusional nature of our shared boundaries:

"This 'inclusional logic' treats all natural form as receptive-responsive flow-form, lacking any fixed executive centre or centres. Correspondingly, space and boundaries are envisaged as connective, reflective and co-creative rather than divisive. They therefore play a vital role in producing varied and dynamic natural form." (Rayner, 2006b, p.4)

In my view, both look at the interconnectivity of our shared boundaries. I believe within this enquiry to have shown how these shared boundaries have evolved with individuals showing new ways of knowing which emerge from the strength of relationship that they hold with the others. These boundaries have grown to include others within them who were earlier excluded, either through their own choice or their undiscovered joy that this shared work could bring.

The love that I share with the students as we seek to create new knowledge comes from the quality of life-affirming energy and the dynamic quality of relationship that my husband and I share; as co-researchers, as critical friends of each other's work and as unfailing believers that the other can and will succeed. We will the other to be the best that s/he can be.

Marian Naidoo (2005) has already explored how the relationship of two people can create compassion, yet I believe, as my husband and as my tutor Jack Whitehead believe, that we are creating new relationally dynamic living standards of judgement as we live, love and learn together:

"My reason for focusing on educational influences is that I identify education with the lives of individuals as we learn to live loving and productive lives. I identify education with the evolution of social formations as we learn to enhance the flow of life-affirming energy, values, skills and understandings that carry hope for the future of

humanity." (Whitehead, 2005, p.23)

I believe that my husband and I influence our educational life in a way that carries hope for the future of humanity. This influence energises us in what we do. Through accepting this way of living, we accept responsibility to live out these values as fully as we can:

"Loving what I do in education flows with energy that is life-affirming." (Whitehead, 2006, p.1)

Within this enquiry, I intend to show you how we can communicate to each other what really matters and how our relationships remain the motivation not only to research but also to understand the reason why we chose to do so. My husband and I want the world to be a better place: for each other, for our child and for the significant others with whom we share our lives.

I believe that this value comes from contact with the other as we gain energy from their motivation. A value is not formed from a sole expedition; rather it is developed through our contact with others. If this journey continues, its energy transfers until we breathe and live the same value, or learn to recognise that value as a challenge to strengthen our own.

We hold within us at any one time a range of the values that we have experienced as a result of our contact with others: either through wishing to overcome adversity or through sharing success and enjoyment. We absorb these values as individuals or we seek to create a value to counteract our own negative experiences. We seek to make meaning of our motivation and in doing so these values we have experienced become part of our inherent make-up:

"It is possible to suppose that in the course of personality development values undergo a definite evolution, changing not only in content but in motivational status as well, in the place they occupy and the role they play in the structure of life-activity. In the earliest stages values exist only in the form of the emotional consequences when behaviour has offended against them, or conversely, has asserted them (first stirrings of guilt or of pride). The values take on the form of 'acknowledged' motives, then that of meaning-formative motives, and finally that of motives both meaning-formative and operative in reality. At each stage the value is enriched with a new

motivational quality, without losing those previously present." (Vasilyuk, 1991, p.119 in Whitehead, 2006b, p.1)

Jack Whitehead has opened me to the African culture of Ubuntu which recognises physical touch as a powerful means of sharing, so that these emotional and spiritual contacts allow us to grow and to evolve:

"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)

Some values lie dormant in the course of our own evolution, whilst others grow in strength and become meaning for our chosen course in life. We live through the energy that others have given us, and carry this within us. I believe that the energy I have for creating the space within a school for students to work as researchers comes from the energy I have gained through my shared life path. Sharing my life with others has allowed me the motivation to create space for voices that need to be heard. This energy comes both from revelling in the success of Simon's work with his teacher-researchers and from my shared life with student researchers at my previous and current schools.

In this I disagree with Vasilyuk as he writes:

"So values do not, on the one hand possess stimulating power, and therefore cannot be held to be motives, but on the other hand, they have to be recognised as motives since they do possess emotionality." (Vasilyuk, 1991, p.119 in Whitehead, 2006, p.1)

I believe that the motivational force we find in drawing upon the energy of our shared values comes from our strength of relationship with others. The emotions that I shared with others and from which I draw motivation in what I do, stem from the space that I share with significant others. My husband and I both ask how we can creatively challenge the system in which we work, in order that we can allow our shared value of recognising the other to be fulfilled. Whilst the focus for my work is the opening of the school to the recognition of how students can add value to its work

through their voice, my husband focuses upon how teachers' voices can be recognised as a force of change through teacher-research:

"This thesis addresses the vastly important influence of relationships within education and explores how these relationships impact on my practice as an educator. The text incorporates and captures these relationships through enabling these others to speak through their own voice." (Riding, S., 2008, abstract)

We both seek a world in which others who remain in the shadows are given the support and encouragement to contribute with their voice. Simon has given me the energy to share my own voice in the name of school improvement as I support him in his quest to make things better.

1.2 Defining living standards of judgement in the context of a marriage

Figure 1: Me and my husband Simon, Maldives, 2005. *I believe this image to show our shared hope for the future of humanity as a living standard of judgment held between us.*



“My hope is to help develop a more empathic, more fulfilling way of thinking/feeling about relationships amongst ourselves, other organisms and our living space, which acknowledges the fact that the boundaries we inhabit are not absolute and fixed but rather inform dynamic, interactive domains that allow a rich variety of patterns to emerge and transform our lives.” (Rayner, 2005, p.2)

Simon and I have grown together as researchers alongside the personal growth in our relationship and our professional growth as educators. We have supported each other's work through dialogue and through action. We have listened and we have questioned in the search to make the other better in what s/he does within the shared space of our dynamic relationship. We seek to make ourselves worthy of the other, asking us to be the best that we can be. We share a loving relationship both in the

sense of unconditional love for each other alongside Cho's (2005) concept of love shared in the common pursuit of knowledge:

"Love means the pursuit of real knowledge, knowledge that is no longer limited to particular content passed from one to the other, but rather knowledge that can only be attained by each partner seeking it in the world. With love, education becomes an open space for thought from which emerges knowledge." (Cho, 2005, p.2)

Our shared love becomes a vehicle for our life of enquiry in the pursuit of making others' lives better as we hope to in our marriage. In our decision to bring a child into the world, we wish to create a world for our child in which the values that we share are evident and enhanced through our work and our research, both with each other and the significant individuals with whom we enquire. In this way Simon has created the space for teacher-based enquiry at his school. He wishes to share his value of enquiry, as a means to self-understanding and improvement with others, in the hope that they may come to value this in the same way. In my work with the student researchers, I have created the conditions for enhanced relationships between generations in which real dialogue emerges for shared learning. The drive behind this work has been the enhanced learning that Simon and I have gained through open dialogue together. Within myself I hold snapshots of conversations that we have shared, in the kitchen or in the car, words and gestures remain with me that have altered my understanding. Challenges to my own understanding alongside support of what I know.

This quality of dynamism between us has emerged as a result of unconditional trust for the other. This trust is the essential quality that binds us together and allows us to research and learn alongside the other. As this trust has developed, so it has helped to move and alter the boundaries of the relationship that Simon and I share. We have been encouraged by the possibilities that this quality of empathic awareness for the other could have in our relationships with others. It is this sense of trust that we seek to live out in our professional lives with others.

In my first year within my new role as Head of Department, I looked to establish this trust. I resented the fact that I had to start again; that I had left behind the trust I had established with others. The move to my new position however has allowed me to reaffirm the need for mutual trust as a means of opening up the conditions for shared

enquiry. Farren has identified trust as one of the key elements needed to support collaboration in schools:

“I try to foster and create a collaborative learning environment. I believe that learning requires the qualities of openness, sharing and trust. In my work with participants, I have tried to articulate my own educational values. This was not easy to do at the start but I realised that in order to enable teachers to articulate their educational values, I needed to openly share my values with them. Trust is an important quality in creating and sustaining a collaborative learning environment.” (Farren, 2005, p.23)

I believe that this trust is earned, not given. The student researchers were only able to begin forming a relationship of trust with teachers after they had shown the benefits that their work could bring. Their first enquiry was therefore grounded in my own classroom. Similarly Simon needed to convince the teacher-researchers at his new school of the value of undertaking practitioner-based research through first sharing his own research with them.

This is my enquiry and this is our enquiry. Within this writing and images, you will see and hear Simon. As I write now, Simon is sat across from me, his brow furrowed in concentration. We share a video clip of when he came to work with the sixth-form mentors at my school at my invitation.



bishops movie 4.WMV

*Figure 2: Video Clip of Simon and I working with sixth-form students
In this clip I believe Simon and I both to embrace Simon’s standard of living myself through others as we recognise the other in this shared space and live out complementary roles within it.*

A moment that we made happen despite both schools opposing it. We re-live this moment, and share insights into it. Although we are distinct in our work and our research, we are not discrete. Our boundaries are shared. This gives us both individually and together a unique *outside-looking in* (Rayner, 2005) to the other’s work alongside an *inside looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) as we experience the creation of new knowledge together. I can observe Simon’s work and offer a unique perspective on it, knowing him as I do. I can see beyond the anger that he holds at the injustice that he sees and ask him to move through this to find positive outcomes from a given situation. Simon asks me not to accept the status quo and to stand firm in my

conviction that I can make things better for others in education. There is a duality to our observations, as we are both on the *outside, looking in* and on the *inside, looking out* of each other's work.

This duality also occurs when generations of researchers begin working together. Whilst each individual shares the excitement of being on the inside looking-out, they also bring a unique perspective to their work that individual experience and perspective allows. This switching of roles, between the external observer and the emerged participant, has been evident in all of the sessions that the researchers have shared. Comments on how to improve the research process itself occur alongside the excitement of the creation of new knowledge.

Simon, researching into his own practice and his own influence whilst working alongside the teacher-researchers within his school, has also been afforded this dual perspective. He has seen the boundaries, once so distinct between Assistant Headteacher and classroom teacher, be forgotten in the excitement of the shared space and learning that the teacher-researchers and he have shared.

Simon and I communicate to each other in ways that allow us to enhance the relationally dynamic standards of judgement that we share. Communication is a vast paradigm that includes many forms. As we reviewed the video footage of Simon and I working with the sixth-form mentors, there is a sense of how we communicate non-verbally with each other in such a way as to understand the other. This video clip is included above. Not a word is spoken between us during this clip, yet everything is understood. Smiles and gestures are hidden from the camera view, yet these images show how we occupy the same space in distinct and discrete ways. We share boundaries yet each retains our unique defined role, complementing the other. Communication is a lifelong process to be improved upon, yet is an essential part of the defining qualities of any shared relationship. Of this event Simon says:

"In frame are husband and wife, both working for the same means connecting their beliefs and values in terms of provision for the most able: in frame are two educators living out their educational standards of judgement. At this moment we are connecting our separate educational lives in the search for one desire: to improve the education within that room. It is as if our accounts merged for that instant. This is something that happens from time to time. For me this clip carries with it the originality of mind present within this thesis of demonstrating a relationally dynamic

standard of judgement within our practice. This further exemplifies Rayner's idea of inclusionality (2006a) as a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries that is connective, reflexive and co-creative. For me, this clip embodies this notion. It demonstrates the value I carry with me of living myself through others, of recognising the value of the other within educational relationships and using this to help make things better.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.226)



Figure 3: Image of Simon presenting to BECTA in 2004

I believe that this image reflects Simon's passion when talking about the worth of practitioner-research.

As Simon and I presented together at the BECTA³ conference in 2004, Simon demonstrated the way in which he communicates vigorously his passion for what he does through physical gesture whilst I rely upon quietly spoken words to persuade

³ BECTA (The British Educational Communications and Technology Agency) defines itself in the following way: “Becta leads the national drive to improve learning through technology. We do this by working with industry to ensure we have the right technology for education in place. We also support the education sector to make the best use of technology so that every learner in the UK is able to benefit from its advantages and achieves the best they can.” (retrieved from <http://about.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=1616> on 24.07.2007)

and convince. We both aim to persuade our audience of the value of students and teachers undertaking research.

I highlighted at the beginning of this enquiry how Simon and I strive to be the best that we can be for each other. This shared quality both places pressure on us yet fulfils us. It stems from a belief in the other to achieve what s/he wants to achieve and to recognise their potential. It asks that the other never becomes complacent, and that s/he seeks the next step with the guidance and support of the other. The individual's success is our success. The individual's concerns are our shared concerns.

When working directly with each other at Westwood St. Thomas School, we worked creatively together to enhance the conditions around us, both for staff and for students. Simon, as a newly appointed Head of Department, needed to support three teachers new to the profession who all faced their own challenges. I was working, as Gifted and Talented co-ordinator, to bring about recognition for the student voice.



Figure 3 *Our wedding day in July 2004. Simon (Ratcliffe) our best man stands to the left of image whilst Toni (Bowden) stands directly behind me in grey*

In this image I believe that the loving way of being shared between Simon and I extends to those around us (particularly with regards those guests who were part of the Westwood teacher-researcher group at the time).

Within our wedding photo, two of the teachers from the Westwood St. Thomas group are present. Most significantly, one became our best man. The quality of dialogue that we shared with these individuals stems from the in-house teacher-researcher group that was established within the school. Talking about our successes and failures, our emotions and our frustrations allowed us to trust those within that space and to undertake learning conversations. Jack Whitehead, our tutor, who led these

sessions, always commented on the sense of warmth that these meetings left him with:

"I always leave here with a sense of warmth in the humanity expressed between us."
(Whitehead, 2003, in conversation at the group)

This feeling of warmth and of shared open dialogue continued beyond the researcher group into friendship and allowed the experiences that we shared to enrich us all as individuals.

Within this shared space, we encouraged each other to be the best that we could be in our research and as classroom practitioners: both within the space provided by the teacher-researcher group and within the space provided by our emerging friendship. We acted as critical friends for the work of the other. This value that Simon and I share as a result of our contact with this group has further extended into our professional life. Simon asked the teachers within his Department to be the best practitioners that they could be, whilst I asked the students to be the best researchers that they could be.

The other side of the *best that s/he can be* value is the holding of the other to account for his/her work and actions. Alongside the encouragement that we invest in the other, we ask for accountability. We ask the other if this was work well done and feel disappointed when the other carries out a project without doing the best s/he can do. In this way, Simon asked me not to be complacent in my bid to change the Department I was now leading, and I asked Simon to listen before he acted in his role as Assistant Headteacher. We are able to ask the other to *quality control* his/her work and to consider his/her next steps. We each give energy and time to the other, yet we also ask for a return for this expenditure: the satisfaction of seeing the other's achievements and successes.

"These ideas are based on regarding the human 'Self' as a dynamic coupling of inner and outer through intermediary aspects, in much the same way that we can understand a river system as a creative interplay of stream with landscape mediated through its banks and valley sides. Each aspect simultaneously shapes the other."
(Rayner, 2006b, p.2)

I hope to share with you our joint sense of hope for humanity in the way that we live. I hope to show you how this feeling has survived, been nurtured and grown despite difficult circumstances. I am asking that the dynamically relational values between human beings be recognised. I aim to show you, through example, how conditions for a loving relationship can be achieved between student and student and between student and teacher. I write this enquiry to explicate this through the emergence of my own living educational theory:

“Ah! That’s why I want to write! I want to write because I don’t feel like an expert authority, although I do know a lot about my own experience, which, in common with many other human beings I feel an irresistible urge to share. In that sharing I discover my complex identity, my place in the world and community I inhabit and contribute to and belong in. I have a loving sense of neighbourhood in which my aloneness (my all oneness) dissolves into delight.” (Rayner, 2006, p.6)

I wrote the following to Simon as I responded to the first draft of his enquiry in September 2006:

Simon, the connection between your enquiry and mine is becoming more evident as our research continues. We both seek to understand how we exist within networks. We both seek to empower the other within our marriage and our professional lives. Whilst your work has centred on giving teachers a new voice with which to speak through research, mine has centred on giving students the same opportunities. You have created the necessary space for teacher-research to occur, but you have not directed the work of others within it. Instead you have taken a role of facilitator and active listener, similar to the role that you carried within the teacher-researcher group at Westwood St. Thomas.

Whilst we were writing our dissertations, we closely guarded these for fear of losing something to the other in the competitive nature that we shared. Your writing has become more persuasive and less expectant. Before you asked nothing more of the reader of your text than his/her agreement. Now you are inviting them in, and this is a reflection of the influence that we have had upon the other. We have learned to open up to the other within our marriage, and a part of this has been the sharing of our ideas and our research. I do not feel that these two research writings are distinct. They share many boundaries and contexts that come from the physical and emotional space that we share. When I look at your research questions for your

thesis, they are mine as well. Our writing is beginning to merge at more points as our relationship and understanding of the other grows.

Jack Whitehead responded to this:

“Smiling at the recollection of how you both moved to an openness in sharing your writings and my rueful response to Simon rushing in his masters dissertation as your writings are merging in the flow of your relationship and understandings.” (Electronic mail received September 2006)

The creative potential that Simon and I hold emerges from the relationship that we share: both with each other and within the networks that we find ourselves. We seek to challenge the other to provide a valid explanation for his/her educational development, in the hope that we are promoting the other to be the best that s/he can be. We look to promote advancement: of individual and shared understanding through dialogue and through creative practice. We care for the other and we look after the welfare of the other. We both look to nurture the potential that we see within our partner and to then share this sense of humanity with our families, colleagues and co-researchers. This is the generational quality that emerges from our shared space:

“We should think about practice as a setting not only for the application of knowledge but for its generation. We should ask not only how practitioners can better apply the results of academic research, but what kinds of knowing are already embedded in competent practice.

Perhaps there is an epistemology of practice that takes fuller account of the competence practitioners sometimes display in situations of uncertainty, complexity, uniqueness, and conflict. Perhaps there is a way of looking at problem-setting and intuitive artistry that presents these activities as describable and as susceptible to a kind of rigor that falls outside the boundaries of technical rationality.” (Schon, 1995, p. 29)

“Husband and wife, both working for the same means connecting their beliefs and values, two educators living out their educational standards of judgement. At this moment we are connecting our separate educational lives in the search for one desire: to improve education. It is as if our accounts merged for that instant. This is

something that happens from time to time. For me this carries with it the originality of mind present within this thesis of demonstrating a relationally dynamic standard of judgement within our practice. This further exemplifies Rayner's idea of inclusionality (2006) as a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries that is connective, reflexive and co-creative. It demonstrates the value I carry with me of living myself through others, of recognising the value of the other within educational relationships and using this to help make things better.” (Riding, S., 2006, p.248)

The rigour that Schon (1995) asks for in qualitative research is demonstrated within the relationship that Simon and I share. In asking the other to be the best that s/he can be, we critique the work of the other based on the confidence and trust that we share to do this. I believe that where such exists, individuals who work, love and live together can best provide the other with rigor in their research.

1.3 Living standards of judgement in the context of intergenerational student-led research



Figure 4: The first-generation student researchers stand behind the second in their third year of enquiry together

This image I believe reflects the shared humour between us and our pleasure in enquiring together.

One of the key living standards of judgement that I hold with my husband is that of recognising the other and the contribution that he/she can make. I take motivation from this standard to recognise the contribution that students can make to their school through undertaking research. I view schools learning from students in this way as a part of a school's entitlement to learn about itself. Learning from student research is a right that each teacher has the potential to access.

I am excited about the *inside-out* (Rayner, 2006b): looking to understand student research from an unframed and immersed point of view. I want to be surprised by their work. I want to return to that time of innocence when the new surprises me, when I do not have pre-conceptions about what to expect and what is around the next corner. I am *unknowing and clueless* (Rayner, 2006a), revelling in the sense of not knowing the path ahead:

"We live attuned with an ever-present, ever-surprising now that folds around and within our view, protecting, exposing, soothing and thrilling." (Rayner, 2006b, p.2)

I value student researchers as human beings and recognise their capacity for doing good. This research has attempted to show how students-as-researchers (SaRs) have allowed them the space to recognize and value the other in their work. Together with the school they now hold a dynamic quality of relationship that allows the other

to learn. Within this space, the stakeholders of the school have shared a life-affirming energy that enhances the space and makes learning a participatory event. They have shown through example that this learning is worthwhile, allowing more reluctant stakeholders to sit on the sidelines and observe until they are ready to share the same quality of relationship.

I am looking within this space at the real outcomes for teachers and senior managers within the school of students working in this way. I need to prove that there is real learning outcomes for teachers and for a school to be gained from this type of work in order to invite the other in. I believe that intergenerational research is better. I am arguing for older and younger individuals to work together on this type of research in order for their and our shared learning to be more significant. The experiences of the old supporting the learning of the young, and the fresh eyes of the young allow the old to see anew. *What's in it for me? What's in it for the school?* I wish to show how students working in this way can reduce the burden of research from practitioners. It gives teachers their time back. It allows them to gain personally in terms of opening their eyes to classroom learning. I aim to show you that even the most unreceptive of ears can be opened to this process:

“Those whom we hope to influence by our findings are usually busy people (if they are not then they are probably not very useful to the research) and they perceive problems from their own different perspectives...we need to try harder to find different ways of bridging the gap between the research community and those whom we wish to include in, or influence by, our research.”(Mortimore, 1999, p.12)

I believe that moving from active research participants to self-study action researchers is a natural progression forward in SaR work. I believe that asking teachers to value the student voice also asks the institution to do so. I believe that a school can become a better learning organisation through the student voice as a tool to knowing itself better.

Whilst the students work creatively within the system that they find themselves, so I have learned what this can achieve. I believe that learning to live within a system and being creatively compliant within it leads to challenging the system in a positive way. In asking the students to challenge their involvement in their school, I have to show the same willingness and courage.

“Am I happy?” (Johnson, 2005)

I want teachers to enjoy the benefits of school-based research and move it towards a process that is done *to* them instead of *with* them (Johnson, 2005). The student researchers first asked teachers to stand on the sidelines and observe the game; giving the teachers security that their classroom practice was not in the spotlight, yet giving them the opportunity to shout out if they wished. The student researchers are not taking away teacher time or asking the teachers themselves to conduct research. They are asking teachers to recognise SaR work as a process that is beneficial to them and to their school. They, like me, are looking to let their own light shine:

“Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small doesn’t serve the world. There is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It’s not just in some of us. It’s in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do so. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates us.” (Williamson, 1992, p.165)

For years I have failed to let my own light shine. I have cloaked myself in research that does not embrace the “I”; that has no ownership and therefore no responsibility. Through this research I recognise that my own light may encourage others to let theirs shine through. By others, I refer to the students with whom I have the honour to work, my husband with whom I am working in a creative way to embrace the shared love we hold and my colleagues and co-researchers with whom I continue to learn. I am hoping that by the end of this research process, I will have found the courage to be and in doing so will have allowed shared dynamically relational standard to be lived out.

Before you begin to read this enquiry, please spend a few moments considering the images below. Although, at this present time, they will mean little to you, I hope that by the end of my writing, you will have come to an understanding about their significance and the reason why I have chosen them in the telling of my story. If, by the end of your reading, you have gained this understanding, then I have succeeded in the reason for my sharing this story with you, and with myself.

Figure 5: Images that exemplify what I hope to communicate in this enquiry



1.4 A summary of this Chapter and looking forward

I offer this introductory Chapter to you as a way into this enquiry. Within this Chapter, I have dealt with the key elements that I see as forming and informing the enquiry. I have described to you how I wish to embrace a living and loving way of being as improving the professional domain. This way of being comes from my relationship with my husband and co-enquirer in which shared living standards of judgement have emerged between us. These support us in the professional domain whilst at the same time these emerge as a result of our educational shared life.

This way of being embraces our shared love in the pursuit of knowledge. My husband seeks to pursue this through the development of teachers-as-researchers, whilst I look to student-led research. I look to take forward the work of students-as-researchers, in that it becomes intergenerational and therefore sustainable, enhancing the school's learning about itself.

My husband and I both act as advocates for these domains of research, and part of this enquiry looks at this role in bringing about improvement.

I now look forward to sharing this enquiry with you. I have chosen to frame this account in the following way, for reasons which I would like to clarify with you.

Firstly, it was important for me to begin by explaining the methodological position (Chapter 2) of this enquiry and the reasons for this. I feel that by doing this, the reader is then aware of the methodological base that the enquiry embraces. This has also allowed me to clarify exactly what methodological framework I intend to follow here.

I then go on to ground the research at the school in which the enquiry has taken place (Chapter 3). Through doing this I hope to give the reader a sense of *where* and a background knowledge of the social climate in which the enquiry has taken place. Again, this also clarified for me the interpretation of the culture of the school in which I work.

Within this school and learning place, I have undergone a series of challenges which I now realise have supported me in creating the conditions for student-led research (Chapter 4). I wanted to document two of these challenges in order to clarify the learning that has come as a result of them, before considering how the establishment of trust has been crucial in allowing this enquiry to continue. I consider the importance of trust in allowing me to overcome these challenges.

In Chapter 5 therefore I have looked to consider my shared life with those significant individuals who together have formed this enquiry, such as my husband and the school community. I needed to look at these relationships in turn in order to understand the common threads linking them together and the significance of the one upon the other.

In Chapter 6 I focus upon the evolution of student-led research, including how the intergenerational aspect has emerged and how the space has been created within the school for research of this type. I have looked across the seven-year lifespan of my work with student researchers and the movement from students as active participants to student-led enquiry. Within this chapter I also wished to focus upon the tensions of an intergenerational approach alongside how the students have developed their own methodological approach and ethics. Through this Chapter I hope to share how an intergenerational approach leads to sustainability of student enquiry and the embedding of such work into the school itself.

After focussing upon these key relationships, I then turn to the exploration of what motivates me to enquire and for others to enquire alongside me (Chapter 7). I hope

to learn through this chapter the reasons behind what I do and how these significant relationships support me in clarifying this motivation and passion to enquire. It was only possible to explore this after considering each of the relationships in turn: how the parts are more than the sum of the whole.

In the final Chapters (8 and 9) I look at the significance of this enquiry in proposing shared living educational standards of judgement as energising. I focus upon what I believe these standards to be and how this is significant to others outside of the research participants themselves. This allows me to stand back and make sense of what has occurred. It also allows me to reflect back upon the methodological framework that I outline in Chapter 2 and to outline this enquiry's original contribution to knowledge.

Chapter 2 Methodology: Why I have chosen to enquire as I have

I refer in this section to the methodology that I have employed in sharing the enquiry with its intended audience. In Chapter 6, I then turn to examine the methodology employed by the student researchers in their enquiry. This distinction was necessary as both methodological approaches have distinct purposes, yet I also focus on where the boundaries between the two are shared.

2.1 Living theory as an unlimiting methodological paradigm

This thesis stands within the research paradigm of living action theory. This is a conscious choice that I make as a researcher, knowing that this is the most appropriate way to allow me to communicate the meanings of this enquiry to my reader and to myself. I do not look as a researcher to dismiss other research paradigms as I state this. I seek instead to open myself up to the possibilities of what other paradigms can bring to this enquiry, in order to develop a *living* methodology that is responsive to the needs of the enquiry. Within this Chapter I seek to justify this choice and to explore how other paradigms strengthen the account presented alongside their limitations.

The importance of the methodological choices I undertake to present this enquiry are highlighted by Whitehead in the following way:

“(To) emphasize the importance of the uniqueness of each individual’s living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) and their methodological inventiveness (Dadds & Hart, 2000) in asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’” (Whitehead, 2008, p.1)

I claim to be both limited and unlimited by my experience as a researcher in considering different research paradigms. I am limited because there are approaches that I do not yet know and may never know; approaches that could excite and engage me as a researcher. Yet I am unlimited because I choose a methodology that is fit for the purpose of the enquiry that I am undertaking. I have the capacity to develop a responsive methodology that enhances the legitimacy of the claims to knowledge made. This is my unique *methodological inventiveness* (Dadds & Hart 2000); a living methodology that allows me to produce an enquiry in the most appropriate way.

“Traditional empirical research (is) just one of the viable and valid methodologies available to practitioners, alongside many others which have already been created and others which will, inevitably, be created.” (Dadds & Hart, 2000, p.167)

Ferguson reminds me of the importance of being unlimited in my approach:

“It takes courage and open-mindedness for people accustomed to and trained in “traditional” research processes to consider and even embrace alternative ways of researching and of presenting that research.” (Ferguson, 2008, p.25)

I write consciously from a position of I. The methodology that I employ embraces this choice and responds by living and breathing alongside the account. I take responsibility for this account and for my actions in choosing to share it as principal narrator.

I begin within a position of considering my self and the shared living standards of judgment that I hold with my husband as a motivational force for my professional life. This position is unique as I am unique. I demand much of my methodology; that it can support me in coming to understand why this is so.

“I see living educational theories being grounded in the conscious lived experience of individuals who are intentional and imaginative with creative capabilities.” (Whitehead, 2008, p.14)

As I seek to live out these shared living standards in the professional, I look to improve the quality of the educational life that I lead and ask that I can live out these standards within it. My life is enriched by others: it is these individuals who allow me to consider the values that are important to me and who open new perspectives to me. These shared living standards as part of my participatory life and the account needs to reflect this participation.

“The context for the study is relationally dynamic. What I mean by this is that it has been influenced by changes in the relationships between the economics, politics, ecology and sociocultural and sociohistorical contexts that have affected my work and the evolutionary transformations in my thinking.” (Whitehead, 2008, p.1)

Whitehead (2008) states that an enquiry begins from a desire to improve. My desire to improve is not born from a deficit model, but from an energised model that brings the energy and motivation from my shared life into the professional. This energy asks me to be the best that I can be. I cannot always claim to know what this best feels like or what it looks like. My husband opens my eyes and communicates with me the potential that I possess to do good and to improve the lives of the educational electorate with whom I live, love and enquire.

This living theory paradigm allows me to explore the living nature of the shared standards that I hold. *Living* I refer to as being lived out in my life as well as evolving alongside my life. The research paradigm within which I choose to work, needs to have the capacity to recognise this evolvment and allow me to explore this emerging understanding.

In stating that this thesis is a living theory thesis, I do not discount other research paradigms as inappropriate. Rather I remain open to other possibilities that could connect with this enquiry and take it in new directions. I am not *limited by an overarching set of principals* (Whitehead, 2008); rather I am unlimited in my approach. In this way, other research methodologies such as narrative, case study, grounded theory and action research contribute to the emergent and responsive methodology represented within this enquiry. The living theory emerges in the creative space between these paradigms. I will discuss how in this Chapter.

Whitehead acknowledges however that there are distinguishing qualities of a living theory methodology:

“...that include ‘I’ as a living contradiction, the use of action reflection cycles, the use of procedures of personal and social validation and the inclusion of a life-affirming energy with values as explanatory principals of educational influence.”
(Whitehead, 2008, p.9)

My emergent living theory shares these principles. It uses procedures of personal and social validation to validate the accounts represented through systematically sharing these with those involved. Validation is also undertaken through considering events from a multimedia perspective, through seeing and hearing the same event through a different eye and voice. I highlight reflection on previous events as opportunities to learn and move forward from, rather than mistakes that evoke guilt. This learning leads me to act in a different way; in a way that is more responsive to those with whom I share my life.

“(Living theory accounts) are grounded in the relational dynamics of everyday life and explain the receptively responsive educational influences of individuals in their own lives. They are unique.” (Whitehead, 2008, p.14)

As I live, love and enquire, I find the explanatory accounts of my educational life become fuller. As boundaries open to those around me in relationships of trust, so new meaning is made. The relational dynamics shared here with others challenge me to work creatively with seemingly opposing views and excite me to new possibilities. I am who I am because of the life that I have led and lead.

I approach this enquiry from the position of a living contradiction. Through the transition period into my new position as Middle Leader, I share a time when I was unable to live out my shared values with others as relationships of trust had not yet formed. I am a being energised by the shared life that I lead, seeking to live out these same energising standards with others. This enquiry explores the transition that I believe to have made from living contradiction to inclusion of this life-affirming and motivational energy with those in my professional life. The use of multimedia narratives to connect these concepts with my reader is essential, as text alone is limited in communicating this transition:

“I think that one of my original contributions to educational knowledge is my use of multi-media narratives to communicate the explanatory power of flows of life-affirming energy in explanations of educational influence. We cannot do anything without energy, yet representations of the energy are not emphasised in explanations of educational influences in learning.” (Whitehead, 2008, p.13)

As I seek to share the life-affirming energy that I hold through this account, Vasilyuk (1991) talks of the difficulty in explicating the relationship between energy and motivation, meaning and values:

“Equally problematic are the conceptual links between energy and motivation, energy and meaning, energy and value, although it is obvious that in fact there are certain links.” (Vasilyuk, 1991, pp.63-64)

I believe, as Whitehead believes, that the links between these concepts can best be represented through multimedia narratives. Within these, movements, gestures, words and looks communicate more than the written word alone. This is a view supported by Laidlaw (2008):

“As you see, I write my description of the end of a lesson, but I feel that it is not as powerful as watching the video itself! I believe that more information is carried in the video than can be conveyed in words.” (Laidlaw, p.16, 2008)

Crucial however to the representation of multimedia within this enquiry is how these are included and reflected upon, so that what is communicated to me can also be understood by my reader. I believe that, if I am successful in this approach, it is these multimedia inclusions that will be remembered by my reader alongside parts of the written text.

“(Embracing) alternative ways of presenting research will validate forms of research that can convey knowledge not easily encapsulated just within pages of written text.” (Ferguson, 2008, p.25)

“In such complex work we need different ways of representing what we know and video has become a crucial avenue to the realisation of our endeavours.” (Laidlaw, 2008, p.16)

The energy and motivation given to me by my shared living standards of judgment can scarce be communicated through text alone. In Figure 2 for example, I share a video clip that communicates the energy shared between my husband and me as we live out our shared standard of recognising the other. It is through this medium that I feel the flow of energy between us and new knowledge about myself as an educator comes to light. Video clips allow me to connect again with this event:

“...where time and space have no separation and the past becomes the present as I allow the knowing to flow into my practice.” (Adler-Collins, 2008, p.18)

The standards that I hope to communicate in this enquiry are living in their nature. They evolve alongside my life as I live, love and enquire with others. In this living theory enquiry, the emergence of knowledge is supported through this multimedia dimension as a living witness to this ongoing life:

“In my doctoral thesis (Laidlaw, 1996) I made the case for our values being not static, but in fact living and developing as we do. If this contention is seen as valid and it is taken on by others in the development of their own educational research, then this has ramifications for what might be perceived as appropriate ways to represent the educational value of research processes and outcomes.” (Laidlaw, 2008, p.16)

I now turn towards those research paradigms that have influenced me in choosing to produce this account in a responsive and living way.

2.2 Considering how narrative influences this enquiry

This study is grounded within my life. I consider how I live out this life and with whom. I therefore look to include narratives of events that are significant in coming to understand the motivation for my professional life. Creswell (2007) offers “useful” markings of narrative research in considering the example offered by Angrosino (1994):

- The author tells the story of a single individual as a central focus for the study
- The data collection consists of “conversations” or stories: the reconstruction of life experiences through researcher participant observations
- The individual recalls a special event of his life, an epiphany

- The author reports detailed information about setting of a context, thus situating the epiphany within a social context
- The author was present within the study, reflecting on his own experiences and acknowledging the way that the study was his interpretation of (its) meaning. (Creswell, 2007, p.87)

My own enquiry shares some of these characteristics, such as the reconstruction of life experiences through conversations and stories. Significantly in Chapter 4, I offer two narratives that focus upon my first year in a difficult new post. These I see as epiphanies, representing key points in my life from which to learn and grow. I ground these narratives within the social context of the school in which they took place. I also acknowledge to have interpreted them myself in an emerged participatory way.

The inclusion of dialogue between the research participants has been of fundamental importance. These allow another viewpoint of the same event. They allow the voice of the participant to emerge and to challenge or support my own interpretation. I therefore see this enquiry as being a participatory narrative that allows participants in an event to be immersed in the narrative itself. It is this approach, I believe, that allows this enquiry to consider the views of all involved, so that the narratives included here have been validated.

The limitations of the Angrosino (1994) example offered by Creswell (2007) is the re-telling of a narrative through text alone. Whitehead (2006) argues that:

“I believe that the meanings of these (living) values cannot be carried solely by propositional statements. I am suggesting that visual narratives containing explanations of educational influences in learning are needed to communicate the meanings of the living standards of judgement/discernment for practitioner-research.”
(Whitehead, 2006, p.1)

Narratives are living events that are seen, heard and acted out. In offering multimedia narrative as part of this enquiry, I aim to share these events in a living way with my reader. The importance of gestures and physical expression is therefore captured within the text and allows the embodiment of the living standards of judgment that I seek to understand here; to be lived out through the enquiry.

Validating each narrative included has been undertaken in a responsive way, in which an appropriate way of responding has been developed for each. It is my wish that each narrative inclusion (text, image and video) is allowed to be fully appreciated in what it offers the enquiry. What is appropriate for one may not be for another. If I had stated a systematic way for dealing with each narrative, then I would be limiting their potential instead of unlimiting it.

In this way, you will see that Figure 24 (three successive images of my husband as he begins a challenging new post) have been responded to individually and then collectively by myself as I was the loving eye involved in producing these. These images I believe to show the loss of motivational energy over time. Meanwhile Figure 35 (a video clip of the student researchers' first unsuccessful interview) was responded to through the student researchers' voice, through an observer's voice and through my own voice. As this video involved several participants within the room at the time, a plurality of response to the clip was crucial.

Evans supports the inclusion of narratives within educational enquiry:

"My excitement at the possibility of using story in a creative way was related to my strong feeling that I would like teacher knowledge to be more widely shared in schools, to be accessible in its language, and to be captivating for its audience."
(Evans, 1995, p.5)

Within this account of the shared learning that has taken place through this enquiry, I have included narratives sharing both the professional and the personal. The inclusion of such narratives is an emergent methodology that I have embraced through reading others' accounts and seeing how narrative added to the enquiry rather than subtracted from it. I however take into account Gabriel's view that:

"The main disadvantage of eliciting stories is that the researcher risks imposing his or her definitions of what is important, meaningful or enjoyable." (Gabriel, 2000, p.137)

For something to be important, meaningful or enjoyable there must be an author and recipient of such feelings. The story carries importance to the individuals involved within it. The story is seen as meaningful to those individuals and as something worth sharing in a wider context. In re-telling shared accounts I am checking their importance and meaning with those involved. Looking to elicit stories within this

enquiry has been part of the maturation process that I have undergone as a researcher, learning that these stories add to the account and bring ownership and responsibility with it. In previous research I remained outside of the account, *accounting for* yet not *engaging with* the learning taking place. Including these has allowed me to express my core values more fully alongside the pleasure I have felt in living these out with others. Gabriel continues:

“We shall argue that researchers who want to use stories as a research instrument must be prepared to sacrifice at least temporarily some of the core values of their craft and adopt instead a rather alien attitude towards their subjects and their texts. They must rid themselves of the assumption that quality data must be objective, reliable, accurate etc. and must be prepared to engage personally with the emotions and the meanings that reside within the text.” (Gabriel, 2000, p.135)

Within this enquiry I seek to understand my core values, transformed into shared living standards of judgment in my life. These stories are therefore part of the rich data source that I can draw upon to begin to understand these values as motivation for my professional life. I seek to embrace the meanings expressed by these stories in terms of the values expressed within them.

My husband has shown me, through the powerful narratives included within his own enquiry, how these can communicate not only with the reader of the text, but also how they serve to reconnect with the events recreated themselves. He writes:

“Within the narrative framework of this dissertation, I want to explore my belief that the future I can create is embedded within the narrative past that I have come from: it is the sharing of these narratives, through working with others that will allow me to understand my present and future. I believe that through taking stock of these past narratives, my own future may well be better.” (Riding, S., 2003, pp.7-8)

To him I respond:

When I first read your account of how your father’s illness had affected you as a person and educator, tears filled my eyes. It allowed me to comprehend the importance of your family in giving you the fundamental values of truth and integrity that you uphold today. I believe that through being the person that you are, you are

giving something back to these people who have given so much to you. Through this narrative you communicate these values so clearly.

Including the use of such narratives within this research has allowed me to gain new meaning from events that have occurred. This medium has allowed me to reflect upon my own and others' actions and to relive them. They have allowed me to maintain an open door between these events and myself through which I continue to connect with them. I have wanted to increase the pleasure and empathy connected to this research through these narratives, and I hope these offer my reader the position of a *fellow-traveller* (Gabriel, 2000, p.136) alongside me in this journey.

As principal narrator I however acknowledge my influence on what events have been re-told to the exclusion of others. I have made these decisions, and accept that I may have done so with an objective *inside, looking out* (Rayner, 2005) view. This I see as a limitation of narrative enquiry, in that it offers only a selective retelling of the events that have occurred. To re-tell every event would however be unrealistic. I therefore believe to have considered events that have some significance in demonstrating the energy that I derive from the shared living standards of judgment that I hold. These events may challenge this assumption or they may support it, but each has a knowledge-generating capacity. I seek out the narratives that support me in answering the questions posed at the start of this enquiry.

In placing narrative enquiry within the living theory paradigm, I believe that the selecting of narratives by the researcher is most significant. Each event adds to the researcher's emerging knowledge about his/her own living theory. I believe that it is those events that resonate deep within me that are most significant to re-tell; those events that are replayed often within my mind that carry the possibility of supporting my claims to know.

Naidoo (2005) embraces narrative as a way of making sense from what has occurred. She looks to write with a specific audience in mind, although I believe that my audience is pre-determined: it is the participants of the enquiry itself with whom my narrative needs to connect:

"I may find it easier if I had someone in mind who I was writing for. This opened the door for me and enabled me to use my craft, the craft of storytelling, to tell the story of my learning. What is exciting about storytelling is that it is uncertain and

unpredictable but essentially people centred. Telling the story of my learning in this way has enabled me to capture complex problems more easily and has helped me to make sense of complex situations” (Naidoo, 2005, p.12)

2.3 Considering how case study influences this enquiry

I now turn to the paradigm of case study as a further paradigm that I have drawn upon to construct my living theory methodology. I seek to understand the dynamic that my professional life represents. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2001) describe a case study as:

“...a specific instance that is freely designed to illustrate a more general principal..a bounded system. It provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principals. ..case studies can penetrate situations in ways that are not always susceptible to numerical analysis” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p.181)

In this way I look to draw out a way of understanding about the motivation in my professional life. This involves considering my boundaries and shared space with others. It involves understanding the complex interactions between me and others and how these can provide me with ways of knowing. These are living interactions that allow meaning to unfold, which I see as linking the living theory and case study paradigms.

I offer generalization through this thesis of how student-led intergenerational research can be undertaken in other educational contexts. I also offer an understanding of where the motivation for this work emerges from, in considering shared living standards of judgment as motivational and energizing.

One of the ways in which this generalization has emerged has been through the consideration of significant events through which this understanding has emerged. For example in Chapter 4 I offer key narratives that offer me insight into the real dynamics between my colleagues and I in my first difficult year in post. This intertwining of narrative accounts within this case study has been part of my emergent living methodology. I have undertaken this both from the position of participant observer and through the accounts and words of others of the same

events. It has been significant that I have considered this case study from both an *outside, looking in* (Rayner, 2005) and an *inside, looking out* (Rayner, 2005) perspective.

Including participants' voices and observations within this enquiry has allowed a participatory account to be produced. Significant here has been the validation of the enquiry through the same participants; enabling them to check the representation of the enquiry. This has been a way in which to offer reliability throughout the account. I offer also a reflexive approach in which words and images have been altered as a result of respondent requests. In Appendix 1, in which I describe a significant relationship with a co-researcher, I consider how I have altered the text in consideration of Graham's wishes. In my initial writing, he felt that the language employed did not seem appropriate to convey his actions and words.

Participant inclusion has also allowed the data represented here to be triangulated through the consideration of the same event from a first, second and third person viewpoint. I include image and video here as methods that allow a further living consideration of the same event. Each participant was asked to consider how they wanted their inclusions to appear in the enquiry. For instance, if they wished to be acknowledged or anonymous within the text and if they gave permission for their participation to extend to image and video. This was considered at the outset of their involvement, yet also adapted to their ongoing wishes. This has been significant with the participation of the H.E. researcher involved in the group, who moved from a position of wanting to be acknowledged to that of preferring anonymity. Secondly with the second generation of student researchers, who after considering their original anonymous participation, then wanted to be named and acknowledged individually for their involvement.

Habermas (1976) shares how a participatory account can enhance validity of the claims to knowledge made. This is through relationships of trust and agreed ways of communicating together. It has been essential in this account to build trust between the participants represented here. They need to feel that I can produce a just account of their involvement and that I communicate this in a mutually comprehensible and fulfilling way. A living theory approach accepts that their participation will evolve as the enquiry continues, and that they are able to trust me as principal narrator to respect their wishes.

“The speaker must choose an utterance that is right so that the hearer can accept the utterance and speaker and hearer can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background.” (Habermas, 1976, pp.2-3)

Working in this participatory and reflexive way has allowed knowledge to emerge rather than considering a hypothesis from the outset of this enquiry. Although Sturman (1997) places on a set of continua the methods of data collection, types and analysis techniques in case study research, I see this as limiting the quality of the enquiry produced. If I were to have planned these rigidly in advance, the account could not respond or evolve as events occurred. The reflexive capacity of the account would have been compromised and the richness of data that a living methodology provides would have been narrowed.

A case study is also defined as being within a bounded system, yet I see this enquiry as challenging this bounded system and moving beyond the boundaries of what already exists. I state within the abstract of this enquiry that boundaries between participants are both fluid and dynamic; they are *living*. It is this key element that moves the enquiry beyond definition of a case study.

2.4 Considering how grounded theory influences this enquiry

I talk of the capacity of this enquiry to generate knowledge. This knowledge is about the motivation for a professional life being rooted in the energy gained from shared living standards of judgment. This generative knowledge-making capacity is shared by a grounded theory approach, as considered by Creswell (2007), from which theory can be constructed. The grounded theory construct however looks to undertake a systematic procedure with a scientific and objective language that uses a construct-orientated approach.

This approach does not therefore allow the participant-researcher to be immersed within the enquiry, or to consider how their subjectivity contributes to the enquiry itself. It asks that the enquiry is pre-set to undertake data collection in a conditioned way instead of responding to the needs of the enquiry as they evolve.

This enquiry therefore, whilst sharing the same aim of research in the generation of knowledge with a grounded theory approach, needs to live outside of the restrictions that this would impose upon it. To produce an account in a systematic way would be

to deny the emergence of knowledge that a living theory approach has allowed me to embrace. This is reflected in Adler-Collins' (2006) enquiry:

"I also had covert standards of judgement in play; ones which I was not consciously aware of....My living standards of judgement, in Jack (Whitehead's) understanding emerged through the heuristic reflective process of researching and writing my thesis. Such emergence was not anticipated as I thought that any values would be educational ones related to my development, management and teaching of a new curriculum in nursing." (Adler-Collins, 2006, p.2)

Working within a living theory paradigm also allows me as a researcher to enjoy the emerging knowledge from the enquiry. I can be delighted by the unexpected that a systematic approach would deny me:

"I find the idea of knowing that I do not know very empowering for I am freed from buying into the passion for knowledge claims. If my judgements can remain flexible and fluid then they will empower me to be inclusional in my life and my work. If they become solid and concrete they solidify my boundaries and become dogma. Such a process is insidious and the road to dogma is deceptively easy. . I choose now to be immersed in the process of knowing with the eyes and wonder of a child." (Adler-Collins, 2006, p.4)

Within the living theory paradigm I need to respect the responsibility for the enquiry that I present. The detached, objective approach offered by grounded theory does not, in my opinion, allow for involved educational responsibility on the part of the researcher for creating a valid explanation of their educational influence in their own learning and in the learning of others. It is my choice to research into and present this enquiry and I need to do so with integrity as an honest and trustworthy researcher. I therefore share Laidlaw's (2006) view of the responsibility of a living theory educator to manage the empowerment afforded to him/her:

"I also stressed my belief that I am also responsible (because my title contains the word 'educational') for the development of something for the good of society and individuals and groups within that society... .The important idea here, I think, is the necessity of education being a dynamic between at least two people. That education occurs when the people involved in the processes are engaged in learning something of value – for themselves and their society. The learner connects what is being learnt

with their inner landscape in such a way that they are empowered by the knowledge and begin the process of being able to manage that empowerment.” (Laidlow, 2006, p.1)

In the past it has been so much easier for me to write avoiding the “I”. I stood involved as narrator yet detached as participant. In 2003 I wrote:

“Throughout the work you are about to read, the “I” is a shadow, someone who ultimately is the reason and the driving force behind the mentoring that I describe. In identifying myself as a leader, as a Mentor of Mentors within the programme, I prefer not to lead from the front; instead preferring to lead through the programme, taking tentative steps to ensure that my fellow mentors are fulfilled. I am living through the others within the programme, identifying with their values and their difficulties as I experience these myself.

I feel however that it is an imposition to talk of myself as a teacher and a mentor, for there is a strong feeling that the research is here for others, to improve the experience of others with whom I come into contact.”

(Collins, 2003, p.1)

These disowned and unloved pieces of writing did not allow engagement with the author; did not allow the experiences and learning undergone to be shared. A whole part of the text that engages both reader and author was left aside. The result was a sterile text which does not share the joy of the process itself. I feel that grounded theory offers neither the author nor the reader to relive the joy of knowledge creation undertaken through the enquiry. I believe that the inclusion of my own voice supports me in exploring my professional motivation and pleasure. It allows me to draw upon and give a voice to the thoughts and feelings that I have and that we have; the “we” in this sense being those with whom I love and enquire. Eisner (1998) also looks towards a “we” that is specific and relates to the personal self:

“Consider how we discuss our research efforts. We talk about our findings, implying somehow that we discover the world rather than construe it. We say in our discussion, “it turns out that...,” implying that how things are in nothing for which we have any responsibility. We write and talk in a voice void of any hint that there is a personal self behind the words we utter: “the author”, “the subject”, “the researcher”,

or miraculously, we somehow multiply our individuality and write about what “we” have found.” (Eisner, 1988, p.18)

My choice to base this enquiry within the living theory paradigm is one born from experience. Through the learning that I have undergone as a researcher-practitioner, I have looked to develop a way of working that is both suited and suitable to my enquiry. I have moved from a detached perspective to an immersed one. This way of working has emerged as a response to my consideration here of my shared life and motivation. I stand immersed within the enquiry and need a methodological approach that can identify and accept this position as I take responsibility for the representation of this research. I want to be charged with its ownership and stamp my identity upon it. I do not want to hide behind a passive voice anymore. To do so would be to weaken the claims that I am making. To do so would be not to credit the role of others in my own work and to devalue their voices. Whitehead (1993) supports the immersed first-person enquiry:

“The idea that a new form of educational theory is being constituted by the descriptions and explanations which individual learners are producing for their own educational development from their action research, means that practitioner-researchers must speak for themselves and make claims to know their own educational development.” (Whitehead, 1993, p.105)

Whilst both grounded theory and living theory offer knowledge creation, one seeks to communicate the feelings and motivation of the participants in the enquiry whilst the other leaves me and the reader with a sense of emptiness and detachment.

I think that this difference is due to the aim of grounded theory to produce theory in the form of relationships between propositions that by their nature have lost connection with the experiences of individual human beings. This is one of the limitations of all traditional theories that are communicated through propositional theories. Living theories are grounded in the conscious lived experiences of individuals and do not lose this connection. Hence my attachment to living theory.

2.5 Considering how ethnography influences this enquiry

As I consider within this enquiry shared living standards and how these influence my professional life, I share an aim with ethnography to reveal a culture-sharing group. I do not look however to describe this culture-sharing group, but rather to live alongside its evolvment and understand the motivation and energy that it possesses.

My aim in doing this is to understand from where this energy is derived. I advance the theme that this comes through relationships of trust and the opening of boundaries between participants, allowing creative space to open up and pleasure between participants to emerge through shared enquiry.

I am immersed within this shared space and act as both participant and observer at varying points. I live both on the *outside, looking-in* (Rayner, 2005) as observer yet also on the *inside, looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) as participant. I consider events that are epiphanies in the life of this enquiry alongside the everyday interactions between the participants of this enquiry. I believe that both types of events are necessary to understand how living standards emerge from shared lives.

I site the enquiry within the social formation of the school at the outset of this research. I look to ground the research in its location as a way of contextualising the enquiry for my reader. These are some of the principles that this enquiry shares with ethnography. However, in contrast to the ethnographic paradigm, this enquiry seeks to understand how the participant group challenges the culture within which it is sited. It looks to creatively challenge it so that the participants are recognised and valued by that culture. Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2001), when referring to the ethnographic notion of “indexicality” state:

“Indexicality refers to the ways in which actions and statements are related to the social contexts producing them; and to the way their meanings are shared by participants but not necessarily stated explicitly.” (Cohen et al, 2001, p.25)

Within this enquiry, actions are produced, not in reaction to their social context, but rather as a result of their shared social context. This is a context that is constantly evolving and driven by the research participants themselves. They are the lifeblood and energy behind this evolution. I seek here explicitly to explore the meanings

shared by these participants as a way of understanding this motivational energy. The participants in the enquiry are seeking to create their own jigsaw in terms of their social context rather than fit into the pre-existing context.

The contrast between my own enquiry and an ethnomethodological perspective is further highlighted by Cohen et al. (2001) as they state:

“Social ethnomethodologists cast their view over a wide range of social activity and seek to understand the ways in which people negotiate the social contexts in which they find themselves. They are concerned to understand how people make sense of and order their environment.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.25)

In this enquiry, participants are not looking to negotiate their social context but rather to transform it. They have ownership over their social context and have an emerging understanding about their place within it as co-creators.

Through this enquiry, based within a living theory paradigm, my relational epistemology has emerged. I am creating my own living theory that can rationalise how I am motivated and energised in my professional life. This is in contrast with ethnography, where Cohen et al. (2001) admit that:

“..related issues of ontology, epistemology and the nature of human beings have received less attention than perhaps they deserve.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.25)

Therefore, although ethnography offers principles to this enquiry, it fails to recognise the evolution of a group creatively with its environment. This evolution is a lived-out experience considered from an immersed perspective. A living epistemology emerges from this experience that is grounded in day-to-day living. Each day brings about events, small and large, that ask the group to evolve.

2.6 Considering Living Action Research

“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, 2003, p 46)

This action enquiry approach has allowed me to plan, act, observe and reflect using an approach that has been defined as a cycle from as early as the work of John Collier and Kurt Lewin in the 1940s:

“One of the founding figures of action research, Kurt Lewin (1948) remarked that research which produced nothing but books is inadequate.” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p.226)

It has allowed me to work in stages, allowing me the space to critically reflect on what has just occurred as advocated by Stenhouse (1979). Crucially it also promotes research for a practical reason; namely the improvement of education practice by those engaged in this field:

“Stenhouse (1979) suggests that action research should contribute not only to practice but to a theory of education and teaching which is accessible to other teachers, making practice more reflective.” (Cohen et al, 2001, p.227)

I do not believe that this enquiry takes one action research (AR) approach as wholesale, but rather adheres to some of the key principals as suggested by Kemmis & McTaggart (1992, pp.22-25) which support the enquiry in improving education by changing it, being participatory and in bring collaborative. Through this approach I believe to contribute to a theory of education about where practitioners find their motivation through *shared* living standards of judgement, as well as exploring how an intergenerational approach to student-led research can improve the school.

In addition, Kemmis et al. (1992) suggest that AR involves keeping records of what has occurred and analyzing our own judgements, reactions and impressions of the research. This enquiry stands as a record and analysis of what has occurred alongside the implications of this research for others. Whilst Kemmis et al. (1992) however stress the importance of the action research cycle; I can only use this term loosely to describe the processes that I have undertaken. If you today asked me to draw and describe to you the cycle of action research that I have undertaken, I would stare at that piece of paper and deliberate for a long time. This *cycle* has however

allowed me to plan, act and reflect simultaneously. The boundaries between these terms merge. The process of action research is not a smooth one, yet the founding principles of the action-reflection cycle as advocated by McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (2000) in their description of *living action research* hold firm to my belief of how I can best live as a researcher. *Living* action research allows the research process to bend and adapt to the needs of the enquiry: to breathe alongside it.

“The essence of action research is that although an inquiry may have an individual initiator with a specific provisional focus, this focus can change as soon as the inquiry is under way and as other participants contribute crucial insights. Also: action research follows a developing situation over time. For both these reasons the later phases of an action research inquiry will need to take into account theory which was not envisaged at the outset.” (Winter, 1998, p.8)

Action research has given me inspiration in my research life as a way to enquire. Learning through enquiry, acting upon it and responding to it have allowed me as a researcher to grow and emerge. I see action research as living with its agent(s) and being responsive in supporting the enquiry. The usual distinguishing characteristics of action research in action reflection cycles are only loosely connected to my own methodology. I believe that responsive and relationally dynamic ontological values can be clarified and formed into living standards of judgment which would be unnecessarily constrained by linear AR cycles. These traditional linear forms of AR cycles are too limiting as a methodology in the generation of my own living theory, yet support the development of educational theory by a practitioner within education as suggested by Winter (1989) and Stenhouse (1979). Winter talks of the importance of the lived practical experience of practitioners that undertake change within their organisation:

“What is specific to action research as a form of inquiry is that it uses the experience of being committed to trying to improve some practical aspect of a practical situation as a means of developing our understanding of it. It is research conceived and carried out mainly by “insiders”, by those engaged in and committed to the situation, not by “outsiders”, not by “spectators”.” (Winter, 1989, p.1)

“Action research raises key questions about the actual experience of taking responsibility for attempting to initiate change. It is about the possibilities and limits

for responsibility and creativity within the lived experience of highly problematic organisational political conditions.” (Winter, 1989, p.10)

I agree with the description of action research as personal commitment by the researcher to his/her research. It is the action of taking responsibility for representing the change that has taken place and which continues to evolve. The living action research paradigm I see as living alongside the researcher’s life: conversations with colleagues in corridors, teaching and learning alongside students in the classroom and meetings within the school day. Making sense of these events is the action-reflection process itself. Practitioner-researchers do not need to be at a computer or in a meeting to allow reflection to take place. Reflection is continuous: on the drive home from work, walking through empty classrooms at the end of the school day, conversations with our partners. All these events allow us to process what has occurred, to make sense of it and to move forward.

This is where I see action research and living theory as sharing boundaries. As action-reflection lives alongside the researcher’s life, it allows meaning to be made through conscious reflection of what has occurred and what is yet to come. This integration of researching and living is intuitive and creative on the part of the researcher:

“As one becomes more experienced, more “expert”, this process (systematically applying theory to experience) ceases to be “systematic” and becomes instead intuitive, creative, elliptical.” (Winter, 1989, p.6)

The creative and intuitive aspects are in line with the call for *methodological inventiveness* (Dadds and Hart, 2001). It is true that through my own learning as an action researcher, I began by embracing theory and by holding the idea that for my own research findings to be valid, they would need to adhere to established theory (i.e. someone else’s) for the claims I was making to be valid. As I grow as a researcher, I have come to see others’ ideas as exciting and challenging. If I ignored the creation of theory around me, it would be easy for me to become stilted in my own research methods and beliefs. I need the fresh engagement that academic, practitioner and student research *by others* brings to me. It allows me a perspective outside of the school, outside of my own research and allows me to develop continuously as a researcher. Although I embrace the validity of my own claims, I still need the engagement of other researchers around me. It is the combination of

practice-based and academic-research, I believe, that affords us the most fundamental learning:

“For this dialogue to be an informed dialogue, research must contribute. Some of that research should come from people who have been given special privileged and responsibility to study issues: university researchers. Some of that research might come from other members of the community. Some of that research might be dialogic research.” (Coulter, 1999, p.12)

“What is needed rather is an account of how professional workers use the knowledge they either already possess or can easily acquire, and how engaging in an action research enquiry creates a process which is genuinely “theoretical”.” (Winter, 1998, p.8)

2.7 Data collection and analysis

I now consider the methods of data collection employed in this enquiry. These are the methods that have enabled me to understand the shared living standards of judgment that I hold, which transform into motivational energy in my professional life. As with the methodology described above, I have developed these methods in a responsive and *inventive* (Dadds & Hart, 2000) way. These were not pre-set at the beginning of the enquiry, but rather have evolved in response to the needs of the enquiry; living alongside it. Each account, multimedia clip and observation has been responded to therefore in an appropriate and unsystematic way. This is in order to fulfil the potential of each piece of data and not to restrict it to a pre-conceived list of criteria. Again, I look here to unlimit its potential. I have not rejected certain methods of data collection; rather I consider data collection as being an intrinsic part of my ongoing life. I do not come out of this life at various points to specifically collect data. Instead the collection of data is an ongoing and living process.

The methods of data collection that I use also come from my experience as a researcher and my knowledge of the different methods with which I have previously engaged. Having undertaken through my masters' enquiries specific modules on methods of educational enquiry, I carry with me the experience of utilising specific methods and methodology in practice. As I have grown as a researcher to embrace living theory as the most appropriate methodological paradigm for this enquiry, so I

bring to this enquiry the methods of data collection that best fit the purpose of this account.

Fundamentally, as stated above, the data collected in this living theory thesis has been part of my ongoing life. I am immersed within this data as participant observer. In order to create my own living theory I have needed to view my life as a data source: both in my actions alone and with others. In accounts that I use, I take an *inside, looking out* (Rayner, 2005) perspective. In observations that I undertake, I am being observed by other members of the group in their accounts and I am the observer in my own account. In images and video that I use, I am looking at these through a loving eye. I am connecting directly with the participants involved.

The main types of data collection and analysis that have emerged as part of this living theory methodology have been threefold. Through accounts, observation and multimedia I believe to have captured events in a triangulated way. Each of these considers a different perspective and is a different way of looking at the same event. This has allowed validation of the enquiry represented here through both personal and social validation. Both I and other participants have reflected together and apart at significant points in the enquiry.

I turn firstly to consider accounts in which I have acted as a participant-observer. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2001) state that these strive:

“...to view situations through the eyes of the participants, to catch their intentionality and their interpretations of frequently complex situations, their meaning systems and the dynamics of the interaction as it unfolds.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.293)

Also:

“Although each of us sees the world from our own point of view, we have a way of speaking about our experiences which we share with those around us.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.293)

The accounts represented in this enquiry have, for the vast majority, involved several participants. It has been crucial to include accounts from different participants about the same event and not solely from my own perspective. This has allowed meaning

to be made about the significance of the account, with each perspective immersed within the original event:

“One can detect the researcher’s attempts to get below the surface data and to search for the deeper, hidden patterns that are only revealed when attention is directed to the ways that group members interpret the flow of events in their lives.”
(Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p.300)

As I experience an event and account for it from one perspective, so other eyes look to do the same. This I believe is a living theory approach to accounts, in which the ongoing cross-referencing of accounts is shared between participants in an enquiry. This has allowed a systematic validation process to be undertaken as the different accounts are shared between the original participants and commented upon.

“Kitwood calls for cross-checking between researchers as a precaution against consistent but unrecognised bias in the accounts themselves.” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001, p.297)

Alongside the written accounts presented here, I also offer visual and video accounts of events that go beyond the understanding offered through text alone. I hope to communicate the importance of that visual and/or moving account to him/her. I believe that 15 seconds of a video account can communicate more than words can hope to about the relational meanings of my values and the energy that flows with them. A strength of this enquiry has been to combine both living accounts with written accounts related to the same event. This has allowed a diverse perspective of that event and has allowed the interpretation of the account to be validated.

The limitation however of using video and still images is that neither method runs constantly alongside the enquiry. A conscious choice must be made to capture an image or film a certain event. The richness of data lost is therefore significant and the evidence presented is fragmented as a data source. This is where written accounts carry strength as they can be produced after the event from the details retained within a participant’s mind. I believe that the choice to include some narratives and not others comes as a result of their perceived significance to the enquiry. Some accounts may be of epiphanies occurring in the enquiry, such as the *“What’s this all for?”* account I share with you in Chapter 6.4 of the student researchers’ first whole-school presentation. Others are located in the everyday, yet still stand out as

significant, such as my account of my after-school experiences in Chapter 5.1. The fact that they are retained so clearly in my own mind or my participants' minds means that they are worthy of consideration. I look towards accounts that aid me in answering the questions posed at the beginning of this enquiry.

I turn secondly to observation as a principal method of data collection that has been used consistently in this enquiry. Observation notes have accompanied accounts within this enquiry and they occurred separated from accounts; both account and observation offering a way of validating an interpretation of a specific event. Observations undertaken have allowed me to connect meaning to events. It has given me a tool for reflection, so that I consciously come to understand what may otherwise be subconsciously missed. Cohen et al (2001) say the following of observations:

“This enables researchers to understand the context of programmes, to be open-ended and inductive, to see things that might otherwise be unconsciously missed, to discover things participants might not freely talk about..and to access personal knowledge.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.305)

In this enquiry, observation has often been a subconscious and continuous act. It may record an event over a prolonged period of time such as a formal meeting, or it may record the briefest of encounters between participants. In all these circumstances I have acted as participant-observer of official meetings between participants and of chance meetings between them. In this way I have recorded observations of chance encounters between participants in Chapter 6.4 as a rich data source. These observations are not simply recorded as words; but as gestures, actions and the way in which participants interact with each other. My eyes and ears have acted as a *living* way of recording this data when neither video nor still camera has been available. I live out my role as observer continuously instead of choosing consciously the observations that I wish to make in advance. This has allowed me to be receptive to the observational data intertwined into my personal and professional life. The approach has unlimited this data source rather than limiting it through pre-selection of what and when to observe.

I record each observation in an unstructured way through my writing; replaying the observation in my mind before seeking to record its meaning for this enquiry. This unstructured approach has been significant in allowing me to capture the richness of

each observation made. I have not looked to categorize data, but instead to consider “thick descriptions” which lend themselves to accurate explanations and interpretations of events over time. Significantly, I have acted as participant-observer in the student researchers’ work over a sustained period of seven years. I acknowledge my subjectivity in this role. This supports me in understanding the energy and motivation shared between participants. A detached observer could not hope to capture the richness of this data captured through “*Mitfühl*”⁴. I have checked my personal interpretations through social validation by the participants involved in the observations themselves. This has been important to temper and validate my own acknowledged subjectivity.

Cohen et al. recognise the criticism aimed at participant observation studies:

“The accounts that typically emerge from participant observations echo the criticisms of qualitative data outlined earlier, being described as subjective, biased, impressionable, idiosyncratic and lacking in the precise quantifiable measures that are the hallmark of survey research and experimentation” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.313)

In seeking here to develop methods of data collection that can respond to the needs of the enquiry, I state that the subjective, biased and impressionable data supplied by observations of the research participants has been invaluable. I talk of motivational energy in the professional emerging from shared living standards of judgment. I can only hope to understand this through such data sources. The participants are immersed in their relationship together; they hold a shared bias about their life of enquiry together that has emerged through their work. Each has left an impression on the other in terms of the values that he/she holds. This is a rich data source that quantifiable measures could not hope to capture or understand. Quantifiable measures do not allow me to understand energising standards of judgment as a motivational force.

I feel that through this participatory validation of the observations undertaken here, I do not become blind to the peculiarities that I am supposed to be investigating (Cohen et al., 2001). Rather my eyes are open to the importance of these peculiarities in offering evidence of the shared living standards of judgment held between the group. The use of narratives by participants in this enquiry and the

⁴ A German noun expressing a feeling that is lived out by another

recording of conversations held have allowed me to embrace the importance of the unusual.

Both observational and account data have utilised multimedia alongside them. I believe that through combining observation, account and multimedia, the data sources within this enquiry are triangulated more fully. Multimedia is entwined into both observation and account. It serves as a living witness that records the events undertaken from an alternative viewpoint. I believe that multimedia serves both myself as principle author of this text and is a more inclusional way for my reader to engage with this text. The images and moving images allow my reader to share an event in a participatory way instead of solely connecting with text. They connect with my reader in a multisensory way. The use of audio-visual data is supported by Farren as she states:

“The visual record of the verbal and non-verbal communications is necessary to the communication of meanings. Without the visual record, significant meanings cannot be communicated through text alone.” (Farren, 2006, p.11)

Farren refers to a video clip in which Jack Whitehead and Jackie DeLong share humour together in their roles as supervisor and research student. I believe that this clip demonstrates the way in which the audio-visual can connect with others in the values that are held between people. The web address is:

<http://people.bath.ac.uk/edsajw/multimedia//jimenomov/ajwidwis.mov>

Multimedia also allows re-engagement with an event to a much greater level. Instead of the richness of that event fading as time passes, the immediacy of connection is retained. As I look now at the images and review the video included, I can live alongside that event again. The values that were expressed at that point in time between participants come to life again. This view is connected in Farren’s words as follows:

“I believe that the visual narratives of our own educational practices show what is possible in our different contexts to live values that we identify for ourselves as giving meaning and purpose to our lives and that carry our hopes for the future of humanity.” (Farren, 2006, p.18)

Cohen et al. (2001) and Whitehead (2006b) also support the use of audio-visual data in the following way:

“Audio-visual data has the capacity for completeness of material, reducing both the dependence on prior interpretations by the researcher, and the possibility again of only recording events which happen frequently.” (Cohen et al., 2001, p.313)

“On viewing the video-tape I experience and see myself expressing the life-affirming energy that I associate with the expression of loving what I do. What I am doing is communicating something I value to a group of educators in a way that is advocating enquiry into a process that I believe carries hope for the future of humanity. I am connecting the values of ubuntu to this hope. In the context of this workshop I am advocating an action research process of enquiring into living these values more fully in our practice and of sharing our accounts of our learning. This is what I am doing myself in the production of this video narrative.” (Whitehead, 2006b, p.1)

The use of the video and still camera within this enquiry has emerged over time. It has moved from a static position at the edge of an event to becoming immersed in the event itself. It has moved from tripod to hand and more importantly, eye, of a participant. I believe therefore that the events have been recorded through a loving eye of a participant that has the capacity to recognise and record the energy shared between participants. A true case in point is the recording of the humour shared between the Westwood St. Thomas in-house teacher-researcher group in Figure 14. This emergence has come about through my first experiences of the static camera being seen as an invader of the group’s privacy. It violated the space that was shared and participants felt that they could not interact between each other in a naturalistic way. As the camera was subsequently held and operated by a member of the group (predominantly the first generation of student researchers) the warmth and humour shared between the group could emerge on-screen.

The use of audio-visual data is strengthened by the written accounts and observations included here. As stated previously, the limitation of audio-visual methods is that they are limited in their capacity to record events spontaneously. These methods will never be as unlimiting or have the immediacy of response of the human eye. The strength of the methods of data collection presented here has therefore been the combination of account, observation and multimedia alongside each other. I have sought each time to employ the most appropriate method to

collect the richness of data produced throughout the enquiry. I have acted in a responsive way to the *lived out* enquiry, showing my *methodological inventiveness* (Dadds & Hart, 2001) through this approach. I believe that it is this responsive nature to data collection that best fits the needs of the enquiry and that allows me to respond to the questions posed at the beginning of this text. I therefore choose to present the visual and audio media embedded within the text, so that my reader can connect with these in a fluid way as he/she engages with the enquiry. It is this fluidity of data resource that is crucial. If these clips and images were placed in an Appendix, then the immediacy is lost that is the strength of this multimedia e-enquiry.

2.8 Assessing the quality of this practitioner-based account

Furlong & Oancea (2005) propose a framework for assessing quality in practitioner-based accounts. I wish now to consider the quality of this enquiry through this framework as a way of relating my work to the current debate in this area.

In the first of four dimensions, Furlong et al. (2005) consider the epistemic dimension of the research. They ask if the research is *trustworthy* and *authentic* in its undertaking and if the research provides an original contribution to knowledge. In response, I argue that the I-enquiry perspective of a living theory account brings ownership to the research process and responsibility to the outcomes that it provides. I have responsibility as a researcher to present a valid account that does justice to the learning emerging through the enquiry. I hold myself responsible for the enquiry as do the participants. Undertaking systematic social validation of this enquiry with the enquiry participants allows a more authentic account to be presented. I am not relying solely on my own reflections; I am asking participants to include their own voice through their own accounts and reflections. I am asking that they comment upon the way in which events have been represented here, in order to ensure the authenticity of data presented.

Brock-Utne (1996) states that qualitative research strives to record the multiple interpretations of events. He states that the notion of reliability is defined here as dependability. One of the dependability checks undertaken here has been, as stated above, respondent validation to the enquiry. It should also be noted the prolonged engagement with these participants in the field and the triangulation of observation, account and audio-visual data. Brock-Utne (1996) cites these elements as increasing the dependability of an enquiry. I see this participatory dependability as allowing the

enquiry to be authentic in its representation and crucially as holding meaning to the respondents.

With regards their second qualitative dimension, value for use, Furlong & Oancea state:

“If we are to appraise a piece of research on its value for use, we need to concentrate not on its actual impact – something that would be almost impossible to assess in the short term - but on its potential value and on the openings that it provides to realise that potential.” (Furlong and Oancea, 2005, pp.12-13)

This enquiry I believe offers two areas of potential value: firstly recognising that professional motivation stems from energising shared living standards of judgment and secondly that intergenerational student-led research brings about a sustainable dialogue for students and schools to work together.

This enquiry serves to show the *possible becoming probable* (Whitehead, Joan, 2004) as different generations of researchers work together to provide meaningful outcomes for their school. The journey illustrated here is not the reason for producing this narrative; more the hope that through this narrative others will consider the value of working in this way. Through this enquiry, an understanding has emerged about the interconnectivity between values and energy. I offer this to the academy in order that others can also realise the potential of their shared standards of judgment as an energising force.

I believe that the *value for use* and *epistemic* dimensions proposed by Furlong and Oancea (2005) share the same fundamental property. They both ask that the research reaches beyond its immediate sphere of influence and challenges others to consider new ways of working in the present and in the future.

In Furlong et al.'s third dimension for quality, *value for people and capacity building*, I argue that people are the motivation for this educational research and the lifeblood of the research itself. This enquiry seeks to understand the motivation for participants to engage with the research. It asks how the research has allowed the participants to grow and to learn as a result of their engagement with each other. I believe that this consideration of shared living standards of judgment held between intergenerational researchers holds hope for the future of humanity:

“Human beings learn many things, some of which are educational in the sense that the learning carries hope for the future of humanity.” (Whitehead, 2007, p.8)

This hope is expressed as a shared dialogue between teacher and student that values and recognises the other. This research has created opportunities for collaboration between people that were limited beforehand: between teachers and students, students and students and researchers and practitioners. This emphasis on learning together has been fundamental to the success of this enquiry.

In the final dimension for quality proposed by Furlong et al., the *economic* dimension of the research, I believe that this enquiry engages the resources already at the school's disposal. Educational research must ultimately have value for the school and its students. In this enquiry students have been placed in the role of learning providers. Through engaging in research, they are giving something back to the school that invests in them. Through dialogue together, talking about learning is understood and shared between teacher, student and the school.

Summary of this Chapter

In this Chapter I have described my methodological approach for the enquiry which now unfolds. I have explicated how the living theory approach offered here unlimits me as a researcher and allows me to draw upon other research paradigms as appropriate. Dadds & Hart (2001) reminds us that *methodological inventiveness* allows a methodological approach to be responsive to the needs of the enquiry undertaken. Similarly, Ferguson (2008) states that:

“It takes courage and open-mindedness to consider and embrace alternative ways of researching and presenting that research.” (Ferguson, 2008, p.213)

I believe that this courage comes as a result of experience gained through the life of a researcher. It is through this engagement with other methodological paradigms that a researcher is able to come to an understanding of what best fits the needs of a particular enquiry. I have come to choose living theory methodology through my seven years experience as a practitioner-researcher, as I know that this methodological approach allows me to work in a reflexive and responsive way; placing *I* at the forefront of the enquiry.

I look, not to fit into a particular methodological approach, but instead to select approaches in order to build a personalised jigsaw that can truly support the needs of this enquiry. I believe that living theory supports a researcher in making appropriate choices and in being responsive to their enquiry needs. Each researcher engaged within a living theory paradigm is able to build an appropriate methodological profile. This profile is grounded in the methodological choices and approaches that the researcher has previously considered, yet it also seeks to take these approaches further through experience and to develop new ways of working alongside these. Living theory is an *unlimiting* methodological paradigm that allows a researcher to produce an enquiry from an *I* perspective that takes his/her recognition of the self as a living contradiction further. It gives him/her the courage to be and to seek to live out his/her values more fully.

This approach is however an inclusional approach that recognises and respects the participants that form part of the enquiry. This is because the researcher is immersed in the *I* enquiry and in his/her life lived out with others. A living theory perspective allows the researcher to take educational space shared between participants and to consider how this evolves alongside the enquiry. It is a reflexive and responsive way of working that responds to the needs of the participants and the space shared together.

I now go on to ground the account in the location in which it has taken place and with the participants who come together to form this account, in which the methodological approach that I have described to you is lived out.

Chapter 3: Where and with whom this story takes place

I have stated that my work with student researchers has taken place over a period of seven years. In this Chapter I describe to you the second school in which this research has been located. Although I will refer back to my previous school in Chapter 5, where I worked with students as active research participants, the involvement of intergenerational research has taken place in this second school. Acknowledging the contribution of the first has been important, yet here I aim to share with you the climate and background of my current school as a base for student-led research. I refer to my work with the students in the first school via comments pulled from my own previous research conducted there⁵. This description of the school is moreover a physical one in nature, which I felt was important in physically grounding the research before looking at the culture and climate of the school in Chapter 6. Alongside the school, I also look here to introduce the participants involved in the enquiry. These are the individuals with whom I believe to share living standards of judgment through a life of enquiry.

3.1 Bishop Wordsworth's School

Bishop Wordsworth's Church of England Grammar School is a voluntary aided selective school for boys aged 11-18 years of age. In the 2001 official inspection report conducted by OfSted (Office for Standards in Education), the school was described as:

"... driven by a sense of common purpose, clarity of vision and enthusiasm for learning. The teachers rise above the limitations imposed by the poor accommodation and bring about some real transformation in the quality of the students' work. It must be added, however, that working in the shadow of an imposing cathedral spire compensates to some extent for the otherwise cramped working conditions." (OfSted, 2001 p.1)

⁵ See Collins (2002, 2003, 2004)

**Figure 6: Bishop Wordsworth's School from Salisbury Cathedral spire
(retrieved from www.bws.wilts.sch.uk)**



The school's ethos is described in the following way:

"The School aims to serve its community by providing an education of the highest quality within the context of Christian belief and practice. It encourages an understanding of the meaning and significance of faith and promotes Christian values through the experience it offers to its pupils." (Retrieved from bws.wilts.sch.uk on 31.10.07)

The school has a long history, and in the original part of the school, images of the founding Bishop can be found alongside former lodgings of the original boys who attended. I believe, if you asked anyone who knew of the school about what makes it *tick* they would conclude that academic performance and the pastoral care provided for its students are both key. These are the qualities that the Deputy Headteacher and co-researcher used to describe the school to me. These foundational qualities are supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme including the school's prestigious choir and its numerous rugby teams' prowess in local and national leagues.

In 2004, the school was successfully awarded Language College specialist status that has seen extensive refurbishment of the existing Languages accommodation as well as an increase in the availability of interactive whiteboards in the majority of the school's classroom. If you spend a few moments considering the image above, an aerial view of the school, I believe that this highlights very well the blend of old and new that give the school its unique character. To the right of the sight you can see

the Sports Centre, completed in 2004 with gym and reception area. This has replaced the disused open-air swimming pool that was originally on this site. To the left of the image is a green area known as “*The number 11 lawn*” where whole-school assemblies were originally held. The modern two-story “*Paddock Block*” provides the Humanities and English Departments with modern teaching bases. This block joins onto the school’s Chapel. The school is the only local authority maintained school in Wiltshire to employ the services of a school Chaplin.

The sixth-form is provided jointly by the school and by South Wilts Grammar School for Girls, some 15 minutes walk through the City centre. This arrangement sees a variety of courses in Years 12 and 13 now jointly taught, simultaneously providing a range of opportunities for students attending in the sixth-form. Over 98% of students from Year 11⁶ continue into the sixth-form, which offers mainly academic Advanced Level qualifications. A large majority of students, on average 93%, from the school’s sixth-form continue into Higher Education.

As a visitor to the school on the day of my interview, I was struck by a number of things. Firstly the general sense of order and cooperation that prevailed, this despite the appalling state of some of the school’s buildings at that time. Secondly the uniqueness of some aspects of the school such as the “*gown room*” for the choir, the Chapel in which, ironically, a Politics Lecture was being held and the two-site split that required students to cross a busy road unsupervised between lessons. Overall though, something special was in the air, and I believe that to be a buzz about learning. After the relative chaos of the school in which I was teaching at the time, it was as if I was stepping into another world. Everyday I now remind myself how lucky I am to be working with these young people in such a caring environment.

3.2 Those that together form this enquiry

In the writing that I am about to share with you, numerous key participants are involved. I feel that it is important at this stage to introduce these people to you, as they together form alongside me the motivation for this enquiry. I introduce these significant others myself, as I want these to come from my perspective of the shared life that we have, in which my role has been to bring them together within evolving boundaries that allow us to learn from the other.

⁶ Percentage based on the average number continuing onto the school’s sixth-form in the period 2001-2006 inclusive

Simon Riding: My strength and the other half of the coin

Figure 8: Image of Simon presenting at the 2004 BECTA conference



Simon and I met whilst both teaching at our former school “Westwood St. Thomas” over seven years ago. He has always been a tremendous support and encourager, not only to myself but also to everyone with whom he works. I saw, at Westwood St. Thomas, how he grew emotionally and physically into his role as a leader and to this day he retains an ideology and conviction of the value of education.

I have no doubt that Simon, now a Deputy Headteacher in a local authority maintained school in Wiltshire, will grow into a unique Headteacher who will drive forward his school with unending conviction whilst valuing the people within it.

Despite the double blows of developing rheumatoid arthritis over three years ago and also of seeing his father undergo intensive treatment for cancer, Simon still wants to come home at the end of the day and talk with vigour about the challenges that he has faced. It is this energy that is one of his essential qualities, and that I believe will continue for a lifetime. It is all these elements combined that allow me to love him as I do and for us to hold the shared life that we have.

Jack Whitehead (Academic tutor to Simon and I at the University of Bath)



Figure 9: Jack Whitehead with Jean McNiff retrieved from <http://www.jeanmcniff.com/vsmall5.JPG> on 31.10.07

Jack is a unique individual whose passion for what he does extends far into the international arena. The benefits of his perspective on “*living educational theory*” and action research that embraces the “I” have been widely felt. I could not do him justice in an introduction such as this; all I can do is brush the surface. For all who come into contact with Jack, the warmth and compassion that he carries are an essential part of who he is. However tired and lacklustre I feel before meeting with Jack, I will always come away with a unique sense of feeling revitalised and ready for the challenges ahead.

I can see Jack now, sitting in his disordered office laughing out loud with his arms folded across his chest. Within this stance he embraces the anger at the injustice he sees around him alongside the joy of the discovery of new knowledge. This sense of injustice drives him to seek out new ways of being which are just and fair and has led him to fight for his cause with vigour and conviction.

This is the image that I have of him, and in a way his office reflects how out of disorder he can construct meaning, a living dialogic approach. One of his unique qualities is that he genuinely cares for others and holds unending belief in their capabilities. He believes never to have influenced anyone is his educational journey, instead allowing them to find their own way through. As one of his students, I would beg to differ.

Shane and Alex (generation one of the student researchers)

Figure 10: Shane and Alex upon joining the school's sixth form



I taught GCSE French to both Shane and Alex six years ago at our former school of Westwood St. Thomas. It was Shane who first taught me the importance of valuing students' contributions to research, and how working with them is much more valuable than working without them. It was he who first approached me and asked why I hadn't asked for his opinion in research that I was conducting at the time. Both Shane and Alex carry a unique quality of empathy for teachers and for their fellow students. They had already been a vital part of the work of developing student research at Westwood St. Thomas.

I was most fortunate when both decided to join the sixth-form at Bishop Wordsworth's School. This allowed the knowledge learnt from Westwood to evolve further in a new era of student-led research to begin. It is without doubt that the enormous steps forward that student research has taken would not have occurred without these two individuals. If I look back at what both have achieved, their involvement in research is staggering. They have presented at conferences, staff training days and have worked with student researchers as mentors. I was extremely sorry to lose these two unique people to University this year, but know that the values they have gained from their work as researchers and research mentors is something they will always retain.

Figure 11: Harry, Paddy, Theo, Chris and Fred generation two of the student researchers-shown from left to right in the image



These five individuals first caught my attention when I was teaching them French in Year 7. All five possessed very different qualities, some very reflective and analytical in their approach whilst others overtly displayed leadership and organisational skills. I do not think that any of us could have predicted what would come out of the original project undertaken in 2004, or the journey that they would undertake as a result.

The make-up of the original group has now been altered, and in some way we always knew that this would come. Different priorities led Fred and Theo to leave the group due to the pressures upon them. Whilst the people in the group are unique, I believe that what they have achieved is not. Their work is representative of all students' capacity to enhance their school. These students have been ambassadors and are pioneers in work yet to be undertaken. I shall always remember the influence that these individuals have had upon my own understanding of students-as-researchers and the joy that our joint work has brought to me.

Andy, Martin and Matt (the third generation researchers) and Alan and Jamie (fourth generation) (no image available)

These five students are now in the sixth-form at my current school and have researched alongside the others for over two years. They came forward to volunteer as researchers after the peer group assemblies in which the other generations presented their findings to the year group. Older than the second generation by two years, they entered the group and struggled initially to find their unique role within it.

After a period of tension between the new and the old, established roles began to emerge in relationships of mutual trust.

The H.E Researcher (*no image*)

Formerly of the University of Bath and Bath Spa University, this researcher has accompanied the development of student researchers through its seven-year timespan. Originally, she acted as research mentor to practitioner-researchers with Jack Whitehead, whilst this group was undertaking their Masters Degrees through Bath University.

The researcher was there when the students first became involved with the teacher-researcher group at my invitation. She has witnessed the evolvement of these students firstly into active research participants before working with them at my current school as research mentor to them. Her support has allowed the student researchers to gain in confidence and competency in their researcher roles, in that she has acted as a critical friend to the group from the outside, looking-in.

Although the boundaries between us have once again become impermeable and we now travel on different paths forward, I still retain the sense of pleasure from our shared enquiry together with the students.

Graham Lloyd



Figure 12: Image of Graham viewing the student researchers' first practice presentation

When I first moved to Bishop Wordsworth's School in September 2003, Graham was the first colleague to talk to me. He did not just do this by chance through meeting me in the staffroom, but rather came to my (then dismal and depressing) classroom to offer his support. Graham thinks and reflects a great deal on his own influence and also how he can improve the work of the school.

Recently having taken up the post of Deputy Headteacher, Graham is now looking to build momentum for the teaching and learning that takes place within the school. He is looking to be creatively compliant in his work, looking to open up traditional viewpoints to new thinking in the name of progress, whilst recognising the culture within which he works. He is asking us, as classroom practitioners, to learn to share and talk with each other, and that by doing so we may learn to know ourselves better.

I now go on to look at my first and second year in post within this location and with these individuals that I have introduced. I look to explore the relationships and shared living standards which began to emerge (or failed to emerge) during that time of transition to a new role.

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 evolvment, 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 & Terrell, 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 & Terrell , 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.

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 agents⁷ 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,

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.

Chapter 6: intergenerational student-led research

I now focus upon how I take forward the values shared between my husband and I into intergenerational student-led research. This Chapter explores the journey undertaken by the student researchers and myself over the past four years, in which I believe to be living out the values that I bring from the personal into the professional and vice versa. It looks at the effects of student-led research upon the school community previously described to you in Chapter 5, including the emergence of shared living standards of judgment between participants in this enquiry. This involvement of student research has seen students move from active participants in practitioner-led research to embracing student-led intergenerational research. This work moves beyond Kellett's⁸ (2005a) suggestion that '*children as active researchers*' may be a new research paradigm through moving into enquiry that is embraced by the school community in which a shared language of learning emerges between student and teacher.

I look first to explore the motivation for student-led research and student-voice work within schools, taking into account the current national and international debate. I share with you how I believe to offer a sustainable, intergenerational approach to student-researcher work that brings about a change in school culture.

6.1 Students-as-researchers: the call for a shared language about learning

Learning is a term that excites and challenges me. I talk about the learning made by teachers and the social formation of the school through student-led research. I talk of

⁸ Dr. Mary Kellett is currently Senior Lecturer in Childhood Studies at The Open University and has played a leading role in establishing the Children's Research Centre., becoming its Founding Director in 2003. This centre is dedicated to facilitating research by children and young people and is the first of its kind in the UK. Her publications, to which I refer in this text, include:

Kellett, M., 2005a. *How to Develop Children as Researchers: a step by step guide to the research process*. London: Sage.

Kellett, M., 2005b. *Children as active researchers: a new research paradigm for the 21st Century?*. London: Sage.

the excitement that this brings me in my educational life. I talk of the role of others in bringing this about:

“I have argued that we come into the world as unique, singular beings through the ways in which we take up our responsibility for the otherness of the others, because it is in those situations that we speak with our own “voice” and not with the representative voice of the rational community. I have shown that the world in which we come into presence is a world of plurality and difference, because we can only come into the world if others, who are not like us, take up our beginnings in such a way that they can bring their beginnings into the world as well. I have therefore argued that the educational responsibility is not only a responsibility for the coming into the world of unique and singular beings; it is also a responsibility for the world as a world of plurality (p. 117) and difference. The creation of such a world, the creation of a worldly space, is not something that can be done in a straightforward manner.”
(Biesta, 2006, p.117)

Biesta talks of the worldly space within which we live, and the importance of the other in changing this space. Shared learning is a response to the environment of which we are a part. The desire by the student researchers to better understand their educational environment, so that it may accept and embrace their work, is a reaction to the space they share with the school community. They have learnt about their environment so that they may change and enhance it through enquiry. They have acquired this knowledge in order that they can respond and subsequently be recognised as unique human beings who can contribute much to this social formation. Biesta (2006) also perceives learning as a response:

“We can, however, also look at learning from a different angle and see it as a response. Instead of seeing learning as an attempt to acquire, to master, to internalize, or any other possessive metaphors we can think of, we might see learning as a reaction to a disturbance, as an attempt to recognize and reintegrate as a result of disintegration. We might look at learning as a response to what is other and different, to what challenges, irritates, or even disturbs us, rather than as the acquisition of something we want to possess. Both ways of looking at learning-learning as acquisition and learning as responding – might be equally valid, depending, that is, on the situation in which we raise questions about the definition of learning. But as I will argue ...the second conception of learning is educationally the more significant, if it is conceded that education is not just about the transmission of

knowledge, skills and values, but is concerned with the individuality, subjectivity, or personhood of the student, with their “coming into the world” as unique, singular beings.” (Biesta, 2006, p.27)

In recent years there has been a significant move towards the rights of young people to be involved in decision making with regards their own lives; empowering them to become active members of society to whom appropriate services and provision can be tailored. The educational environment is there to assist their coming into the world. Enquiry undertaken by students is a move towards learning in the responsive sense. Children acquire knowledge about their educational environment and their own position within it so as to change it for the better. UNICEF (The United Nations Children’s Fund) guided in its work by the provisions and principals of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, defines the empowerment of children in the following way:

“Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights. The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development.” (UNICEF, 1990, p.1)

I believe however that “*rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age*” pre-determines the extent of the child’s role in society purely as a result of physiological age. This does not take into account the responsibility of the child in learning about and responding to his/her environment outside of pre-determined boundaries imposed by age. The intergenerational approach to student-research that I offer has allowed the empowerment of children through different ages learning together. This has allowed younger researchers to hold more responsibility than those older, and newer, researchers joining them.

As part of the children’s emerging role as co-creators of knowledge, education is evolving into something that is done *with* them as opposed *to* them. In this enquiry I support a responsive way of children working *with* the school in which there are:

“High expectations of every child, given practical form by high quality teaching based on a sound knowledge and understanding of each child’s needs. It is not individualised learning where pupils sit alone. Nor is it pupils left to their own devices - which too often reinforces low aspirations. It means shaping teaching around the

way different youngsters learn; it means taking the care to nurture the unique talents of every pupil.” (Miliband, 2006, p.2)

Miliband highlights the high expectations that the school should hold about each child. I see this high expectation as two-way, in that children may have high expectations of what learning opportunities they are provided with, yet alongside this they must recognise their own role as knowledge providers about learning. This is in order that they can respond to their educational environment for improvement.

I believe that involving young people in their education is a means to improve the educational environment provided by the school; a view supported by the Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF) in its *personalised learning* agenda in support of the pupil voice:

“In addition, there is powerful emerging evidence in the area of improving pupil voice and consulting learners about their education.” (DCSF, 2005, p.1)

The DCSF further brings the involvement of young people in their education to the forefront by stating:

“Personalisation is a very simple concept. It is about putting citizens at the heart of public services and enabling them to have a say in the design and improvement of the organisations that serve them. In education this can be understood as personalised learning - the drive to tailor education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to fulfil every young person’s potential.” (DCSF, 2005, p.1)

Children and young people are therefore seen as citizens, able to offer opinions on their own education. The expectation of the student researchers is that these opinions are heard and have a purpose in the school i.e. that the school has the capacity to listen to their voice:

“Voices are nothing without hearers.” (Noyes, 2005)

This is reflected in the United Nations agenda for the rights of a child and also in the *“Every Child Matters”* (2005) agenda proposed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families:

“Children are entitled to the freedom to express opinions and to have a say in matters affecting their social, economic, religious, cultural and political life. Participation rights include the right to express opinions and be heard, the right to information and freedom of association. Engaging these rights as they mature helps children bring about the realization of all their rights and prepares them for an active role in society.”
(United Nations, 1990, p.1)

“The government strongly supports the effective involvement of children, young people and their families or carers in the development and running of all children's trusts. Increasingly acceptance of the principal of children's involvement is being turned into practice through a variety of participation activities across a range of organisations. However, sometimes it is difficult to translate commitment into practice that is meaningful for children and young people, effective in bringing about change and which becomes embedded within the organisational ethos.” (DCSF, 2003, p. 5)

The call for children to live out an active role within society is a living standard shared between my husband and I which has emerged as a result of our life of enquiry with students. This viewpoint has given, and continues to give me, the motivation to develop the role of student researchers accessing their right to be heard and using this voice to respond to the social formation of which they are a part. I recognise however that both school and student researchers need to respond together in order for the international agenda for the empowerment of young people to be fulfilled. Both need to work together to transform the social formation within which they are found, in order that the school is able to listen to its students and respond to their needs. The students themselves need to develop a way of working with their school that places conversations *with* teachers at the forefront of its work. A shared language needs to emerge which is understood by all involved, in order that true learning conversations can take place between student and teacher. The General Teaching Council (GTC) fails to recognise the fluidity of these conversations, or the fact that learning here is a two-way endeavour between student and teacher:

“A learning conversation is a planned and systematic approach to professional dialogue that supports teachers to reflect on their practice. As a result the teacher gains new knowledge and uses it to improve his or her teaching.”
(General Teaching Council for England, 2004, p.1)

The Qualifications and Curriculum Alliance (QCA) recognises the importance of a more responsive way of working in its call for a “21st century curriculum” that reflects the needs and interests of young people. Alongside the GTC it does however not recognise how much young people themselves bring to this environment:

“QCA has developed a curriculum big picture to reinforce the concept of curriculum as the entire planned learning experience of a young person. This would include the lessons that they have during the school day, but also recognizes how much young people learn from the routines, the events, the extended school day and activities that take place out of school. These are as much a part of the curriculum as the lessons. The curriculum needs to be living and dynamic, responsive to the needs and interests of young people” (GTC, 2003, p.1)

Through working together with students, who can explicate their classroom learning experience, I believe that the curriculum can be enriched and enhanced as it becomes a dynamic space with intertwining roles of teaching and learning shared between participants. This call for student voice has emerged through the work of researchers such as Fielding & Bragg (2003) and Kellett (2003, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2005b) and is a concept that has evolved from the participation of students through student-voice to the role of students-as-researchers themselves.

“The notion of ‘students-as-researchers’ (Fielding & Bragg, 2003, p.6) has its roots in traditions of teacher inquiry and action research that are characterised by principals of inclusivity, participation and grass roots development. Thus, despite the general tendency in traditional research practices to ignore the ‘student voice’, these research discourses and practices embody a spectrum of ways in which students are actively engaged in school and classroom action inquiries, working alongside teachers, in order to generate knowledge and so improve learning and teaching and the conditions necessary in schools to support these.” (Leitch, Gardner, Mitchell, Lundy, Odena, Galanouli, Despina & Clough, 2007, p.3)

Leitch et al. continue by stating the limitations of many pupil voice enquiries, recognising that these reports still talk of research *about* students as active participants rather than *with* students in the emergence of shared language of learning:

“The majority of reported studies illustrate constructive ways in which students are being actively engaged in school and classroom inquiries for change. These are inspiring and, yet, Hadfield and Hawe (2001, p.86) would argue that few problematize the ‘inclusive ideal’ of students engaged in action research and even fewer published articles report on research with students in more conventional educational research designs” (Leitch et al., 2007, p.4)

Leitch et al. (2007) look towards more conventional educational research designs as something to aspire to in student voice work. I argue that this brings students’ work into the domain of established research paradigms; a world over which they have no ownership. I argue that it is more rewarding for students, H.E. Researchers, teachers and the school to work together to own the research design and language used within it. Only then will such research have true benefits for its intended audience.

Alongside this argument is the consideration of who owns the research. There are many fears that all too often adults “own” the enquiry led by students and that the results and worth of this work is therefore limited. I argue that ownership of the student-researcher enquiry needs to be agreed between students and the school, in order that student-enquiry has a true purpose and value in changing this social formation. As much as the student researchers need to have ownership over their enquiry, so the stakeholders within the school have a right to understand the enquiry and to see how it will have worth for them. A culture of “them” and “us” needs to develop into a culture of “we” that respects the other and that shares a common language about learning.

In order for this we to emerge, student-led enquiry must be sustainable over time. I consider how an intergenerational approach to student-research can provide sustainability for this culture of enquiry within a school, an issue that has been raised by Leitch et al (2007) as part of their responsibility as researchers working with student researchers:

“Ultimately, we are left with some ambivalence about issues of power and our responsibility as second order action researchers with respect to intervening briefly in the lives of students and championing student voice and agency in schools.” (Leitch et al., 2007, p.18)

I argue that the support of the school's leadership team is crucial in allowing this work to develop and become integrated into the social formation of the school, as is the continued support of a "teacher advocate" to provide space and time for the student researchers. This support needs to be sustained in order that student-led enquiry becomes integrated into the school. The work of student researchers is therefore championed in a responsible way, so that it may enhance the lives of the student body alongside the other stakeholders within the school.

Sammons et al. (2007) call for the need to ensure that:

"Continuing professional development provision is relevant to the commitment, resilience and health needs of teachers" (Sammons, Day, Kington, Gu, Stobart & Smees, 2007, p.699)

I believe that student-led research can enhance the CPD provision within schools through offering something back to teachers expending energy in the call for learning in the classroom. The students who have undertaken this enquiry have recognised the commitment and dedication shown by many teaching colleagues:

"Before I just thought they turned up and taught. I can't believe the amount of planning involved." (comment by second-generation researcher in May, 2005)

Rué (2006) calls for students to be recognised in their role as consumers, yet also calls for cooperative action between themselves and the school community as vital in enhancing what the school can offer:

"It is especially paradoxical that our students should have a wide choice as consumers, both in quantity and diversity as in technological sophistication, and should have, on the other hand, a very low possibility for discernment regarding what to do and how to be involved as agents within our schools: whether in different aspects of their own education, in the development of their own agendas or in the creation of social fabric through the participation and development of different projects. It is also paradoxical that our schools should occupy the students' whole educational agenda without allowing for opportunities to see themselves as individual and collective agents with initiative and powers of discernment for the proposal and development of cooperative action." (Rué, 2006, p.125)

As Schon (1995) calls for a new epistemology in the way in which research is presented, Kellett (2005a, 2005b) considers the debate of whether student-led research can develop within the traditional parameters of academic research or whether this requires a new paradigm:

“Children’s competence is ‘different from’ not ‘lesser than’ adults’ competence (Waksler, 1991; Solberg, 1996). The claim that children do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding does not stand up to close scrutiny (Kellett, 2005, p.3) Undoubtedly adults have greater knowledge than children in many areas of life but with regard to childhood itself - in the sense of what it is like to be a child - it is children who have the expert knowledge (Mayall, 2000; Christensen and Prout, 2002) If the research areas that interest children emanate directly from their own experiences then no adult, even the most skilled ethnographer, can hope to acquire the richness of knowledge that is inherent in children’s own understanding of their worlds.”(Kellett, 2005a, p.9)

In consideration of this debate, I agree wholeheartedly that when researching issues from the students’ perspective, then it is through the students’ eyes that this is best understood. This allows the research to consider viewpoints from the *“inside, looking-out”* (Rayner, 2006b) that offer richness and truth-value to the research.

I consider here a shared language between student and adult-researcher, with each validating the other’s claims to know. The origin of certain words is a debate that detracts from this purpose. How words and phrases effectively communicate between the participants is the most important aspect. Authenticity comes through the sharing of an enquiry between all involved and the inclusion of their viewpoints throughout.

Kellett (2005a) considers however the need for student researchers to be trained as effective researchers before this shared language can emerge. I argue that this means inviting student researchers into the academic arena of research without considering what they have to offer first.

“While children’s knowledge and understanding of childhood and children’s lives is evident, a genuine barrier to children engaging in research is their lack of research knowledge and skills, not least because of issues about validity and rigour. Reflecting on the skills needed to undertake research it soon becomes apparent that these

attributes are not necessarily synonymous with being an adult, they are synonymous with being a researcher, and most researchers have undergone some form of training. Many, perhaps most, adults would not be able to undertake research without training. It would appear, therefore, that a barrier to empowering children as researchers is not their lack of adult status but their lack of research skills. So why not teach them?"(Kellett, 2005b, p.10)

It should not be taken for granted the wealth of knowledge that young people already have with regards conducting research, or indeed the vocabulary of research-related terms already at their disposal:

"We've already done this in Science-I even remember doing investigations at my Primary School. We had a hypothesis, and we had to come up with methods to prove it right or wrong before writing up our results and presenting them. This seems similar" (second-generation researcher during their initial meeting, 2004)

Frost (2007) highlights effective research undertaken by primary-school children:

"The following report describes a research project chosen and carried out by a small group of seven and eight year old students as part of a whole class project developing thirty students-as-researchers in an Essex primary school (Frost, 2006). Their training and research took place over a period of seven afternoons within normal curriculum time. The class worked in six groups on their own choice of topics with research questions as diverse as 'How was God made?', 'Why do people like football more than saving trees from being cut down?', 'Why are people cruel to animals?' and 'Why was the shed taken away?', (referring to the removal of a shed in the school playground that the children were particularly fond of). The pupils gained experience of a range of data collection methods and then chose to use interviews and questionnaires to collect data from relevant children and adults inside and out of the school setting. The research experience was deemed enjoyable and beneficial by the young researchers while raising questions regarding issues of time management, the role of adults in young children's research and ethical concerns regarding young pupils researching inside and out of the school setting and handling adult data." (Frost, 2007, p.8)

Kellett supports the capacity of even young children to undertake complex and rigorous research:

“Interim evaluation findings are extremely positive about the ability of children as young as ten to undertake rigorous, empirical research and the impact of such participation on child self-development.” (Kellett, 2005b, p.10)

Instead of needing to provide students with official teaching relating to research methods, we should instead look to draw upon their existing knowledge and ask other student researchers to share their examples. This approach has allowed a new generation of researchers to improve upon what has already been done, and to develop their research methods and understanding alongside student and adult mentors whose role has been to challenge, support and most importantly, be listeners to their voice.

Another issue related to the validity of student-led research, as raised by Frost (2007) and Kellett (2005a) surrounds the extent to which student-led research can be autonomous in its own right, or whether adult control over the research is an omnipresent factor that distorts its authenticity. Frost writes:

“Our differing views of learning affect our views of teaching and the nature of the classroom, its tasks, resources and the interactions that take place within it (Watkins, 2005). The way learning is understood, constructed and practiced in schools also cannot be separated from the purposes and priorities of those holding power, (John, 2003; Griffiths, 1998).” (Frost, 2007, p.3)

The students’ enquiry has been centred on learning with the school whilst retaining the traditional roles of student and teacher within the classroom. One of the central remarks by students within the school has been the desire to retain this dynamic in order to feel safe, to trust the other and to know what to expect. In the researcher-led student forum, one student commented:

“I want my teacher to be my teacher-I want to feel safe when I go into the classroom that (he) can help me to learn and can control the class...I want to do the best that I can in my exams, and I want to trust my teacher...that (he) can let me do this. The school bell still rings and we still get homework-this all helps me to feel safe when I come to school-I know what to expect.” (Year 8 student, December 2006)

I consider the “*purposes and priorities*” of schools to be shared between students and teachers. Raising academic success, safety, teaching and learning that interests and inspire have all emerged through the student researchers’ work. The purpose of education is to deliver these aspects to students as its core stakeholders, and the core purpose of the student-led research has been to support the school in being able to provide the best learning experience for them. The power relations between student, teacher and Headteacher remain intact in the traditional sense, yet dialogue between these groups has been opened up. This invitation to dialogue has come from the “bottom up” in terms of the students opening up the school stakeholders’ ears and eyes to the possibility of student-research. The boundaries between these groups have become fluid in terms of an ongoing learning debate that has added to the richness of what the school can offer:

“Although power in schools is often perceived as a ‘top down’ phenomenon, in Foucault’s terms power does not need to be seen as such but can be regarded as a way of acting to produce reality. Institutional power can therefore be understood as fluid, shifting according to who is present and negotiated through a wealth of social practices, (Foucault, 1980).” (Frost, 2007, p.4)

6.2 Setting the scene for student-led research: What has happened in the past four years?

The development of student-research around which this research is founded, is the culmination of a lifespan of more than seven years. This time period has seen the research move location from Westwood St. Thomas Upper School in 2003 to Bishop Wordsworth’s Church of England Grammar School for boys. As my previous enquiries have focussed on the first three years at Westwood St. Thomas (Collins, 2003), I now turn to the onward emergence of student research that has occurred in the last four years at Bishop Wordsworth’s School. These four years have seen students move from active participants in adult-led research to intergenerational student-led enquiry. They have seen the development of receptive space for student-research in a potentially hostile environment that embraces four generations of student researchers working alongside the other. This space has expanded to include the active support of the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, the

school council⁹, an H.E. Researcher, practitioner-researchers and classroom teachers. The strength of working in this intergenerational way has been the sustainability of student-led enquiry beyond individuals: new generations bringing *fresh eyes* and motivation to this shared life of enquiry.

“Because students are not merely educational shoppers in the marketplace; they are creators of their own educational experience; and their voice can help shape provision. Both as a means of engaging students in their own learning – the co-producers of education. And as a means of developing their talents – using their voice to help create choices.” (Miliband 2004 p.2)

⁹ Student bodies such as School Councils provide a medium for dialogue between the school and its students. The School Councils UK organisation define the role of such councils in the following way:

“School Councils are about involving young people in the life of their school. Traditionally pupils were viewed as passive learners, with their sole purpose being to get their qualifications and move on. In recent years, this role has been changing as society begins to recognise the rights of young people. Schools are beginning to listen to the views of pupils, and this has been seen to have a number of benefits to both staff and pupils.

In schools of several hundred pupils, ‘listening to their views’ is easier said than done. School Councils are the term given to structures which facilitate this communication, and enable young people to take responsibility for aspects of school life previously considered ‘out of bounds’.

While every school is different – and therefore every school council is different – we would give the following definition to describe a school council.

“An elected body of pupils whose purpose is to represent their classes and to be a forum for active and constructive pupil input into the daily life of the school community.”

The term ‘school council’ is used as an inclusive term for similar student representative bodies such as pupil or student council, school parliament or school forum” (retrieved from <http://www.schoolcouncils.org/whyandhow/structures-definitions#school> on 19.11.2007)

The role of Schools Councils defined here is as an empowering force for students to be heard which recognises that this journey is ongoing. Trust between the school and School Council must first be developed on both sides in order for each to comprehend how they can benefit the other. As Biesta (2006) talks of learning as acquisition and learning as a response, the School Council needs to develop a responsive way of learning with the school. If the Council has been given space within the school, then students within that Council have a role to make their work and space valued. The council needs to develop relationships with adults within the school that ask them to listen. Although the Headteacher or other Senior Leader(s) may have initially initiated and supported a School Council, as I initially supported the development of students-as-researchers, this does not guarantee that other stakeholders within the school hold the same value for its work. Although some of my colleagues were ready to listen, others needed to recognise that it was worth listening to. It is therefore the work of the student body (including School Council and Student Researchers) to gain listeners for their voice through the quality of the work they produce and the quality of relationship that they hold with others in dialogue and action.

Student voice needs to be developed for a purpose i.e. to enhance the quality of education for students both as *receivers* and *co-producers* of education. If students wish to be acknowledged as co-producers, they must choose the way in which they use their voice for maximum impact.

In 2003, the process of gaining support for the creation of receptive space to student research began within my school. At that time, there were limited listeners ready to engage with the student voice, and the role of the classroom teacher was to *provide* his or her knowledge in order that students could *gain* examination success. On joining the school, I was informed that my "*principal role was to continue to ensure this examination success*" (comment made by Headteacher in my first meeting with him in September 2003).

Two student researchers (who had previously engaged as active research participants) moved from my previous school to join my current school's sixth-form in 2003. This move was significant as these students became the first generation of researchers to work within the school. Upon joining the school, they commented upon the lack of research being undertaken by students:

"Perhaps students here have not tried to research because they don't see any need to improve their education. They trust their teachers to support them in achieving their potential and don't see the need to challenge or explore what makes this learning process work well. At (our former school) we saw a need for this type of work...here they do not. When we asked our friends about joining a learning debate together with their teachers, they were literally shocked!" (Shane first-generation researcher, October 2003)

The first role of the student researchers, in which the first generation recruited the second from the Year 7 cohort assemblies, was therefore to convince school stakeholders that there was a need for this type of enquiry. Working alongside myself as teacher advocate and an H.E.-researcher who supported the development of this receptive space for student research, the group's first enquiry focussed on my own classroom practice, working to see the effectiveness of the recently introduced "*National Strategy*" (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2003) on classroom learning. I asked the researchers to enquire into this area, as I wanted this first enquiry to be a springboard for school-wide and subsequently student-led research. I laid my own classroom practice open to the group so that the worth of

student enquiry could begin to be valued within the school. I hoped in this that other stakeholders would see what this type of enquiry could bring to the school. This small-focus enquiry had the advantage of allowing school stakeholders to stand safely on the sidelines and watch the process unfold, whilst providing an example of what student-enquiry provides the school in learning about itself.

The H.E. Researcher working alongside the group reflects on her involvement:

“I had worked with Karen for several years as her MA tutor and as a research mentor funded by the DfES Best Practice Research Scholarships Scheme. She had asked me to support her work in mentoring with Able and Gifted students where I met Shane and Alex (the first generation of researchers). I later photo chronicled their participation in a teacher development day. I looked to mentor and coach the first-generation so that they in turn may research mentor the group of five KS3 students who would undertake co-research.”(electronic mail received, May 2004)



Figure 20 Shane (first-generation researcher) aged 14 and me at Westwood St. Thomas School co-hosting an INSET session in 2002. This was at a time when the students were working as active participants in adult-led enquiry. In these images Shane and I are co-leading this session. His voice combined with my own to provide the teacher-student perspective on gifted and talented learning in the classroom. I believe here that everyone involved in that session valued the other, be it student or teacher, and that the learning conversations held between us were of real value to all.

Following the completion of their first small-scale enquiry, the student researchers presented their findings in a validation exercise to a sample group of teachers and stakeholders. The invitation to the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher to

participate and comment upon the outcomes of this enquiry was crucial in gaining their support to move towards school-wide student-led enquiry.

“Very good...interesting comments at the beginning of the presentation...but I just sat here wondering what they (the students) are making of my lessons now...I don’t think that I’ve written an objective up this year!”

“Wouldn’t it be a good thing if we could say that Bishop’s was leading the field in this type of work?” (comments by the Headteacher, March 2004)

The support from the Headteacher following this presentation was crucial in giving them the space to engage in a whole-school enquiry of their choice. This receptive space was made possible through first proving the worth of student-led enquiry. The Headteacher and Leadership Team’s support was crucial to the continuation of student enquiry at the school, as it gave the students themselves motivation and energy for the value of their work.

“When (the Headteacher) became involved and asked us to focus on a whole-school enquiry to be presented to the staff, it felt as if this was “proper” work that we were undertaking. It wasn’t something that only a few people knew about..it was becoming a part of the school.” (second generation researcher in conversation January 2005)

The students chose to enquire into assessment practice within the school for this whole school enquiry. They recognised that in order for student-research to be relevant to teachers and students, they would need to prove that they could offer real learning outcomes valued by the school and its stakeholders:

“Through our research we aim to share good learning between pupils and teachers in the school. Our recent focus was to share the good practice of assessment throughout the school. We believe that assessment related not only to one teacher or Department, but to them all, and that therefore more teachers would find this interesting and relevant to their own work. The scope for our research was wider. We also believed that this would help our fellow students understand what assessment involves, and in doing so, ask them to be aware of what is going on in the classroom as well as what teachers do to really make this a good process” (Harry, second generation researcher, March 2005)

For this enquiry, the first and second-generation students actively sought to bring in more individuals who shared their receptive space. They firstly sought to recruit a third generation of researchers to research alongside them, recognizing that the enquiry needed new ideas from fresh eyes and that the workload was about to increase dramatically if this enquiry were a success. They also sought to recruit teachers to work alongside them in a review of assessment practice. The students were asking teachers to see them in a different light and to affirm them as equal members of the school society. They were asking that the teachers treat them as individuals who can move the work of the school forward through highlighting best learning practice.

Day (2004) considers the need for passionate learning communities to:

“...(seek) to understand the classroom from the students’ perspectives, focusing in the process of teaching upon building self-esteem through the knowledge and understanding of the student.” (Day, 2004, p.141)

For this enquiry, the students began to examine the methodology that they were developing to respond to their enquiry, taking forward the learning from the first small-scale enquiry into my practice. Alongside classroom observations undertaken by the student researchers, they also asked students within lessons to film from the students’ viewpoint. The video camera was becoming a living witness of the classroom learning that was taking place, given to a student to film from their viewpoint. They also began to develop “*learning diaries*”¹⁰ that looked at both the teacher and student view of what learning was taking place during a lesson.

“How can we know what they are learning in each lesson...we need some sort of written evidence...and this needs to go with what the teacher thinks they are learning each lesson..say over a period of two weeks...that will allow us to see if both sides “match up”-we can then use these in the interviews to follow.” (comments by Chris, second-generation researcher, March 2005 during a meeting of the group)

When they had collected this evidence, they then examined their findings alongside the teacher and students in a semi-structured interview before drawing up their initial findings. These formed the first draft of their presentation and were shared with the

¹⁰ In Appendix 2 the methodologies developed by the students researchers, including the learning diaries, are explicated

teachers with whom they had been working for comment as well as the Headteacher and Leadership Team. These findings were then presented to their peer groups via whole-year assemblies and student learning forums for validation before being presented to the whole staff during a teacher-training day.

The H.E. Researcher, observing the training day, then interviewed a sample of teachers involved either directly (being involved as active participants) or indirectly (through the training day) with the enquiry, including members of the school Leadership Team. It was felt important that these interviews be conducted by someone from an outside perspective rather than by the student researchers themselves. It was hoped through this interview, that an objective review of the effectiveness of the student researchers' presentation could be established.

The main points of these interviews were then collated and shared with the interviewees before being fed back to the researchers themselves. This process provided a valuable critiquing of the enquiry. It allowed the students to consider what improvements could be undertaken to improve the quality of their research outcomes. The main critique of the findings was that not all students had been given the opportunity to respond to them. At the initiation of the Deputy Headteacher the student researchers then presented their initial findings to the entire school via a series of year-group assemblies. They also asked for representatives from each year group to join a student learning forum during which the findings were discussed.

Another critique of their enquiry was that learning objectives featured heavily in the good learning practice offered by the researchers. This, colleagues felt, was a heavy overlap with their previous research into the National Strategy and therefore offered limited new suggestions. Theo, a second generation researcher responded to these comments:

"We talked about objectives a lot in the first piece of research, I know, and since then there seems to have been an objective fever in the school with more teachers telling us or writing down what we are going to learn. It used to be unusual to see this...now it is unusual not to see it-this kept being mentioned in the interviews and learning diaries that we did, and it seemed right that we shared these views now." (November 2005)

Increasingly e-based methodology has played an important role in supporting the student-led research. At the time of writing the group is developing their own websites using the KEEP Toolkit Snapshot profiles (Carnegie Foundation) to share their results with a wider audience¹¹. They hope to utilize this method in the near future to share their journey with other students in other schools about initiating student-led research.

Alongside the KEEP Toolkits, the use of still and video image has allowed the students to capture and record events that may otherwise be lost. Weblogs have provided a forum for sharing ideas and for those working in a research mentoring capacity, the opportunity to provide online support. The use of e-based technology supports the sustainability of student-led research, providing a forum through which the events and learning outcomes can be shared and recorded.

¹¹ The student researchers' webpages are all collated in the student researcher pages of the Bishop Wordsworth's School website at the following address:
<http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=83796166240979#>

The H.E. Researcher working with the group has provided them with a webpage in which she seeks to explain the learning undergone through their enquiries:
<http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=83796166240979#>

This page forms part of her presentation on students-as-researchers presented to BERA during their annual conference in 2005. The webpage to accompany this presentation can be found at:

<http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=78801916892456>

The student-researcher's first webpage, related to their small-scale enquiry can be found at:
<http://www.cfkeep.org/html/snapshot.php?id=83796166240979#>



Figure 21: Three generations of student researchers including (from left to right) the first generation, the second and the third in 2007

Each generation brings to the enquiry a different perspective as a result of their values and experiences. Intergenerational work brings these perspectives together in a medium not previously undertaken in the school. Each perspective is unique and it is this richness that strengthens the enquiry undertaken.

The testament to visual image as a record of significant events is no better demonstrated than by the two images of Shane (first generation researcher) (see Figure 27 of Shane in 2004) that highlight the length of his sustained commitment to student enquiry.

After first sating the journey of student research undertaken within my current school, I now bring you to the most significant part of my story. In this story I have brought the standards that I hold in the personal into the professional i.e. valuing the other, recognising the best that one can be and recognising work well done. This journey has seen students move from working as active participants in research (as at Westwood St. Thomas school) to students undertaking and leading enquiries themselves i.e. having their contribution and work recognised. Through this evolution both attitudes and ultimately policy have changes in the traditional setting of a boys' grammar school.

The capacity for understanding learning shown by the students with whom I have engaged has been astounding, and I believe to have taken from them a new sense of knowing as a classroom practitioner. I do not believe this experience to be exceptional in any way; moreover it is representative of what any group of students in any educational context are capable of. This is providing that the school takes the time to *listen* and provides the space for them to enquire. Bragg (2007) acknowledges the crucial role of the school as a learning community that supports the development of multiple voices capable of speaking and listening to each other:

“A final point concerns the significance of ‘teacher voice’ or, more accurately, the voices of all those in a learning community, including support staff and teacher voice, has to be developed alongside pupil voice for the dialogue to be truly meaningful within a whole-school situation.” (Bragg, 2007, p.116)

Bragg also acknowledges the difference in pace between the development of these multiple voices. Similarly to this enquiry, she has found that the teacher voice emerged at a slower pace than that of the student voice:

“It shows that, whilst children seemed to rise quickly to the challenge of pupil voice ways of working and being, the perceptions, experiences and reactions of the teachers tell a more ambiguous story of the complexities that emerge as intentions are implemented.” (Bragg, 2007, p.55)

This journey is about these multiple voices and generations working together in a pluralistic learning society. In my transfer seminar in October 2005 at the University of Bath, I was asked the question:

“Isn’t this work more about cohorts of students rather than generations working together?”

At the time, I conceded that the three groups of student researchers in Key Stage 3, 4 and 5 respectively are classed traditionally as cohorts. They are however generations as well, sharing different values and expectations as a result of their life experience and of the culture in which find themselves. In the *Collins Concise Dictionary* (1993), a generation is defined as:

“All the people born at a particular time, regarded collectively (my generation, the rising generation.” (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1993, p.813)

It is also defines “*generation gap*” as:

“Differences of outlook or opinion between those of different generations.”(Collins Concise Dictionary, 1993, p.813)

The definition does not define a number of years between generations. The definition of “*generation gap*” shows outlook and opinion as a defining factor in separating

generations. In this account of the students' work, you will see many examples of differences in opinions and outlook between the students, yet alongside this you will see the merging of opinion through shared enquiry across generations.

Intergenerational research therefore seeks to recruit student researchers of different ages, experiences and background; yet acknowledges that through these generations working together they begin to share boundaries as shared values emerge between them.

Generation 1, Shane and Alex, have undertaken an incredible journey in their research life for the past four years, and have a wealth of knowledge to share. They both carry a confident air in their ability as researchers. This has been recognised by the Headteacher of the school and by my tutor Jack Whitehead alike. After researching together with me for seven years, they have now both moved into Higher Education. This seven-year span has seen them move from passive to active participants in teacher-led research before becoming research mentors themselves. In this sub-chapter, their story is brought to light.

6.2.1 From one generation to the next: The first-generation Shane and Alex story



Figure 22: Shane (left) and Alex (right) in their second year at Bishop Wordsworth's sixth-form

I believe this image highlights the sustainable nature of intergenerational research as we see Shane move from active participant in adult-led enquiry in Figure 27 to the role of mentor for a second generation here three years later.

A wealth of opportunity was available in September 2004 with the arrival of Shane and Alex, two of the former student researchers from the Westwood St Thomas programme. Shane and Alex had previously been involved in much of the student research developed at Westwood St. Thomas as active participants. It was Shane

who instilled in me the value of recognising the other that has since become a standard shared out between my husband and I. Shane discovered anonymous quotations that belonged to him included within my own previous research on the website: www.actionresearch.net in 2001. These quotations were used without his permission or consultation and related to an action-research enquiry I had undertaken on the use of learning objectives with students. I had asked the students their views as active participants in teacher-led research, but this was the point at which their “active” role ended. The research was done *to* them and *about* them instead of *with* them.

I commented in previous research on the enjoyment that working alongside students such as Shane and Alex had afforded 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.109)

The following comments made by these two students are taken from a video transcript in September 2005, during the first session in which they began to work with the second generation of student researchers:

Shane: *“My name is Shane Garvin, you might recognise me as one of the Year 12 students here. Basically I used to go to Westwood St. Thomas before I came here. That is where Mrs. Riding used to teach French before she became Head of French here”*

Alex: *“My name is Alex Dunning, and I used to work with Mrs. Riding at Westwood St. Thomas on the student research programme before she came here. We didn’t work by ourselves as students as you are doing here, but we worked with her on the student research work which she was doing then”*

I remember thinking about how many students I had referred to in my research writing, but how little I had actually worked with them as co-researchers up to that point. It was an embarrassing situation where I was a living contradiction to the value

that I hold of recognising the other. This episode brought about much discussion within the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group on the ethical issues relating to research with students. This debate continues with the recent comments made by Kellett (2007), upon which I later reflect:

“There are still many unresolved ethical issues relating to children as active researchers. Who takes ethical responsibility for a child-led study? The child? The supporting adult? An independent body? And should the ethical standards be designed and policed by adults or by children? Would children regard adult policing as interference or a necessary framework in which to operate?” (Kellett, 2007, p.21)

Alex: *“At our previous school (Westwood St. Thomas) teachers and students had much closer relationships. We were a lot more relaxed and closer to the teachers than we are here. Here there is not the right atmosphere for that...it is a different type of place. There I think we needed to get involved in the teachers’ research because we knew (or thought we knew) how to make things better. Here the students trust the teachers to get them through the exams; they don’t see a need for research by students”*

Shane: *“After I read (Mrs. Riding’s) comments on the web, I was disappointed. I wanted to know why she hadn’t spoken to me about what she was trying to do-it was about our class after all. I had been involved in the research, yet I wasn’t involved at all if that makes sense. After that, we then started to be involved with the teacher-researchers. We went to the meetings after school; we saw them fighting over the biscuits and cakes and stuff. Therefore (addressing Year 7 students) as a result of your research, you might form closer bonds with your teachers. You won’t see lessons in the same light again”*

In May 2005, when Shane had been involved with the Year 7 researchers for over one year, he reflected on how the process of student research had come full circle for him. From the beginning of the process, whereby a websearch led to a discovery about teacher-led research, to webspace becoming a vehicle for him to share student-led as opposed to teacher-led enquiry.

Seeing Shane and Alex working alongside the second generation of researchers to deliver their first whole-school research presentation was a moment when I felt *fully present*. It went beyond them having confidence or speaking eloquently about

student voice and its merits. It was the pride I felt at the passion with which they were speaking and communicating their work. I was sharing their passion with them. When the time arose for questions and the room fell silent, Shane continued to ask until the first colleague raised his hand. He was adamant in asking my colleagues to engage with the student researchers in their work; so that their work was recognised.

6.2.2 Moving to student-led research with the second generation



Figure 23: 2004 The second generation: (from left to right) Fred, Paddy, Chris, Harry and Theo in their first year as researchers

This image was taken before a breakfast meeting in 2005 and reflects the shared motivation that the group had to meet and enquire together.

“If the effects of policies are presented through measures that suppress the individuality of experience, then it is easy to mislead. We need, in particular, to hear the voices of students and to give attention to their perspectives on being a learner in school.” (Ruddock, 1994, p.8)

The above statement by Ruddock, during her presidential address to BERA (British Educational Research Association) reminds me that I am an educator, a learner and a researcher, yet within my professional life it is the students that matter most. They are my *raison d'être*. I propose this research as a reminder that as well as a teacher, I am a learner learning to improve my classroom practice. Through this writing, I hope to show how teachers can learn from students and most importantly embrace the oft forgotten word of “enjoyment” in this process. As partners in a school, both students and teachers have the right to learn and to use engagement with the other

as a means to (re) discovering their own passion for learning. I see learning as the fundamental reason why schools exist.

“At a time when teachers are concentrating on raising expectations, and enhancing academic performance, they might be helped by more attention being given, through research, to some of the fundamental structures and relationships of schooling. A comment from a secondary school student comes to mind: “School’s not labour and not play, so what is it?” That is a question that we need to work on.” (Ruddock, 1994, p. 9)

In McGregor’s (2007) exploration of current practice and theory related to “*Students-as-researchers*”, she provides the following explanations behind the benefits of collaborative enquiry with students:

“Collaborative enquiry has been shown to raise morale, efficiency and a sense of agency for teachers (which might be expected to relate to attainment) through the engagement and motivation of students. In their first year review a significant proportion of Network Learning Communities identified enquiry with students as a major achievement and 80 percent planned more activities for year two.”(McGregor, 2007, p.87)

She continues:

“The identification of student involvement as a significant dimension of Network Learning Communities development mirrors the currently considerable and growing interest in policy circles, nationally and internationally, around needs of young people in an increasingly complex society.” (McGregor, 2007, p. 87)

McGregor highlights the two sides of learning proposed by Biesta (2006) that I relate to the work of students-as-researchers. Although I find many accounts speaking of the benefits to students of this type of work, I find little evidence of the impact of these enquiries. I wonder who are the individuals involved and what difference their involvement as researchers has made to their school. I also ask about the longevity of such projects, and how current trends develop into a school culture that embeds students-as-researchers as a mechanism for whole-school learning. Bragg (2007) recognises the demands that student-voice work place upon the adults in the school:

“Whilst adult support for pupil voice is crucial in ensuring its success and sustainability, it is important to recognise the demands it places on teachers, for instance in changing their identities as professionals and their relations both with children and with other staff.” (Bragg, 2007, p.1)

Through offering a sustainable approach through intergenerational student research, I hope that the school culture can be enhanced through learning about the intricacies of teaching-learning:

“Through seeing students’ capacity for quality research, and the usefulness of it for its insights into aspects of school life, changes in cultural attitudes to students can be brought about. Such insights can also form part of a differently constructed approach to professional development that is more open, reciprocal and indicative of a more flexible, dialogic form of democratic practice in which the interdependency of teaching and learning is explored and enhanced.” (Frost, 2007, p.3)

Part of the work of the student researchers must therefore be *learning as a response* (Biesta, 2006) to their environment, seeing how their work can creatively integrate into the existing school culture. They have asked for their contribution to the school to be recognised. Teachers have stood on the *outside, looking in* (Rayner, 2005) to their work, until they too are ready to engage with the researchers. This is a long-term journey that will not be achieved by one student-led enquiry alone, hence the strength offered by an intergenerational approach to this type of enquiry. Ruddock (1994) talks of the long haul nature of this work:

“We can take some inspiration from the work of some teachers who have been trying to unfreeze their schools and transform the traditional culture through whole-school policies on equal opportunities. They have struggled on, often with little support apart from their own commitment and that of their colleagues, and the task has been complex and personally harrowing .But they are realistic and acknowledge that it will be a long haul.” (Ruddock, 1994, p.9)

Adults within the school need extended opportunities to realise the potential that student-enquiry has to offer them. McGregor asks:

“It is not just the power to speak and the right to be heard that are so critical in themselves, but also engaging with the purpose of the process. Student voice for what?” (McGregor, 2007, p.88)

Linked to this in the first presentation that the student researchers made within the school, a colleague asked the most valuable question that could have been asked of their work:

“What’s this all for?”

It is a question that I hope to have responded to within this enquiry. I believe that intergenerational work by student researchers allows the precious resources of teacher time and energy to be saved. This approach brings enhanced results for teacher and school learning, in supporting the sharing of good learning practice.

This intergenerational approach enhances relationships across the divide of traditional year groups and shapes dialogue from which a school-based community can learn. The immense capacity of students to relay information regarding best learning practice in the school has been crucial to the success of the student-led enquiry. Students are best-placed to analyse the learning experience in the classroom. It is they who can relate their own and their peers’ experiences in order to give the school a true view of learning through different eyes:

“Children’s competence is ‘different from’ not ‘lesser than’ adults’ competence (Waksler, 1991; Solberg, 1996). The claim that children do not have sufficient knowledge and understanding does not stand up to close scrutiny.” (Kellett, 2005b, p.3)

“Undoubtedly adults have greater knowledge than children in many areas of life but with regard to childhood itself - in the sense of what it is like to be a child - it is children who have the expert knowledge.” (Mayall, 2000, p. 35)

“If the research areas that interest children emanate directly from their own experiences then no adult, even the most skilled ethnographer, can hope to acquire the richness of knowledge that is inherent in children’s own understanding of their worlds.” (Kellett, 2007, p. 9)

Generations of students working together in a collaborative way can support learning and enhance relationships not only between student-student, but also student-teacher and teacher-teacher:

“Research has reflected changing legislation and has been shifting its focus on to children as subjects rather than objects of research.” (Kirby, 2001, p.76)

The word “*with*” in this research is extremely important. It demonstrates the nature of the co-enquiry that is taking pLACE during this writing. I am learning. The students are learning. They are learning from me, and I from them. There is a new hierarchy that reflects the evolving position of student and teacher within this relationship. Kellett (2005) suggests that “*children as active researchers*” is a new research paradigm, yet I argue that students have always held the capacity to actively enquire. They have been waiting for the space within their school to develop that allows this capacity to be fully realised. The national and international agenda of student voice previously discussed is at last realising what the student as consumer can bring to the educational environment. It would seem that schools have been *missing a trick* for a long time in developing the capacity to listen.

I am not “*giving*” the students a voice, as Ruddock and Flutter (2004) would appear to suggest in their publication of this title. I am recognising their capacity for influence and insight into the work of the school. The students already have the voice; it is now the work of the school and of the students to promote this as a vehicle for real learning and to create the space for hearers of their words.

A BECTA¹² researcher asked me in March 2005: “*Why are you engaging in student-led research, and for whom?*”

To which I responded: “*for the school, hoping that student-led research will support school-wide learning across generations and across traditional boundaries; I’m learning with them and enjoying the feeling of gaining new knowledge alongside*”

In Ruddock and Flutter’s (2004) publication “*How to improve your school: Giving pupils a voice*”, they give snapshots from their field notes, including comments made by students. I recognise here that the word snapshot as essential, as the work of H.E. Researchers is often finite in nature. My own perception is that H.E.

¹² BECTA: British Educational Communication and Technologies Agency

Researchers such as Ruddock and Flutter therefore miss out on the real benefit of seeing the long-term effects of student voice. This is my privilege as a practitioner-researcher. I can see how far the first generation of researchers with whom I have worked, have come insofar as they are now capable of mentoring other researchers in similar work. The intergenerational nature of student-led enquiry has allowed me to become a long haul learner.

Here, I empathize with Senese (2005), who recognises himself as a learner within the classroom as a result of his interactions and relationships with his students. I also identify with him his willingness to talk with his students. He appears to be approaching his work from a dialogic perspective; making meaning from the responses he receives outside of pre-determined categories:

“As I studied the documents, I stopped looking for evidence in predetermined categories and attempted to see what was actually there. I strove not only to hear what the students were telling me, but also to listen to them because “the outcomes of the learning processes are varied and often unpredictable.” (Walker & Lambert, 1995, p.18) (Senese, 2005, p.44)

Unlike Ruddock and Flutter (2004), Senese enjoys longevity of relationship with the students that allows him to project a path backward through the years of research he has undertaken with them. After the door closes behind H.E. Researchers engaged in schools during a finite period, the space they leave continues to develop. I believe that this space shared between student-researcher and practitioner-researcher is akin to Cho’s definition of shared love:

“In the love encounter, the teacher and student do not seek knowledge from or of each other, but, rather, they seek knowledge from the world with each other.” (Cho, 2005, p.3)

As Biesta (2006) proposes *learning as a response*, I too needed to understand the space that students shared within the school before beginning to engage with them as researchers. I believe that I first need to seek knowledge of the other before the journey with the other can begin. My own reflections on the world of students are narrowly based on the images and sounds that I hear and see in the school day. Each day I enter my teaching room, a tutor base for two tutor groups, in order to set up for the morning lessons. This is before the majority of students arrive. There is a

calm and sanity in the room at the very beginning of the day, a feeling that it is *my* space. I feel this space evolve when Year 11 students (most of who are taller and louder than me!) arrive, as they begin to take over this space, excluding me from it.

This process of transformation of this space each morning allows me to become a voyeur in the sense of students' interactions with each other. They see me as invisible and unwanted at this time of day. I feel uncomfortable, almost an intruder, in their space. Their shared language, gestures and humor are their own. I recognize that as a teacher I stand outside of this space, and indeed need to in order to maintain my professional role. Trying to understand this space is key in the first steps to recognizing that a strong and personalized student voice already exists, before a journey together can be established:

“There is an alternative learning agenda outside of the classroom, although many students may not recognize these learnings and do not talk to them as such: learning how to initiate activities and work out rules for shaping the behaviors of participants in games, learning how to mediate in disputes and so on. The value of these social learnings may go relatively unnoticed by adults in the current climate of concern about performance and academic standards.” (Ruddock and Flutter, 2004, p.87)

The development of the student voice at my previous school, Westwood St Thomas, had been organized and advocated largely by the practitioner-researchers working within the school community. Whilst there was no formal training for the students whose voice we sought, there was strong evidence of participatory research on an equal level between the students and their teacher-researchers. A voice shared between teacher and student had begun to emerge, although the agenda set for this voice was adult-led. This was echoed in the research writing of co-researchers such as Potts (2002) and Bell (2002) at the time:

“In evaluating lessons, observers are asked to comment on whether students are supportive of each other. In evaluating students' work a question is asked about the existence of evidence of peer assessment. When interviewing students they are asked; “Are students supportive of each other in lessons in this subject?” This is derived from Fielding's (1996) comments about the importance of students feeling supported by each other. Another question to ask students to gain some insight in to the effectiveness of learning in the subject is “How often do you get to engage in discussion with other students about what you are learning”?” (Potts, 2003, p.10)

“The majority of boys who participated in the survey claimed that they enjoyed Food Technology, but definitely preferred practical to theory lessons. Why then do I only offer 50% practical lessons? Why do the students have to do so much writing? At least half of those surveyed do cooking at home, yet only 1/3 prepared their own materials for school. Too little preparation time, too many ingredients to collect together, issues with money, not very macho to be seen wandering around the supermarket? All of these issues could contribute to a lack of enthusiasm. Virtually all those questioned claimed to enjoy food-tasting activities – not a great surprise, since all teenagers especially, seem to graze their way through life!” (Bell, 2002, p.7)

At that time the practitioner-researchers at Westwood St. Thomas displayed enthusiasm and an unending thirst for the raw insight and knowledge that the students in their school could share. At one teacher-researcher forum at Westwood St. Thomas, I invited students to join us and there was a sense of learning conversations taking place without hierarchical boundaries between researchers and students. This was extended as the students then joined my colleagues on a staff training day to examine classroom-based practice in 2003.

As advocated by Kirby (2001) and Ruddock (2001), a shift of focus has occurred, moving students from passive participants in research to becoming true agents of research itself:

“Students-as-researchers” takes the practice of improving education for all one stage further than many other attempts. It relies on the fact that not only can the students come to school to learn; but that they can and indeed must be an integral part of the school’s own learning. Schools cannot learn how to become better places for learning without asking the students.” (Crane, 2001, p.54)

Within my current school, I sought to build upon the values shared between the Westwood practitioner-researchers with regards the worth of the student voice. I sought to move this forward from a dialogue with students on teacher terms to a dialogue between students and teachers based on shared values. I was looking to develop hearers for this shared voice, which I define as those with the capacity to recognize student-voice through enquiry. An individual needs to become a *listener* with the capacity to not only recognize but also respond to the student voice. Within

the presentations that the student researchers have given to the staff, some colleagues have had the capacity to respond to what has been presented. Hearing is passive reception, whilst listening demands active engagement. I put my own practice up for scrutiny, in the hope that this would allow colleagues to sit on the sidelines, able to listen to the students before becoming part of this voice when and if they were ready.

On a personal level, I was anxious when faced with the honest critiquing of my classroom practice. I was convinced as to the worth of objectives-based teaching¹³ as a key-learning tool, which was the very focus of the first student researchers' enquiry. I was leading my Department in this initiative, and still needed to win my colleagues over to its benefits. I had a lot to lose, but also a lot to gain through hearing the students' views.

On a professional level, I also realized that I would be breaking new ground at the school by asking the students to respond to the teaching and learning within it. If the critique received was damaging, then I stood to lose the respect from my colleagues in this type of work. I had two conflicting ideas of how to "sell" this idea within the school in my role as teacher advocate for the students' work. The advice from the Sharnbrook *Students-as-researchers* Project (2001) was explicit in needing the support of staff within the school *before* embarking on this type of project:

"Students-as-researchers actually led part of one of our Staff Days when we first set up the project to enable staff to engage, raise questions, query and challenge the principals under which the project operated. This has proved to be extremely important in terms of supporting students and staff involved in this work. Sensitivities have been broken down and we have been able, over a period of time, to share the positives that have undoubtedly arisen for staff and students engaged in this work." (Raymond, 2001, p.60)

Sensitivities sit alongside trust. Trust is needed so that dialogue about learning can emerge as a result of shared space. In Chapter 3 I shared a narrative with you that

¹³ Objectives-based teaching has been one of the main focuses of the National Secondary Strategy, formerly the Key Stage 3 strategy, offered by the Department for Schools, Families and Children in 2003. Within this strategy, a number of key objectives are defined, to be introduced and re-enforced in the classroom. With regards Modern Foreign Languages, these objectives cover areas such as speaking & listening and cultural awareness. Each lesson is therefore designed to deliver one or more of these objectives to students, hoping to increase student awareness of their own learning in the MFL classroom.

looked at the breakdown of trust between my colleagues and me as a result of the sixth-form feedback project in my first year in post. This was a process that both sides were unprepared for and in which conditions of trust had not been established. I now therefore had to convince my colleagues not only to trust the students involved but also to trust me.

“At the time, I remember being extremely excited at putting these very simple recommendations into practice, but the culture and climate of the school at the time was just not right.” (Raymond, 2001, p.60)

I was open in explaining to my colleagues the nature of the students’ intended enquiry. I asked them to be first observe the process, validating the findings that the students were making. I hoped this would allow them to feel comfortable in their role, in which their own classroom practice was not under scrutiny. They reacted with more enthusiasm than I could have hoped for, and I tentatively suggested that in the future, if the project proved fruitful, they might wish to allow the student researchers into their own classrooms for observation and feedback. My heart beat faster as I suggested this, but my colleagues nodded and said that this could be interesting. The bonhomie of free cake on a Friday breaktime was working its magic.

“The pressures of needing rapid results may lead us to listen most readily to voices that make immediate sense. I want to make a plea to take our time with the anomalous, to allow what doesn’t fit or produces unexpected reactions in us to disrupt our assumptions and habitual ways of working – because I believe that it is from these that we may, in the end, learn the mos.t” (Bragg, 2007, p.73)

Bragg emphasizes the need to listen, and to make sense of the dialogic around us before acting. I could not afford to turn my colleagues’ enthusiasm into mistrust again. I also listened to the voice of my colleague, Graham Lloyd¹⁴, in the promotion of the student voice at the school:

“My advice would be, start with your own groups, that way no one’s fingers get burnt apart from your own. Successes can then be crowed from the rooftops later, showing

¹⁴ In Appendix 1 I explore the relationship that I have shared with Graham Lloyd, a practitioner-researcher working with Jack Whitehead at the University of Bath. Graham has recently moved from the position of Head of Middle School to that of Deputy Headteacher at the school.

others through real practice how this can aid them in their classroom practice. Start small, and then it snowballs.” (December 2004 in conversation)

I hoped that by demonstrating how students working as researchers could support the development of the teaching and learning within the Department, I would encourage others to follow suit. I listened to the students beginning to research, the first two weeks of their work dogged by uncertainty that they were not being directed or told what to do. They needed this time to find their own direction, and to reflect upon what they were saying. Although desperate to intervene and offer advice, I stepped back and waited. I would not lead the research for them. Senese noted the following about liberation through research and the fear of uncertainty that it can bring:

“Most students found the freedom of these classes to be both liberating and frightening. I can document quite clearly that the vast majority of the students appreciated being treated as adults, being given choices (even within boundaries), and being self-reliant.” (Senese, 2005, p.47)

“In the most recent classes that I taught, I acted more like a learner. When students wrote “slam” poetry..I write a poem and performed it in public to. If these students could see me as a learner, it was because I allowed them to see me in that way. To be a learner, I needed to act like one” (Senese, 2005, p.52)

Senese shows here how he has been able to place himself in the position of a learner alongside the students with whom he is researching. He has placed himself in the position of unknowing, waiting to discover with them. He has opened the space shared between the students in the hope of new knowledge. I share Senese’s way of working as I believe myself to be a learner in shared enquiry with the students. I come to this space in my role as classroom teacher, whilst the students come to it from their own perspective. Each of us offers a new dimension and ways of knowing. The important thing was that as researchers we are able to share this space on an equal footing, all stepping forward together along a new path as the enquiry progresses.

As the second generation of researchers began to undertake their shared enquiry alongside the first generation, the unfolding of generational differences that each person brought to the space of enquiry began to emerge. Students’ differing religious

beliefs, native language and family background were all brought to the space that we shared. My hope was that we could learn to embrace these differences as lending strength to the enquiry as opposed to them becoming barriers to ways of knowing. This was a view expressed by Crane in her experiences with student researchers at Sharnbrook:

“Working with fellow students and staff on a genuinely equal level, tangibly building on the basic notions of respect and value discussed in the training, provided me with a unique experience. Staff and students alike learnt to respect the other individuals in our group for the exact qualities that might usually cause contention. For example: that somebody else holds a different point of view to your own, or everybody holds a different view to each other, helps a group to get the most out of their research.”
(Crane, 2001, p.54)

All students volunteered to participate in the student-researcher work. Anyone had the right to leave the space when they wished, and since 2004 the group has lost five original members for various reasons. One student-researcher left almost immediately as he did not feel that the research had a clear direction. I could not begin this project under false assumptions as I did not know the direction that their work together would take, and felt that I needed to be honest about this from the outset:

“Students must participate because they want to. We need to be really up front about the nature of the research, the process of what we are doing and how we hope to achieve it. By teachers being honest and up front about engaging students in this way, and having the courage to say ‘I don’t really know where this will lead to’ can gain a lot of respect from students. Students feel engaged and involved as equals from the outset.” (Raymond, 2001, p.59)

As the enquiry into my classroom practice began, the students began to find their feet as researchers. They were beginning to look with new eyes at the world around them:

“We are filming this lesson and others to try out different ways of saying or writing the lesson objective... filming again at the end we’ll see how well the class have understood each time.” (second generation researcher during a lesson in February 2005, explaining to his peers why the lesson is being filmed)

Alongside their emergence as researchers, their associated methodology began to emerge¹⁵. Although aware of research methodology through their work in Science, they only drew upon this knowledge briefly as a source for their own enquiry. There were no pre-set methods that they engaged with; instead seeing this part of the enquiry as emerging in response to their needs. Clark and Moss (2001) in Kirby (2001) highlight the way in which young people can draw on their creativity and sense of fun to develop ways of enquiring that best fit the context in which they find themselves:

“Over recent years the development of qualitative and participatory research methods for children and young people has enabled them to express their views and experiences using familiar means of communication, many of which they use in their everyday lives. These tend to rely less on just formal methods of talking (such as traditional interviews) and instead include more creative and visual techniques, which help them to discuss their experiences and views in an interesting and fun way, and build on their existing capacities. These include drawing, photography, e-mail, role-play, visualisations (such as mapping and time lines) and group work.” (Clark & Moss, 2001 in Kirby, 2001, p.75)

It was at this point that the research was already taking on a very different approach to the one adopted at Westwood St. Thomas. There, I led the research drawing upon established research methodology, not allowing the student researchers to have a voice in this part of the process. Even though I believed to previously have engaged in participatory research with students, I do not believe that it engaged or gave voice to the people with whom I was trying to research. I, as teacher-researcher, only sought the voice of students to validate and not to challenge the enquiry undertaken. Raymond sets out the limitations of working in this way:

“Limitations with this approach relating to the quality of data collected and the scope for school improvement as a result. Often, this is to do with a lack of student involvement in the design stage. A teacher-designed question is a good example of this. They often leave teachers feeling frustrated because they sense that they have not fully understood the responses that the students give. Whichever model is chosen, what is particularly important is that starting small is fundamental. It is great

¹⁵ In Appendix 2 the methodology that the student researchers developed is described in detail

to empower students by asking them to provide feedback, but the reality is that there are numerous questions and answers and teachers have different styles and ways of interpreting the results.” (Raymond, 2001, p. 58)

Alongside the emergence of the students' methodology, the participants were emerging in new roles. I was becoming co-researcher alongside the students, a role in which the hierarchy of teacher-student shared in the classroom is put aside. The first generation of researchers was emerging as a critical friend and mentor. The H.E. Researcher was emerging as a listener to this emerging student voice. Kirby (2001) talks of the need for teacher-researchers to evolve in their role through enquiry with regards the dichotomy between their traditional role and their emergent role as researcher alongside students:

“For teachers involved in research there is a potential conflict between their role as a teacher and that of a researcher. The first is an established position of power, which includes the education and development of young people, imposing decisions and maintaining discipline. A researcher is classically expected to be a detached and impartial observer, encouraging voluntary rather than enforced participation, and records rather than challenges opinions. The participatory researcher working with young researchers demands a further redefinition of their role, where one shares knowledge and facilitates young people's critical awareness, but does not impose views and ideology” (Kirby, 2001, p. 75)

I believe to be able to maintain the integrity of my original role as classroom practitioner, yet be in a position of heightened awareness as a result of my contact with the student researchers. This feels a powerful position to hold in terms of knowing, allowing me to reflect upon and refine my practice in order that I may support learners better. In a cover lesson in 2005, one of the student researchers was clearly not on task. I referred to him as I would any student in asking him to return to his work, and he responded in kind. The boundaries between us, impermeable in this original context, become fluid within the space created through enquiry.

Macbeath et al. discuss the use of language as one of the important considerations for participatory research with students alongside the following considerations:

- *“age (taking account of students’ competence and their attitude to the medium)*
- *ethical issues and how these differ with age and with the medium of the consultation*
- *whether the information is consciously or unconsciously given by the students*
- *whether students’ ideas are authentically interpreted by adults*
- *whether students know what happens as a result of the consultation (feedback and action)*
- *what language for talking about learning students have.”*

(Macbeath et al, 2001, p.81)

For the intergenerational group now learning to work together in our shared space, we are learning to find a common language between us that is inclusive and allows the other in. MacBeath et al appear to hold the students they refer to here at arm’s length, unwilling to engage with them in a position that denies a participatory way of researching. One of the first activities undertaken by the research group was conceptualizing research itself, so that a common language was shared, as the H.E. Researcher asked:

“What is research?”

Second generation student-researcher: *“Finding out information about a particular subject”*

“Experimenting to see what different results you get in a particular subject”

H.E. Researcher: *“What is the difference between high quality research and ‘finding out’?”*

Second generation student-researcher: *You can go onto the Internet and just print off a whole page, that’s finding out - but research? You find the answers for yourself-there is no page to print off. Finding out is a homework, something you’ve been asked to do, here we want to find out for ourselves.”*
(November 2004 during the first meeting of the student researchers with the H.E. Researcher)

It was important to establish a common ground in understanding research itself alongside why the students were undertaking this. I talked with the

students about research as a means to improvement, with the outcomes supporting learning, in line with Whitehead's question:

"How do (we) improve what (we) (are) doing?" (Whitehead, 1995)

The language we were beginning to share alluded to participatory research, in which *I* moved towards *we* in an inclusional way. The students understood the need to know a given situation before they could research into it: being aware of classroom language such as objectives, learning outcomes and plenaries. They needed to be aware of the language with which they were to come into contact in order to understand what they were looking for. In this they were undertaking learning as a response (Biesta 2006). They believed that this language excluded their peers from knowing what they were researching into, and that a shared language known between teacher and student would need to develop as the enquiry progressed.

The emergence of this shared language began in February 2005, when the H.E. Researcher worked alongside the first and second generation of researchers for the second time. This created a circle of support for the second-generation of students emerging as researchers: She offered them an outside perspective to their enquiry whilst the first generation provided mentoring advice based on their own experiences as researchers and I provided the practical support in terms of the space that the enquiry would need. Each of us was learning to find our own role within the enquiry, wanting to bring our experience and views to each other about how to make this process work best.

In this way one of the second generation researchers stated:

"(In Science) it is about facts...there is a right or a wrong answer..we are given a question, and we find out the answer to it...we do experiments as part of this..Here it is not about being right or wrong, but we still need to do practical things to find out about our own learning in class."



Student researchers introduction.WMV

Figure 24 This clip shows the first simple introductions between the second generation researchers and the H.E. Researcher

This clip, taken in the first five minutes of the second-generation researchers meeting with the H.E. Researcher, shows the absence of shared values in this initial phase of their work together.

Jack (Whitehead) responds to the above comments:

“Can some evidence be provided that shows change in this young person’s understanding of research or the appreciation of the nature of enquiry that is beyond replicating the answer towards creating an answer. Is there any evidence showing movement in what is understood to be learning or research?” (Electronic-mail received 19.03.07)

In response to Jack’s question, I share with you one of the second-generation researcher’s responses some two years later, when considering the impact of student-led research with which he has engaged:

“We have noticed quite a big change in some of our lessons as a result of working with teachers in this way. This was an excellent result that shows even though we are students we can still make a difference to the classroom. For example, some teachers now use a black background on the interactive whiteboard, making it easier for us to see. We now see more teachers moving around the classroom to help us with work instead of sitting at the front. More teachers now write up objectives for us to help us know what we should be learning. We have also notice that more teachers are telling us what is coming up and why-the big picture again-so that we are not being led in the dark. We hope that this evidence shows that we have made a difference-to our teachers and importantly to other pupils. These ideas all came from them when we asked them what really helped them to learn.” (written comments produced by e-mail, 2007)

I believe strongly that this student-researcher is demonstrating his capacity in *creating* research which is responsive and has a purpose in supporting the school. He acknowledges here what he feels has been the impact of his shared work with the

student researchers, using language that has emerged as part of the shared understanding of classroom practice such as the “big picture”. He talks of the difference that he has made through this shared enquiry and the evidence that exists to support his claim to supporting learning in the school.

Further in response to Jack’s question, I offer this transcript of a subsequent meeting between the student-researcher group, in which I sensed that the quality of dialogue emerging *between* the first and second-generation researchers:

Key: (1) denotes first-generation researcher (2) denotes second-generation researcher

Paddy (2) to Shane and Alex (1): *“When you were at Westwood, did you have a favourite type of research that you were involved in?”*

Shane (1): *“It was when there five or six of us, and there were no fixed questions, it could go one way or another, quite unexpectedly. It was a very open and honest discussion. I had some control over the direction of the discussion, I wasn’t just led along.”*

Harry (2): *“I think that before I just thought that a teacher would come into the lesson and just start talking without thinking their lesson through. I have come to appreciate that they do actually think things through a lot, and that they are looking to improve what they do that can only be beneficial to us. It made me think of what I really liked in terms of my own learning, and this helped me further on in terms of revision and stuff”*

Shane (1) *“You are so lucky to be doing this kind of stuff in Year 7. We didn’t have the chance until we were in Year 11. You will be so helpful to your school and to the teachers here in years to come, and this will help you learn how to work with them.. .to have this confidence”*

Shane (1) was considering here the two-way benefits of student-led research for school and student-researcher, recognizing that both needed to benefit from the process for the process to hold value. MacBeath et al. make the following comments in relation to this:

“We also have to remember that the potential of student voice to make a difference depends not only on who is talking but also on who is listening and whether their attentiveness is genuine; students need to be sure that what they say about matters that concern them is being taken seriously by teachers in the school.” (MacBeath et al., 2001, p.4)

Chris (2): *“It’s more about giving constructive feedback than negative, then we can support teachers in their work and benefit from this ourselves.”*

Working in this intergenerational way has allowed academic-researcher, practitioner-researcher and student-researcher to work alongside each other. This is where I feel that as a practitioner-researcher, I need the *outside, looking-in* (Rayner, 2005) perspective offered by a researcher not previously connected with the school. The H.E. Researcher has allowed us to view the enquiry from the objective perspective of other teachers and stakeholders in the school. This concept goes further than MacBeath et al. suggest below, in asking the enquiry to provide worthwhile results for those involved alongside the need for stakeholders to have confidence in its worth. There is a marrying together of the needs of both participants and stakeholders:

“It is important to think whether the topics “permitted” for discussion with students in schools are ones that they see as significant. Consultation is less likely to be seen as credible if teachers always identify the issues on which students are consulted. Students soon tire of invitations to express views on matters that they do not think are important.” (MacBeath et al., 2003, p.43)

This need was highlighted by Shane and Alex (1) in the same meeting as they asked:

“What do you think will be the most important points of your research?”

Harry (2): *“I think the most important part will be earning the respect of others that our research is worth doing. Only if we can prove that this is useful to the school, will we be able to continue working in this way. I mean students thinking our work is useful as well as teachers. We’ve got a lot to prove.”*

6.3 Intergenerational tension and shared values through enquiry

Part of the immense learning curve undertaken through this enquiry has been the development of relationships between the student researchers themselves. The group has experienced difficulties in relating to the other both *inter-generationally* and *intra-generationally*. In this way, in the initial phase of the group working together, Shane's (1) concern was that two members of the second-generation group were becoming increasingly dominant in the research process to the exclusion of one individual. This led to long pieces of dialogue with only two students involved from this new generation. Shane (1), Alex (1) and I discussed how to involve this quieter individual to a greater extent. They suggested a role within the research group in which this student provided ideas about the next steps of the enquiry, thus giving him the space for his own voice to develop and be heard. Through this, we hoped that the more dominant characters would listen to the quieter students.

Later within the enquiry, as the second generation recruited the third to support the whole-school development of student-led research, further problems became evident. This third generation, being older than the second, began to dominate the enquiry leading to the disillusionment of the younger yet more-established researchers. Too many voices tried to be heard at once, and the group began to fracture into sub-groups that could not see the benefits of coming together to strengthen their enquiry. This was a time when Alex & Shane (1) and I worked hard to develop empathy for the other within the group. Through drawing on the strengths that each individual brought to the shared space, we asked for trust in the other to fulfill his role. As with the factitious relationship between my colleagues and I during my first year in post, this group also needed time for trust to be established. The third generation needed to prove they were *trust worthy* before being allowed to develop this shared space with the established researchers, as I had needed to do during my first year at the school.

"It's not that they can't get on, it's more that they haven't yet learned to. They can't yet see the benefits of the older students joining their project-even though it was their own decision to do so. The younger, more established boys are finding it hard to let go of the complete ownership of this project, and to hand it over in part. They, I don't think, have ever seen Alex or me as a potential threat in this way. I can only conclude that this lack of trust is because they are much closer in age than us and the second generation." (Shane (1), June 2006)

I compare the younger boys' sense of loss of ownership, as highlighted above by Shane, as being similar to the sentiment that I shared when my husband and I first began to enquire. At that time we acted as two individuals engaging with similar fields of enquiry, yet choosing to do so apart. We both felt that the other was invading our enquiry, and did not openly invite the other in. It is only as we have learned to merge our boundaries as husband, wife and co-enquirers that our enquiries have moved closer together. The development of a feeling of trust for the other has been the overriding factor in allowing this movement together to occur. I believe that the student researchers could also only gain this trust over time. Through showing their worth in terms of what they could offer the enquiry, the third generation could begin, not just to participate, but to move the enquiry forward. Leat (2005) states the following when looking at new people entering an established group:

“It is hard to bring new people into this bonded group. They feel like sore thumbs and the dynamics can feel awkward..It takes deliberate work on the part of the new group to engage and hang onto new recruits. They need to be given a role and responsibility fairly quickly to help them become part of the group.” (Leat, 2005, p.6)

The latter half of the issue raised by Leat was quickly in place within the group, as each third-generation student was assigned a specific Department to work with. There was however a certain tension that I felt as I reviewed the video footage from the first training session with them. When discussion was taking place, the older third generation students were comfortable to raise points without putting a hand up, whilst the second generation felt this was necessary. There was more than one “*put-out*” face from the younger researchers as their hand was raised and then lowered in frustration at others “*butting in*”. It appeared that, whilst the second generation wanted the third to join their enquiry group, they needed to establish a clear way of working with them. They perceived themselves as the lead researchers in this initial phase, and wanted to have ownership over the enquiry's direction. Whilst this third generation was welcome to participate and give energy to the enquiry, the boundaries between new and old researcher had not yet been permeated. The values shared between the first and second generation had also not been explicated in terms of the norms of the working of the group. The other, in terms of the third generation, had not yet been invited into these shared values.

As the group learned to trust each other anew, then the value shared between my husband and I of being *worthy of the other* became crucial in the development of the students' co-enquiry. Each participant looks to give to the enquiry, yet also to gain something in exchange for their time and effort expended, asking "*What's in it for me?*" Each asks if the enquiry will produce new ways of knowing that support the school in knowing itself better, yet also seeks new ways of knowing themselves. When consulting with Shane and Alex (1), their primary concern was whether the enquiry would have any benefits for myself as a classroom practitioner. They were concerned as to whether the students' enquiry would allow my own understanding to move forward. In doing so they were testing if their involvement was worthy of the enquiry itself.



Figure 25 Two images that reflect the evolving nature of the roles within the research group



Figure 26a.WMV



Figure 26b.WMV

Figures 26a and b

These clips highlight Shane and Alex's ability to lead the second-generation in a mentoring capacity. They show the evolving nature of the roles taken within the group and the immense learning journey undertaken by Shane and Alex as they have moved from active participants to research mentors.

As the enquiry progressed, Shane and Alex (1) took on increasing responsibility for moving the enquiry forward. The second generation was gaining in confidence to undertake enquiry, and the trust of the other was emerging. I allowed myself more

time to enjoy the enquiry as an observer and felt less pressured to support the direction of the research itself. For me, the benefit of intergenerational student-led research was becoming ever clearer. It allows teachers their time back. It allows them to enjoy the unfolding of the enquiry alongside the students instead of feeling pressured to find a direction forward. I felt that I was able to hold onto my role as practitioner-researcher more comfortably. There was no longer the same pressure and guilt attached to devoting time to the enquiry in school as opposed to my primary role as Middle Leader. The one role was supporting the other, allowing me to be a more reflective practitioner and still have the time and energy needed to lead the Department.

MacBeath et al. (2001) highlight the recurrent problem of practitioner-researchers finding time to research within their professional roles as a common issue:

“Teachers who have successfully introduced opportunities for consultation are often worried about making the most of it given competing demands on their time. Priorities at school level are not necessarily determined by what is most important or most valued by teachers and students but by the urgency of external demands.”

(MacBeath et al., 2001, p.43)

In order therefore for teachers to allow themselves time to engage with student-led research, they must know what potential value it holds for them. There must be a return in the creation of new knowledge that supports them as classroom-practitioners. Within this enquiry, I refer to Cho’s definition of knowledge creation together:

“Knowledge is by definition the inquiry we make into the world, which is a pursuit inaugurated by a loving encounter with a teacher. With love, education becomes an open space for thought from which emerges knowledge.

If education is to be a space where teacher and student search for knowledge, then we must strongly affirm that a teacher and student can and must love.” (Cho, 2005, p.4)

When Jack Whitehead highlighted Cho’s work on *“Lessons in Love”* (2005), I was sceptical at the title given the educational climate within which I work. This is a climate that shuns the word love with fear of retribution. I have however grown to

embrace this sense of love in the shared work that both teacher and student are carrying out together. The students, my colleagues, co-researchers and I are all engaged in this enquiry because we want to. Without this shared personal commitment to the project, the shared sense of love for what we do, then the project would not enjoy the motivation that it does. I share a love for the work of the student-voice in creating new knowledge within schools and for the excitement that student-led enquiry can bring to the classroom practitioner. Cho's notion of "*a loving encounter with a teacher*" is lived out through this enquiry.

Cho has looked at the place of *love* in the workplace (teacher-student) in the light of political climate and scandal. He argues for a relationship of two, in which knowledge is not simply transferred from teacher to student in line with the traditional profile of the classroom. Instead knowledge is the enquiry that student and teacher undertake together. If education is to be a space where teacher and student can search for new ways of understanding, then I must affirm that:

"Yes, a teacher and student can and must love." (Cho, 2005, p.3)

Each day I believe that the encounter between student and teacher should lead to the furthering of knowledge and understanding on both sides. Teachers acting as learners and students acting as teachers, as they share their experiences with those who have the capacity to listen. I wish to leave school knowing that the encounters I have experienced today have allowed me to learn. I ask for something in return. I am not the same person for I carry new knowledge within me.

Since working at my previous school in which Cho's (2005) notion of the shared pursuit of knowledge could be seen through the work of the in-house teacher-researcher group, I have been aware of a need for recognition of the other and for a shared loving relationship between colleagues, teachers and students in the pursuit of improving the school. I believe in the recognition of *work well done* by these individuals coming together in enquiry, a value instilled in me by the Headteacher of Westwood St. Thomas School. Encounters with individuals such as these are to be cherished, as they allow practitioner-researchers to move forward in their understanding of themselves and their work.

The student researchers have struggled with the parole *love* in the political climate of UK education. They have come to accept the definition of such as aptly describing

the journey we are taking together, yet cannot embrace the word itself. It is a word which sits uncomfortably between us and cannot be embraced by all concerned:

“You first showed us this definition, and I thought, yes this describes what we are doing. Then you mentioned how this is described as “love”, and I started to become worried. No one speaks about love at school; it seems to be a forbidden word. Yet I do agree that I love doing this, being a researcher and working with the others. I accept this definition, but do not know how we could talk comfortably of love between student and teacher. It is a sad world in which we live where such taboos exist.”
(Shane (1,) November 2005)

I was subconsciously idealising the joint pursuit of knowledge that my students and I shared, although I have only come to make sense of this as the research has progressed. In the selection of a title for their initial enquiry, the student researchers chose *“It’s not all cameras and cookies!”* I feel that this reflects the warmth of relationship in the simple sharing of food at research meetings that we have had.

During an interim meeting about the project in March 2005, Shane (1) was feeling drained with the pressure he was facing with his workload and the approaching interview for Head boy. For the first time, he took a back seat during the session, and the others needed to find the creative energy without his input. The second generation commented upon the level of tiredness that Shane showed during this session. They were appearing to empathize with him, and were realizing that they needed to lead more at that time. There was a sense that they were the experts now as well. They held the capacity to undertake research themselves and were becoming equals in their relationship with Shane and Alex (1) for the first time.


This confidence I was convinced came through the realization that the project was being valued by the school. The students were concerned about the sustainability of working as researchers within it for they now saw the classroom through new eyes. They could not simply *switch off* and become passive unknowing learners. It is this realization that is profound. I consider how the classroom could have become a more frustrating place for them:

“Before I could just enter a lesson, sit down and get on with whatever I was asked to do...Now I get so annoyed if no-one explains to me why I am there...don’t I deserve to know?” (Chris, second-generation researcher, May 2006)

It is the fundamental duty of the school, I believe, to make efforts to integrate student-led research into the school once the process has been started. This sustainability will partially come from the teacher(s) involved with the enquiry who create the space and conditions for shared learning in this way, yet is also the duty of the students involved to continue pushing for more involvement in this way. Intergenerational student-research provides this continued motivation to enquire. People leave and others join, yet through an evolving network of participants, the process itself becomes embedded as part of what the school does.

It's Not all cameras and cookies

Is this really MY project-I have given you the focus of it, but it is you who has really led t through with little input from me!



Mrs Ridings objective-learning benefits project

Figure 27 Three slides from the initial enquiry that the student researchers undertook.

You will note within the slides where I have inserted my comments into this first draft (highlighted in green), asking the students to become reflective in what they doing. The title of the first slide was particularly poignant as to the ownership of this first enquiry.

Questionnaires

This looks a good slide-how about adding more answers for each question that you have received from different people in the class!

Here are some of the quotes from a questionnaire we handed out in class...

What is the purpose of an objective?

To tell you what we are trying to achieve in the lesson.

Do you like having an objective in a lesson?

Yes because you then know what to do in the lesson

This second slide shows me asking the student researchers to consider a wider range of viewpoints received from their peers.

Why, and what are we doing

Should title be what we are doing and why?

- **What?**
This project is trying to find out the most effective **was** of trying to get today's generation **educated**. The project is exploring how objectives may be able to **make children aware of their own learning**.
Could educated be replaced by involved in their own education?
- **Why?**
Mrs Riding wished to do this project to **improve her standard of teaching to BVVS boys** and to continue with her on going teachers research. **I see it more as improving the learning of students in my class!!**

This third slide highlights how I tried to manipulate the language employed by the student researchers in this first small-scale enquiry. I was not aware of my misguided influence in influencing their language until the conclusion of this first enquiry.

This embedding can however only be achieved through the involvement of the Senior Leadership Team within the school and crucially the support of the Headteacher. The Headteacher's and two Deputy Headteachers' involvement as co-researchers in the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group, was crucial in supporting the significance of the group's work, as well as opening the necessary space and time in order to progress. This continued support allowed the group to become sustainable, to become embedded in the school culture and to evolve as some members left and others joined. Even with the departure of the Headteacher in 2004, the Deputy Headteachers were able to provide the group with the continuing support and space that it needed. The group had grown outside of its original participants, although sustained and built upon the shared values created together within the space. The presence of the absence was felt. These shared boundaries between the practitioner-researchers gave the group sustained motivation beyond individual enquiries:

“What this group has become has grown outside of my expectations. The energy that it has been given by different individuals at various points in time have provided the group with an energy that has meant it is grown into a sustained part of what this school does.” (comments by the Deputy Headteacher at Westwood St. Thomas School, May 2003)

Within my current school, the role of the Headteacher and Deputy in supporting the enquiry has been vital. These two significant individuals approached the space shared by the group in very different ways, and provided me, in my role as teacher-advocate, with a means of beginning to embed this work within the school. Graham Lloyd, as Deputy Headteacher¹⁶ and practitioner-researcher enquiring into the school, was able to offer the group an *inside, looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) view of the impact of the enquiry. He has played a significant part in supporting the group through providing them with an honest critique of their work. He has asked them to consider how their enquiry is perceived and responded to by other colleagues within the school. He has also allowed me to see the enquiry through the eyes of colleagues not directly involved in it. This correspondingly opened me to an *outside, looking-in* (Rayner, 2005) view of the enquiry as seen by my colleagues. From this perspective I am more clearly able to ask *“What's in this for the school?”* recognizing this aspect as fundamental in giving the group's work significance and the lifeblood to

¹⁶ Please refer to Appendix 1 for a fuller discussion of Graham's involvement with the enquiry

continue. Whilst recognizing the student voice and giving this a forum is invaluable to the students involved, there must also be a return for the school in terms of knowing itself better. The involvement of both these senior colleagues has given the enquiry value. The students are being recognized for their efforts and can realize the significance of what they are doing:

“When (the Headteacher) became involved and asked us to present our work to the staff, it felt as if this was “proper” work that we were undertaking. It wasn’t something that only a few people knew about...it was becoming a part of the school.” (second generation researcher in conversation, January 2005)

The Headteacher has been responsible for recognizing and valuing the work of the boys within the school. He has provided the group with the space that it needed and has indicated to my colleagues that this work is something to be valued. As opposed to Graham Lloyd who became directly involved, the Headteacher gave the boys the space within which to work. He then stood on the sidelines waiting to see the match that would play out as a result. He chose against active participation, preferring to see if this would provide real benefits for his school before committing himself and the school to it.

6.4 Moving onto school-wide research, developing responsive methodology and third generation tension

As already mentioned, during the second phase of the project, the group wished to expand to work alongside a wider range of teachers and bring a third generation into their enquiry space. They chose to recruit students from Years 10 and 11 (15-16 years of age) which would bring students from Key Stage 4 into the enquiry and therefore allow the enquiry to span the three parts of the school: Lower, Middle and Upper. They also looked to re-evaluate the methodology that they had previously employed and to add more rigor into their research processes:

“We need to use the same questions in our interviews each time, otherwise this may bias the results that we obtain...we need to give all our interviewees the same diet in effect.”

“When we are videoing the focus lessons for this project, we should ensure that each has a similar style in terms of length and focus. It’s not up to us to pick and choose what we film, we should agree this beforehand.”

(comments by second generation researcher Harry, September 2005)

“Reliability is essentially a synonym for consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. For research to be reliable, it must demonstrate that if it were carried out on a similar group of respondents in a similar context, then similar results would be found.” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, p.117)

“If we add in a questionnaire alongside the video and interviews, we can see whether the results and comments are the same or whether they come up with completely different results..Surely we need more than one way to prove a point.” (comment by second generation researchers, September 2005)

“Triangulation is characterized by a multi-method approach to a problem in contrast to a single method approach..methodological triangulation (is where one uses) the same method on different occasions or different methods on the same object of a study.” (Cohen et al, 2000, p.113)

I explained the definition of reliability and triangulation to the group at this point and went on to explain that I thought they were developing an awareness of both in response to their enquiry. The student researchers were beginning to develop their methodology in response to the needs of the enquiry:

“If we just stick to a set amount of questions in our interviews, we could miss the point altogether. We need to be flexible enough to add in others in response to what is being said; otherwise we might miss a huge chunk of information that could be useful.”

“We must ask the teachers whose lessons we have filmed to view the tape before we interview them. They need a chance to see what we have, and to consider what they are learning through seeing themselves on screen.”

(comments by second generation researchers, September 2005)

Part of this responsiveness was the recognition when certain methodological choices needed to be modified in order to best fit the purpose for which they were intended. A key example of this was the researchers' first attempt to interview their peers in July 2005, during which they rigidly stuck to a pre-supposed set of questions and were

unable to creatively respond to the comments that they were hearing in order to develop these to a greater extent. Their own focus in this interview was also noticeably lacking. Their eyes kept flitting to the football games taking place outside, and their responses to what they were hearing were cursory. They seemed uninterested in their interviewees who were quick to pick upon this and responded in kind.



Interview First attempt.WMV

Figure 34 Video clip of the first unsuccessful interview

This clip highlights a situation in which the second generation researchers were not valuing the other students that they had invited into the room.

“I don’t know about you, but I felt embarrassed in there. They just didn’t seem interested in the other guys in the room. If it had of been me sat there, I think I would have left.” (comment by first generation researcher Alex immediately following the first interview)

They decided to try again the following week.

This time, the first generation researchers asked the second generation to respond to the issues that had arisen in the first set of student-interviews. They asked them to take ownership over the improvement of their employed methodological choice. The second generation responded by saying that they needed to first outline the context and purpose of the research before “launching” into their questions. They also felt that the interview should become more open-ended, leaving opportunities for discussion.

The differences a week later were remarkable. There was real warmth in the room that transcended the “*froideur*” of the previous week’s interview. Everyone clearly looked and felt more relaxed, and gained courage from the other. The second generation made their interviewees feel valued which allowed them to develop their answers to a much greater extent.

Alex (1) highlighted the relative success of the second interview as he commented:

“The first group discussion meeting with the other year 8 students was not useful for them or for the enquiry. The meeting followed the format of a very dull series of questions, asked only by one of the researchers, who did not particularly intrigue or excite in any way by what they were doing. Questions were asked too sequentially and there was no real attempt to link them together. This proved an uninspiring research technique for all involved.

The second session found the boys much more eager to discuss. This may have been a fluke due to the mood they were in, it also may have been due to the fact that there were more of them taking part – an environment where they may have felt more comfortable or been encouraged to show off. This time they allowed their interviewees to open up to their questions, and then to discuss their feelings as a group.

One point to take into account may be the fact that the camera was in a discreet place the second time, and many of the boys looked noticeably more relaxed as a result.” (electronic mail, September 2005)

I felt enlightened at the level of Alex’s response, in which I felt that he had been able to capture the space in which the second interview took place. It shows me the extent to which Alex was now aware *of the other* as a researcher, able to relate to the relationships between individuals looking from the *outside-in* (Rayner, 2005). The next stage of the enquiry was now to link Alex’s observations in the wider context of working alongside teachers and a new third generation, as the first two generations presented their enquiry findings to the whole staff during the November 2005 during the In-service Training Day.

The following narrative highlights my reflections after the whole-school presentation to my colleagues in 2005.

Make or Break: It was one of those mornings

By the time that break time arrived, my heart was pounding with anxiety. The morning had not gone well. It was as simple as that. The focus on teacher learning through listening to others had not been clarified by the Leadership Team at the outset of the training day. If we were doing OK as a school, my colleagues asked, then why did we need to change, why did we need to now listen to our students to

improve? These were the views throughout the morning. Just before the break, in which the students were due to set up, there was a comment from one colleague stating, *“We are teachers... they are students. It’s up to us to know... and them to follow.”* This preceded rapturous applause and hollers of delight. Was this really the right time for the student researchers to present to the staff, I asked myself.

I had no fears that the students were capable of delivering an effective and engaging summary of their research project. I felt as a parent seeing her offspring grow their wings and fly. During that time, I felt that I was working wholeheartedly within Cho’s (2005) notion of love in the pursuit of knowledge together. I felt confident in their ability to deliver to my colleagues, although I was unsure of my colleagues’ capacity to listen to their voices.

“Voices are nothing without hearers.” (Noyes, 2004)

During the presentation, I deliberately sat to the side so that I could watch the reactions of my colleagues. Two colleagues played cards at the back of the room, and several had a fixed gaze on the passing traffic outside yet the majority were attentive. There was an atmosphere of quiet engagement, a feeling that my colleagues were giving the students their undivided attention. Quite literally, you could have heard a pin drop.

When the students opened their presentation up to questions, my heart sank when I saw no hands go up. The Headteacher then began to ask a question. In doing so, he was stating that he valued this work and that he wanted my colleagues to engage with it. The questions that followed were at first a series of questions focussing on student learning:

“Do you feel that objectives could be set over a series of lessons i.e. is there flexibility in the current system?”

“Can you see the point of having a lesson if there is no objective involved?”

These were followed by:

“What’s the point of all this?”

The students chose to respond to this question in a positive light that strengthened the value of what they were undertaking:

“Before we did this research, we weren’t really aware of what was happening in the classroom. Things like learning objectives and the bigger picture were an unexplained mystery. It was only through doing this research project that we now understand what these things are... It’s as if we’re learning to learn alongside doing this research. Most of the other pupils that we interviewed don’t really have a clue about these terms either, although know what they are in reality. We can now say not just what is good, but why it’s good. This has been really important in understanding learning and how it occurs, and we hope that this is something, that through sharing, we can make lessons as good as they can be.”(response by Harry, second generation researcher, to the preceding question)

I began to recognize the significance of my colleague’s challenging question after reflection with the research group. Through this I realised the juxtaposition that I found myself to be in. Whilst the student researchers had already begun to embrace their potential enemy as a challenge to prove their worth in supporting the school, I still needed to learn to embrace this critical friend. She was asking that this enquiry team become the best that it could be in having a solid purpose and in being worthwhile. In this, I learned from them.

“When I come across someone challenging my position, I become bull-headed. I want to face them head on. There is no room for negotiation. My viewpoint is the one I see. I head into a problem, I find it very difficult to creatively work my way around it as you seem able to do.” (comment by my husband in May 2006)

Throughout this enquiry, I have advocated the strength of working in an intergenerational way in order for student-led research to become sustainable within the school. This way of working has allowed the boundaries between new and old researchers and different generations to evolve in a continuous way. It has allowed the enquiry to draw strength from new directions as it has progressed, and to feed upon the motivation given to it by new members. I believe that it is only through this strength that the group could respond in such a way to the potentially harmful question above.

As the group now entered its third year in 2006, Shane and Alex (1) quietly sat on the sidelines, content in their diminishing role as they prepared for Higher Education. It was clear that the group needed to grow to include new researchers and that the second generation, who only six months ago were unsure of research and research processes, wanted to take on the challenge of training a new third generation. They recognized that with the diminishing input of both Shane and Alex, new blood was needed in order for the group to grow into its emerging whole-school role. They also looked to expand to work alongside teachers in the classroom in order to answer their research question:

“How can learning best take place within lessons?”

A second-generation researcher stated at this time:

“This is relevant for all teachers across the school...It is something that is relevant to everyone and hopefully will allow them to learn with us” (Harry, second generation researcher, January 2006)

They saw that only if they could engage the interest of a range of teachers in their project, would it then be considered of relevance to the wider school community. For this project they gained the support of my colleagues in order to focus on three Departments within the school, working closely in sub-groups with teachers within these Departments. They also proposed that this ongoing project become part of the school's Internet site, therefore allowing other colleagues and stakeholders, if they wished, to be aware of the research process and to respond to it:

“We know that maybe only the teachers involved will read this...but that's enough..at least we are communicating with them and offering all the chance to comment on what we are doing.” (second generation researcher, January 2006)

The students first began to write to the teachers with whom they wished to work (after seeking permission by the Headteacher) outlining the aims of their research and how they wished the teacher to be involved. They each approached one teacher and inevitably received a varied response. Although one declined to take part, five others agreed. The sheer enormity of the workload they were taking on in this project began to sink in. The answer to this increased workload was to recruit a third generation of researchers amongst the Year 10 cohort, students two years older than

themselves. This would give them the scope they needed to work across Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 5 and would allow them to form Department based teams to work with individual and groups of teachers.

Each team was then to take on the following¹⁷:

- Set up and coordinate a two week student learning diary for an individual class within a Key Stage (sample of students from a target group)
- Film two key lesson extracts to include the lesson outline and the plenary (focusing on how students were given time to think)
- Share the video evidence and the learning diaries with the teacher(s) involved in an interview
- Set up and conduct a Department interview of a range of teachers within the Department, looking at how students are given opportunities to learn and how they do so
- Keep all stakeholders updated with the ongoing research project via the school website, allowing opportunities for feedback
- Share the results of their findings with year group assemblies in a validation exercise
- Validate these findings through an intergenerational student learning forum
- Revise and present summative findings to the whole staff

This was an enormous undertaking and commitment for the students involved, which would take place in addition to their full timetable of lessons, homework, extracurricular pursuits and lives outside of school. This was indeed not a project for the fainthearted.

When Harry and Theo (2) addressed the Year 10 students within an assembly, asking for volunteers to join them, I was surprised at how confident they felt addressing older students within their school. Appealing to the “*What’s in it for me?*” factor, they outlined the benefits of working as researchers.

At the end they waited. Four students approached them.

¹⁷ Please refer to Appendix 2 for more detail of the methodology employed by the student researchers and how these were developed/chosen.

The initial training session with the third generation involved the students dividing themselves into intergenerational groups that would each focus upon a different Department within the school. I led this discussion initially, until the students were able to take over. The engagement and active listening from the Year 10 students showed how they realised that this was a time for them to listen and learn from the younger students. I had a warm feeling towards the end of this session, as it felt that with “the new blood” their enquiry had a realistic chance of success. Afterwards shared smiles began as researchers chanced upon each other around the school; there was a feeling of something special being shared between us as a group.

Figure 28

In the following video clips, focussing on the initial meeting between second and third generation, the absence of shared trust is evident as they all talk through me to each other.



Year 10 researchers.WMV



Discussing together.WMV

After trust had later been established, I felt that the group had reached a level of autonomy where I could begin to step back from my previous role as mediator and enjoy seeing the project unfold and develop. I felt this to be a very privileged position, where we as classroom practitioners can sit on the sidelines occasionally and enjoy the game without knowing the result. I still however recognise the energy I continue to give to the research and the individuals within it.

I believe that by recognising my own role and influence in my shared life with others, I am supporting others in developing their own *shining light* (Mandela, 1994). I am taking responsibility for this role, and in doing so giving ownership to this account. Without my presence, the student-researcher group would not have an unwavering ally whose presence allows them to discover their own capacity as researchers, nor someone to record their journey. Through this role, I have been able to recognise the cycles that the research has undergone.

Leat (2005) outlines the need to recognise cycles in networks where collective enquiry is undertaken. He recognises that there can be a lull when key players leave the group and that there is real value in allowing breathing space and a chance to reflect between projects. The summer vacation provided the group with a natural breathing space between the first small scale project and this whole-school one. By mid July in 2005, it was clear that we all needed a break, and that a tiredness and loss of focus had occurred; not just between the researchers themselves, but also by myself.

In the new academic year, the younger researchers began to dominate the project with the first generation becoming peripheral members, attending meetings as and when they could. With their A-Level courses now entering their final year, both students were under a great deal of pressure and could no longer afford the time to the research project.

Over the following weeks, the new group began to form a purposeful identity that was orientated towards meeting its own deadlines and to reviewing its methodological choices as it grew. We had found a new, smaller and quieter room in which to meet. This was a space that became our own on a Wednesday lunchtime when everyone appeared with sandwiches and coke. For the first time, I began to bring my own lunch to these meetings. Whilst this may seem insignificant in the context of this research, it showed that I was now relaxed enough to eat together with the others. The project progressed over these lunchtimes: interviews were arranged and discussed, video evidence was reviewed and learning diaries were collected. The project was shared with the colleagues within the school via the website. There was purpose and there was progress. This was a time in which to enjoy the shared love that we brought to the meetings.

Ethical issues related to the research have become an increasing concern for the student researchers¹⁸. These issues related not only to the participation of the student researchers themselves: they also extended to how the researchers were dealing with working with these other individuals:

"I know that I am involved. You get us to read what you have written...and we want you to use our names...we want to have our work recognised as being by us...I

¹⁸ A full discussion of the ethical considerations of this enquiry is undertaken in Chapter 8

remember Shane telling us about when he discovered his comments in your research on the web.” (Chris’ (2) comments in a meeting, March 2006)

“We need to share everything with them before we share it with the others around the school. The (teachers) who are involved and the pupils need to have a chance to discuss with us what we have written.” (Chris’ (2) comments in a meeting, March 2006)

As the research has progressed, the need for clarity over naming research participants (both students and teachers) has become vital. Within the first small-scale enquiry undertaken by the students, the group agreed that they felt uncomfortable including comments about others without informed consent. As shown above, the agreement to therefore share their ongoing research with participants for comment has become a foundation of the way in which they have continued to enquire.

In order however for the researchers themselves to enquire, the school first needed to seek parental consent for their involvement. Although this was readily received and welcomed by the parents (I have had several informal conversations with parents during consultation evenings about the ongoing research), the need to first gain this consent takes away the right of the child to make their own decision about becoming involved. Kellett (2005b) refers to this debate:

“Tensions can ensue when some children want to become active researchers but are refused parental consent (e.g. parents may want to protect their children’s leisure time or be suspicious about possible exploitation). Equally, some parents might put pressure on their children to participate because they decide the experience ‘will be good for them’ or there will be ‘educational benefits’ when the children themselves have no real interest in or motivation for research activity.” (Kellett, 2005b, p.20)

Parents are however stakeholders of the school, entrusting the school with the welfare and education of their child. Seeking to involve parents, not solely through gaining their consent, but furthermore inviting parents into the research space via web-based technology, allows a relationship of trust between the school and parents to build. Parents are empowered through knowing what their child is undertaking and dialogue between parent, school and child emerges as a result. In this way, when

one of the second-generation researchers began to find his time commitment to the research stressful, it was his parents who talked with him to find a solution.

I believe that working with parents in this inclusional way allows the receptive space between those involved in the research to expand to include these parents. Potential “enemies” to the research process, like the example of my colleague earlier, are thereby included and may become critical friends who ultimately support the research. It has been the role of the student researchers to explain the research that they are undertaking and their role within it to their parents. This is part of their emerging responsibility as young researchers.

In addition, the students need to consider how they were evolving as ethical researchers themselves with regards their research participants. Kellett states:

“Child researchers must themselves conform to rigorous ethical standards when undertaking their own research... There are still many unresolved ethical issues relating to children as active researchers. Who takes ethical responsibility for a child-led study? The child? The supporting adult? An independent body? And should the ethical standards be designed and policed by adults or by children? Would children regard adult policing as interference or a necessary framework in which to operate?” (Kellett, 2007, pp.20-21)

As part of the emerging living educational standards of judgment considered by the research group, ethical considerations have formed a large part of the discussion within the group. Very early on, in their initial small-scale enquiry, the student researchers decided that filming lessons should be conducted from the rear of the classroom, therefore allowing their peers to act more naturally and not be limited by the camera within the room. When filming lessons in their whole-school enquiry, they first sought permission of the teacher and pupils involved: explaining to them how the material was to be stored and then used in the research. In addition, when setting up their website to share their research results, they sought permission to include the video clips that included teachers with whom they had worked. This showed that through dialogue, they hoped to reach a shared understanding with the research participants about how their involvement and comments were to be recorded and subsequently shared.

Another agreement was the anonymous use of comments that they wished to include from interviews, questionnaires and learning diaries. They believed that referring to comments by year group (i.e. Student 10A) rather than by name was a less intimidating process for their peers. Before moving to share the comments that they wished to include via their webspace, they also performed a validation exercise with the student-learning forum at the school. In this they asked a wider range of pupils to substantiate or discuss the comments already gathered by the researchers. Of this process, the third-generation researchers commented:

“This was something I really enjoyed-listening to a wider range of students discussing the findings we already had. Time flew by, and I felt we had only just scratched the surface. We (the researchers) were really interested by what they (the forum participants) were saying, and this really helped us to enjoy being researchers again.” (during a meeting in June 2006)

Kellett (2007) asks above who takes ethical responsibility for a child-led study, and whether this should be the children themselves, a supporting adult or an independent body. In this enquiry however, ethical issues have been agreed *between* the participating bodies in the research, and therefore individuals involved have shared ownership of the agreed ethical standards by which the group lives. The H.E. Researcher and the first-generation researchers have challenged the group to consider an ethical way of being from the earliest opportunity. The students have responded to this debate in an inclusional way. These standards are not upheld by solely one group within the research process; they are instead a consideration of all involved.

6.5 Learning with the school

Throughout the four years of the student-led enquiry at my school, I have combined my own role to act as both a research mentor and advocate for student-led enquiry. I look to further provide space for the group, alongside seeking opportunities for their voice to be further recognised. My role as mentor to the group has diminished as established generations of the student researchers have been able to take on this role. The first and second generation are now confident to mentor the third and fourth and to find their own direction for enquiry. The established student researchers are much more capable of providing appropriate mentoring as their view from the *inside, looking out* (Rayner, 2005b) is invaluable.

I consider myself at this time to be what Meyerson and Scully (1995) describe as a *“tempered radical”*. I am a change agent within this forum, much as my husband has been in his school with regards the creation of a teacher-research group. I wanted to change the balance of relationship between student and teacher, and I knew that I needed the widened support of the Leadership Team (outside of that already gained with the Headteacher and Deputy) within the school to be able to do this. I was seeking change in a creative way. I was drawing upon the motivation that the group’s work was giving me, drawing upon the shared values with the students themselves to show how this change could be beneficial to the school:

“Tempered radicals-people who work within the mainstream organizations and professions and also want to transform them...These people seek moderation, they have “become tougher” by being alternatively “heated up” and “cooled down” and they are angered by incongruities in values and perceived lack of social justice.”
(Meyerson & Scully, 1995, p.586)

The differences in the two cultures at my previous and current school are marked. At my previous school a large number of students were disengaged in both their academic work and the wider school community, displaying characteristics that would define them as *“passive negative”* in Ruddock and Flutter’s (2004) definition. I felt that this was due to the fact that there was no sense of purpose to them becoming actively involved in the school’s life. No space existed in which purposeful dialogue between teacher and student could emerge:

“On the other hand, the passivity displayed by students, and all its consequences, is the manifestation of an attitude which reveals the effect of the absence of the three conditions already mentioned: what can I do, how does it affect me, and what for? This attitude, furthermore, is the reflection of something deeper: the inability of the model of instrumental rationality to direct and give meaning to the schooling of many people in an extraordinarily important stage of their lives.” (Ru  , 2006, p.126)

Inviting students to work alongside practitioner-researchers proved to be a very positive experience that brought them into the school community as active participants. This provided the space and feeling of being valued that students needed to become more active participants in the school. The Deputy Headteacher at Westwood St. Thomas stated the following at the time:

"I believe giving students within the school a voice to express their thoughts on issues connected with learning and also with the wider school community could allow this school to build a positive ethos with more students within the school. This type of work could be seen as a way forward for the school." (Mark Potts, Deputy Heateacher, comments made during a practitioner-researcher meeting, November 2003)

Within my current school, my immediate concern when setting up the student-researcher group, was that active student involvement was not part of the inherent culture of the school. There was a real shift between the expectation of the student role at Westwood St. Thomas, where I felt that students were given more opportunity to voice their opinions and engage with staff through the practitioner-researcher group. The "*Bishop's boy*", where a culture of "*teacher knows best*" prevailed heavily in the light of high academic expectations, was however prevalent at my current school. The boys at Bishop's could be defined as "*passive positive*"¹⁹, in that they undertake many additional responsibilities within the school life²⁰, yet they are not asked to enter into a debate on teaching and learning. This view of acceptance and conforming by the boys was seen as a positive side of the school ethos, which had the results of public examinations to support this. When I first arrived at the school, I was struck by the willingness of the students to help a visitor to the school, by the ordered nature of the students going to and from lessons and by the fact that students could remain largely unsupervised in classrooms at breaktimes without significant incident. Discipline by teachers was rarely challenged. This is an objective view that I developed when first joining the school.

It was easy to understand why stakeholders within the school would be reluctant to make changes to the students' role within the school, and how any attempt to involve them as active participants and enquirers would be met with a high level of resistance from some colleagues and stakeholders alike:

"There are still some dinosaurs here. Not as many as before, but we still need to consider their viewpoint." (comment by the Headteacher in January 2008)

¹⁹ Ruddock and Flutter (2004) identified four categories of students within schools, with regards their attitude and motivation to participate within their school. The four types were: active positive, active negative, passive positive and passive negative

²⁰ This is highlighted through examples such as the sixth-form prefect system, the Young Enterprise group and the mentoring of younger students by older boys.

However, I persisted with the view that:

“Education is not something that should be done to you, but something that you should be a part of.” (Harding, 2001, p.56)

I needed another viewpoint to compare to my own of the role of the students at the school. Shortly after his arrival in my current school's sixth-form, I asked Alex (1) to comment upon the differences, to which he responded:

“I believe there are two extremes in the two schools concerning student-teacher relationships. These extremes being, i) a very relaxed, very friendly environment which will ultimately lead to a negligence of academic 'push' by teachers, and ii) an environment where there is no friendship with students coming from teachers, but only an emotionless, old fashioned, text-book style of teaching.”

Alex continues:

“I believe however that a line can be drawn between these two extremes, where there is an equal mix of friendship, seriousness and in-depth learning, and also importantly a large amount of feedback between students and teachers on their views on each others' successes/weaknesses in practice. This would seem to be the position that student researchers would promote.” (e-mail received, September 2004)

When I first asked Shane and Alex (1) to talk about their views on the student role within the two schools, they talked about trust as an important factor in determining teacher-student relationships. They felt that at Westwood St. Thomas they could not trust some of the teaching and learning that was taking place. This led them to want to become more involved in supporting teachers in their research, as they hoped that this would help improve aspects of the school's work.

Their academic experiences at Bishop Wordsworth's School however have led to them not feeling a *need* to become involved. They trusted the classroom practitioners in their delivery of the syllabus and in supporting them to achieve the high academic standards they needed to continue onto their chosen university course. Shane (1) commented:

“Perhaps Bishops students have never thought about evaluating or questioning teachers because they have never felt the need to.” (conversation held in September 2004)

This passive yet positive acceptance by students was highlighted when Alex commented:

“At the moment there is certainly no structure or framework through which students can develop their classroom researching skills, and help teachers improve. In fact mentioning the idea to some of my peers has lead to mostly confused and shocked faces. They don’t see a need for it.” (conversation held in September 2004)

Therefore, the change in school culture that was needed to accept student-led research as a positive contribution to the school, needed to be recognised by students as well as teachers.

I asked Shane and Alex (1) if this perception of trust between teacher and student was one that they considered before entering the school, or if it was an area that they had considered since being in the sixth-form. They responded by saying that it was both; the reputation of the school within the community was trusted in meeting academic expectations and the reality they experienced confirmed this. This therefore led me to question how I would bring about a culture of participating student researchers into the school that would be valued by colleagues. It needed to avoid eroding the trust which the Bishop’s students have for the school: changing them from “*passive positive*” participants in the school to “*active positive*” participants (Ruddock and Flutter 2004) and “*change agents*” (Ru  , 2006):

“For someone to become an agent, that is, to be ‘the person to act and work for change whose progress can be evaluated according to his/her own aims and values’, according to Sen (1999, p. 19), several requirements must be met. The sense of agency, in the first place. That is to say, the sense that one’s actions have a meaning, an effect, within the context of the action. Secondly, to be an agent also assumes—to whatever degree—moral responsibility for one’s actions. What I do, somehow, has an effect on me. Thirdly, it requires a certain degree of control over one’s own agenda, to know what I intend to do and why, that is, be capable of evaluating progress achieved in the light of one’s own aims and objectives” (Ru  , 2006, p.126)

For me, the key to this sense of agency lies in the actions undertaken having a meaning and a sense of purpose. The students have acted as agents with meaning and purpose through student-led enquiry. Through the development of their research ethics (discussed in Chapter 6) they are undertaking moral responsibility for their actions.

The students first needed to prove however that they were capable of undertaking this moral responsibility through enquiry. I felt therefore that showing the impact and worth of student-led research by example was crucial. This facilitated the move towards students becoming change agents. Many colleagues were fearful of a breakdown of trust that would lead to lower standards of respect between teachers and students. They were also fearful that consulting students would bring about a wave of criticism directed at their classroom pedagogy. The Senior Tutor summed up this fear in an impassioned statement:

“There is a general fear here that if we let the boys near anything...they will mess it up. Why aren't we asking them more? They can often prove to be insightful, and in some cases appear to know a lot more than we think they know.” (comments made in November 2004)

I asked him to comment further on this statement. He in turn informed me that he had previously engaged in practitioner-research and saw the access to the students' reflections on learning as paramount to the development of the work in the school.

He commented:

“Most boys here wouldn't say boo to a goose...They would be terrified of saying anything too negative against us for fear of retribution. We should be embracing what they can offer us, instead of stifling their voice.” (conversation, November 2004)

It is significant to mention at this point, that the Senior Tutor is responsible for the running of the School Council and also the tutor group forums, in which students have an opportunity to express their thoughts and to bring forward issues that they would like to work upon. This work however extended more to the non-academic involvement of students in the school life. There was no voice within this existing forum for academic work and development, asking questions of the nature: “How we

can improve the quality of teaching and learning opportunities?" There was a belief amongst my colleagues that there was no need to discuss these aspects, for "*all is well*" and the school's academic work was "*work well done*" (Whitehead, 2003). If it ain't broke, don't fix it!

"Treating students-as-researchers in their own schools and classrooms surpasses the boundaries of formal Councils which may simply be a way of containing voice within parameters of time, place and representative advocacy."

(Macbeath et al., 2001, p.79)

Alderson (2000), in her paper on students' views on school councils, recognizes the two-way dynamic that needs to exist in an effective council. She talks of giving the students the right to express their views on matters concerning them through bodies such as school councils, yet also highlights the responsibilities that accompany this right. I argue that only if students can consider and live out agreed moral and ethical values created through school councils and similarly through student-led research, can the parameters of representative advocacy be extended and altered:

"Rights are often contrasted with responsibilities. Yet civil rights are mainly about taking on more personal and shared responsibility and decision making, being trusted, and helping one another, as shown in the many practical issues raised in the survey. All the groups talked about wanting to be heard more and respected, not so much to make demands as to contribute ideas and helpful suggestions."

(Alderson, 2000, p.131)

My own poorly-judged exercise to ask for feedback from sixth-form students within the Department²¹ had taught me that I needed to exercise caution in approaching the work of students-as-researchers within the school. Cuninghame et al's research highlighted this concern:

"Adults who control research knowledge are in a powerful position to censor or selectively disseminate findings. For example, in one school some staff were unhappy with student researchers' research findings, which critiqued teacher student

²¹ Refer to Chapter 3 in which I consider my first year in post. Part of this year was spent asking sixth-form students within my Department about their views on lessons, without first creating the acknowledged trust between teacher and student to do this.

communication, and as a result they refused to display the posters that summarised the research.” (Cunninghame et al., 1999, p.177)

As I sat in the leadership meeting in January 2006, in which I was acting as teacher-advocate for intergenerational student-led research, the school’s inherent culture with regards student participation was at the forefront of my mind. *Je voulais être ailleurs*. I wished to promote the “*what’s in it for us as a school*” aspect of students working as researchers and referred to two examples illustrated by Naylor and Worrall (2004) that I felt highlighted this:

“Over a period of 2 years at an LEA all-girls 11-19 comprehensive school in London, a “students-as-researchers” initiative was developed to enable young people to investigate, analyse and present student perspectives on learning and school life. An academic gave 150 students from Years 8-12 three days research training; identifying research questions, research ethics and methods and the analysis of data and the presentation of findings This were supported by a teacher-researcher. The groups’ write-ups of the projects and outcomes were presented to the school council, a selection of staff and governors and also at two education conferences.

The main question was “How does being a student researcher affect learning?” The majority of students experienced their election and training to be positive and were overwhelmingly in favour of giving their peers the opportunity to undertake research, although they identified and expressed concerns over methods and criteria for selection, suggesting that students should be volunteers. 90 percent of respondents saw benefits from the programme in terms of their academic and social skills.” (my own notes for the meeting adapted from Naylor and Worrall, 2004, p.7)

“In Bedfordshire, the “students-as-researchers” project is now entering its fourth year, involving students in all upper schools within the County. An original student research project asked whether students could be part of exploring teacher trainee placements and what benefits would arise from this. Students have helped develop a process of working closely with trainees and their mentors to provide feedback on lessons. Training has been provided to deal with sensitivity and boundaries, but all those involved feel that they have benefited greatly. Different schools now operate different programmes, some focussing on Newly Qualified Teachers, some on trainees and others open to all staff interested in developing new ways of working with students, in

order to develop and gain feedback from classroom practice” (adapted from Naylor and Worrall, 2004, p.8)

After I had presented my case for widening the support of student-led research, one colleague asked two valuable questions in terms of the value of the project as a whole:

“If we are asking students about their knowledge as learners, and asking them to evaluate which of these experiences is best in their opinion...are we not then excluding potential strategies that have not been tried out in the school? We cannot ask them to judge what they have not experienced.” (Assistant Headteacher in a Leadership Team meeting, November 2004)

“What is the value gained in students researching aspects of their learning in terms of a measurable value?”(Assistant Headteacher in a Leadership Team meeting, November 2004)

I found myself considering the African idea of “Ubuntu” as introduced to me by my tutor Jack Whitehead. I was essentially being asked “*What’s in it for us?*” and “*Is this a gain that we can measure and turn into veritable evidence?*” The researchers were being asked to become a vehicle for school improvement, one that could be quantified and measured. There was little sense of humanity and recognition of the other, yet my colleague was responding perhaps necessarily to the political drive for contextual value-added²². The students wanted to achieve improvement as a result of their research. They saw their enquiry as supporting the other in their community, recognising that teachers have limited time to research into best practice, and that this could be role taken up by students.

²² The Department for Children, Families and Schools define KS2-KS4 Contextual Value Added (CVA) in the following way:

“CVA is a measure of the progress made by students from their starting point (prior attainment in Key Stage 2 tests) to their GCSE results, taking into account a number of factors that are outside the schools control such as movement between schools and ability range in the school.

The expected CVA of a school is 1000 – this assumes the progress of each child is in line with national progress.

Figures higher than 1000 indicates that students made more progress than that expected.” (retrieved from www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/performance on 10.03.05)

“Teachers haven’t got the time to do this, and perhaps aren’t best placed to do so, as the view of good learning in the classroom is best recognized by the students within it. If we can, through our research, support teachers through showing them how we learn best, then we can share this with them without asking acres of their time. If our lessons improve as a result then surely we’ve answered “what’s this all for?”” (Shane (1), in a meeting, March 2006)

“The principal of caring for each others’ well-being... and a spirit of mutual support Each individual’s humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual’s humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the rights and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being.”(Tutu, 1996, p.1)

The students’ enquiry was therefore also a way of promoting a more loving way of being between teachers and students within the school, in which the contribution that the other could make is recognised. These intelligent and aware young people were asking the teachers within the school to recognise them as such:

“A person with ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, does not feel threatened that others are able and good, for he or she has a proper self-assurance that comes from knowing that he or she belongs in a greater whole and is diminished when others are humiliated or diminished, when others are tortured or oppressed.” (Tutu, 1996, p.1)

The students are asking that teachers affirm them as equal members of the school society. They ask that they do not feel threatened by the research being undertaken into learning, but feel excited by it instead. They ask that teachers treat them as individuals who can move the work of the school forward, whilst maintaining the traditional teacher-student role in the classroom. One of the student researchers’ findings from their interviews with their peers was the importance of a sense of security and knowing the boundaries within the classroom.

I believe that the student researchers, through their evolving awareness of how to work with their school, are providing evidence for their disposition to learn. Referring to Perkins, Jay & Tishman’s (2003) consideration of a *“dispositional theory of*

thinking” the students are displaying the key dispositions needed for good thinking and the development of, in this case, their work as enquirers:

“Most views of good thinking and its development hold that good thinking depends on general and specific abilities. We propose a theory of good thinking based on the concept of dispositions. Dispositions are often considered to be a matter of motivation. However, we define an expanded concept called “triadic dispositions,” which emphasizes (1) inclinations, which may reflect motivation, habit, policy, or other factors, (2) sensitivity to occasion, and (3) abilities themselves.”(Perkins et al, 2003, p.2)

In the first of these concepts, the researchers have the motivation to enquire and to sustain this enquiry through an intergenerational approach. In the second, they have needed to be sensitive to the school environment in which they propose to research; working creatively with it. Thirdly I believe their work shows ability for research and research mentoring. This is evident in their methodology, research ethics and a common language emerging between those who enquire.

What Perkin et al.’s definition does not recognize is the importance of the environment itself in allowing these dispositions to develop. Without the opportunity to enquire and the space to do so, the students would not have been able to develop their potential as researchers.

In this way, Day (2004) considers the need for passionate learning communities to:

“...understand the classroom from the students’ perspectives, focusing in the process of teaching upon building self-esteem through the knowledge and understanding of the student.” (Day, 2004, p.141)

In stating this, Day supports the inclusion of students as an integral part of a learning community which can build self-esteem. He also defines the need for teachers to sustain their vocational passion:

“...active learners by their own sense of moral purpose to do the best they can under all circumstances, and by the sense of common purposes shared with colleagues.”(Day, 2004, p.177)

"I am not asking for every lesson to be seen as "fun", this is unrealistic, and teachers don't have the time to plan these sorts of lessons all the time. Sometimes, learning needs to be done in a "dull" way, and as this still helps us to pass our exams, we need to respect this" (comments by a Year 8 student during a student-forum on learning 12.12.2006)

Through inviting students to work with the school community and supporting teachers in learning about it, students become aware of the pressures and courage of the teachers in their school. They build empathy towards teachers whilst working with them through research. Indeed the very title of Day's book *"A passion for teaching"* (2004) could equally be entitled *"A passion for learning"* as teachers like myself look for the reward of personal learning to build our self-esteem as classroom practitioners.

Conclusion to this Chapter

This Chapter has sought to clarify the process of student-led enquiry developing within the social formation of my current school over the past four years. I have looked to explain how an intergenerational approach has emerged through this time, and how this can lead to sustainable student-led enquiry. I have also explained how, through this shared enquiry, the student researchers have developed living methodology that has responded to the enquiry and a loving way of working together in our shared pursuit of knowledge. This is shown in the development of their research ethics that look to recognise the other.

I talk of the importance of the shared living values between my husband and I in our educational lives. These values I believe to be reflected and lived out in my shared life with the student researchers. I bring the values from the personal into the professional, yet I also take the pleasure from the professional into the personal. To deny the pleasure I gain from the professional would be to deny my own pleasure in learning alongside others.

Lohr (2006) talks of *"love at work"*. Love I see as a pursuit of knowledge undertaken with others, as defined by Cho (2005). *Work* is defined in the Concise Oxford Dictionary (1995) as a:

“Physical or mental effort or activity directed toward the production or accomplishment of something.” (Concise Oxford Dictionary, 1995, p.816)

This definition leads to a merging of the boundaries between love and work, as they both become a pursuit and a productive activity. *Love* brings motivation to this enquiry, whilst *work* allows this energy a space in which to be lived out.

I refer in the abstract to the living standards of judgment shared between my husband and I. I state that these give me energy and motivation in my professional life. Having focussed in this Chapter on how this energy is lived out in the co-creation of intergenerational student-led research, I now return to explore the source of this motivation.

Chapter 7: Shared living standards of judgment as motivation for a life of enquiry

I have described to you the importance of my shared life with my husband as giving us shared living standards of judgment. These we take *into* and *from* our educational lives. I have explored with you how shared standards of judgment have developed similarly between the student researchers, my colleagues, the school and me. I now return to the shared dynamic between my husband and I, asking how this supports me in what I do and in giving me the motivation to enquire.

7.1 Emerging shared values through doing

Three years into my marriage and Simon and I are both still researching, both sharing a loving quality of relationship that allows us to enquire together and apart. We recognise our professional and personal lives and the connections shared between the two. No longer do we try to separate these as separate identities that we have. We recognise that the one supports the other.

“Th(is) text is a multi-media representation of an action research enquiry that utilises autobiography as a way of accounting for one educator’s movement from being a classroom teacher, through middle leadership and finally into senior school leadership. I argue that I am the educator that I am because of the life I have led and the life that I am currently leading.” (Riding, S. 2008, abstract)

Simon is making meaning of his move into Senior Leadership, exploring how narrative and personal experience define him in that role. He is sharing his journey of setting up a practitioner-researcher group in a school where practitioner-research previously did not occur. He is identifying how his relationship with the teachers in the group allows the individual to develop his/her voice and create listeners for these voices. In this work, he carries forward *valuing the other*, a living standard of judgment that emerged through the Westwood St. Thomas teacher-researcher group. Here he reflects upon coming to work with the sixth-form mentors at my school, for which he needed to overcome boundaries on behalf of both the schools. He is looking here to make the *possible probable* (Whitehead, Joan, 2004):

“However, recognising that I wanted to make the possible probable and recognising what this meant to Karen I really wanted to find a way to sort this out. For both of us this reflected the way in which we are bound by the institutions we work in and the

regulations surrounding them and that it was only through creative thinking that this event could happen.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.223)

The similarities in context between our two enquiries have only emerged through time, as we have embraced shared living educational standards of judgement to which we hold ourselves and the other to account. I am sharing with you my narrative of developing intergenerational student-led research as a force for change within a school. I believe that intergenerational research is key to developing a sustainable way of working. I am looking to make the *possible probable* (Whitehead, Joan 2004). These are some of the connections between Simon’s enquiry and my own.

There is also a danger that goes alongside living and enquiring together in a marriage. There is the temptation to analyse all that happens, to think beyond the pleasure of the moment to how I could interpret this event. We have both needed to learn when to let go, and to create space within our marriage outside of enquiry. Taking time to remember our roles as husband and wife, mother and father, I believe is fundamentally important:

“I do need to know when not to adopt a thoroughly inquiring approach and to leave life “unprocessed”, but deciding when and how to do this is also a part of living inquiringly.” (Marshall, 1999, p.2)

Our motivation in our professional life comes from the life-affirming energy that we hold together. I have energy for what I do in my professional life as I seek to recreate a loving way of being with those individuals with whom I work and enquire. It is the shared experiences between us that have led to the right conditions for relationships of trust to be formed. As Simon talks above of the importance of experience in making him the practitioner that he is, so Eisner (1998) talks of the primacy of experience as a fundamental part of living and enquiring:

“Like breathing, we regard experience as a condition that is ineluctably associated with being alive” (Eisner, 1998, p.15)

“It is one of our culture’s most significant tasks, one for which our schools have special responsibility, to provide the tools and to develop the skills through which the child can create his or her own experience.” (Eisner, 1998, p.15)

Eisner also shares Simon's and my own view that schools are there to serve and enhance the lives of the children in them. Simon in particular, referring to his life experience as a school refuser, holds this value close to him:

"This section of the thesis began with an exploration of what I believed was a fundamental experience in determining who I am: my experience of being a school refuser. Through this exploration I have been able to frame my relationships with family and friends as a way of explaining my own living educational theory."

(Riding, S., 2006, p.231)

The school has a social responsibility to respond to the needs of the child, yet within this the child can support the school in learning about learning. The experience on offer to the child can therefore be enhanced through student-led enquiry that explores what the school does and how to do it better. Improvements are made through learning about the significance of pedagogical experience as teachers in the classroom. I argue that by both teachers and students embracing learning, a constructive dialogue emerges that allows teachers to see again through younger eyes:

"...(There is) a narrowing (that) accompanies "growing up", from child to adult..It is the product of a detached viewpoint that separates "subject" from "object", "self" from "other" and "better" from "worse", regardless of context. The detachment that, needs must, comes to empower and protect us, swings our focus round from inside-out to outside-in. All of a sudden, things begin to resolve into a sharp, clear focus-sorted"! Carried away with our success, we may go as far as to regard our outside-in, objective view as the one and only "correct" one. We then hasten to instruct our children, learners of all kinds, young and old, to accept and learn it, whilst abandoning their naïve, inside-out view as wrong." (Rayner, 2006b, p.4)

I believe that through my experience of enquiry with student researchers, I am embracing again my childhood *inside, looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) view of the world and of the possibilities that it can offer me. Simon is similarly embracing this as he learns alongside the practitioner-researchers at his own school.

There were no pre-conceived standards to adhere to when I began this research, only the excitement of discovering that others were doing the same; looking to learn

alongside the learners in their own classrooms and see things from another perspective:

“Were we to mentally and habitually exchange places with our pupils or students, we, as teachers, would have to rely more on our imagination. We would have to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity and treat them as part of the learning process. We would not be able to plan everything in advance but would probably allow knowledge to emerge and grow in and through the practice. We would listen to our learners more carefully; indeed we would have their voices in our heads, and respond to their individual needs.” (Farren, 2005, p.3)

I have discovered the thrill of not knowing the next step that I must take. For once, I was not attempting to label what I was seeing and learning. I reacted alongside events instead of planning them. I avoided labelling the experiences I was having, as I realised that any attempt to do this would be to limit the possibility of the students’ work and to close myself off from the possibilities that it opened up. I was excited by the unexpectedness of the enquiry and by my own learning, as emphasised by the following:

“When in our teaching, our curriculum, and our research methods we emphasize the prompt classification and labelling of objects and events, we restrict our consciousness and reduce the likelihood that the qualities of which those objects and events consist will be experienced.”
(Eisner, 1988, p.17)

“If I learn something new I actually go to bed happy.”
(John Cleese interviewed by Michael Parkinson in Stoll, Earl & Fink, 2002, p.77)

“Educational research should strive to be ethical, creative and emancipatory and contribute to the imaginative acquisition of knowledge.”
(Lomax, 1998, p.2)

As a researcher, I have always been reminded of the importance of maintaining an objective view of the research process. Rayner (2005a) argues for us to become excited by research and to revel in the learning that it brings to us. If we are to ignore this excitement and to turn our backs on our own *inside, looking-out* (Rayner, 2005) view, telling ourselves that this does not promote validity of the research, then I

suggest that we are turning our backs on our very motivation and excitement as researchers. I do not wish this research to be done around and away from me, instead I wish to get my hands dirty and see clearly through my own eyes. I believe that only through lived experience can I truly understand this enquiry:

“As action researchers would agree, our subjectivity actively contributes to our knowledge of the things with which we now interact. Without this relational aspect, we could miss vital aspects about the “things” which we enquire into.” (Ladkin, 2005, p.113)

Learning is for me a living shared quality that stems from enquiry with others. In trying to understand how learning can be improved through the students’ eyes, I am seeking to further my knowledge about best learning practice. I am bringing myself into this enquiry. Ladkin (2005) describes three aspects related to subjectivity and action researchers:

*“A placing of importance on the day-to-day world in which we live, rather than the abstracted world of scientific measurement and principals;
The importance of doing in developing knowing-the stance that there are certain things which can only be known through their enactment;
An aim to apprehend the world in a way that reveals its truth and acknowledging the way in which our subjectivity contributes to that truth.”* (Ladkin, 2005, p.112)

I share with Ladkin the importance of knowing through experience and of the lived-in world as providing enquiry with the space to exist. It is only through being part of this space and this enquiry that I can fully comprehend my claims to knowledge. In this way it is only through experiencing *“intergenerational research”* that I can fully understand what it is and its implications. Whilst I could read about it and understand what I am reading, what these words communicate remains unknown. Similarly, *collaboration with others* is a lived experience in which all bring their own both subjective and objective views to the shared space we inhabit; subjectivity that supports the enquiry in finding motivation and direction. As a practitioner-researcher, I look to creatively work with the world around me so that I can truly know the space that I inhabit. It is only through living out shared values with others in my life that I can seek to improve what I experience:

“Examining the nature of a concept such as “influence” then, has limited potential for deepening knowing unless it is experienced as a lived phenomenon.”

(Ladkin, 2005, p.116)

Marshall (2004) talks about *living life through enquiry*, an idea that I believe shared similarities to Ladkin’s lived experience. Both require the immersion of the researcher in their enquiry to allow them to question and develop their epistemological way of being:

“I have an image of living continually in process, adjusting, seeing what emerges, bringing things into question. This involves, for example, attempting to open to continual question what I know, feel, do and want, and finding ways to engage actively in this questioning and process its stages.” (Marshall, 2004, p.2)

My husband also shares this way of being as he states:

“I share similar desires as Marshall (2004) in wanting to draw more sense from my life and understand the self more in order to improve my practice thus I am:

‘...seeking to bring attention into more moment of being and action...’

(Marshall, 2004, p.2)

I further connect with her calls for each researcher to develop their own sense of first-person research as we are all unique beings that need to inquire into our own lives in such a way as to make sense of them. (Marshall, 2004, p.2)”

(Riding, S., 2008, p.302)

This knowing through action is for me the pleasure of my life as a learner. On teacher-training days I awake with a smile. This is a day for me to reflect upon what has been and to consider the next steps. In contrast, each school day allows me to question what I am doing in the classroom and how I can improve upon this. The training days allow me an opportunity to return to and engage with theory, to know new ideas and to feel the excitement that their possibility evokes. These days give me space in which to reflect with colleagues on what has been and what is yet to come. The classroom gives me an arena in which to do this, turning scientific

principles into lived experience, so that they hold true value. I believe that, as a classroom practitioner, I need to engage with the theoretical and the practice, as one informs the other and provides me with a continued sense of motivation for what I do:

“Quite often living like this can be fun, and has the capacity to turn what might be daunting, mundane or duty-full activities into ones which are engaging, interesting, playful and opportunities for learning.” (Marshall, 1999, p.2)

“The life-world is the everyday world of practical, lived experience”

“This is the kind of knowing which is of particular significance to us in that which enables us to make things “work”.” (Ladkin, 2005, pp.112-116)

I interpret this kind of knowing as giving practitioners the motivation to enquire. Enquiries allow practitioners to look at what they enjoy doing, bringing meaning to their work. If the two are disconnected, then what a dull life it would be.

Cockburn (2000) quotes the words of a primary school teacher when asked about her motivation in her work, to which the primary teacher responds:

“I love getting a new class in September, thinking that by the time they leave me at the end of the year they would know so much more and it would be because of what I had taught them” (Cockburn, 2000, p.227)

I would partially share this teacher’s sentiments that her intrinsic motivation for what she does lies in her classroom teaching, but that describing herself as the instigator of knowledge leaves out most of the equation: the excitement that we gain as classroom practitioners which comes from our contact with students. If we focus only on teaching, we are ignoring the wealth of knowledge that each student brings with them into the classroom, their capacity for engagement and the creation of new knowledge. It is this contact with students that wills me into work each day: the excitement of the unexpected.

“Some people seem to view everyday events as opportunities for learning: they enjoy the challenge. For example, not so long ago, when one of us asked her father, in his late eighties, about his day, he told her that on his walk he decided to go down a particular street because “I haven’t been down it before and I wanted to find out more about it.” (Stoll et al., 2003, p.77)

Huberman (1993b), Helsby and McCulloch (1996) state that:

“Teachers who are, for example, in regularly changing roles, work in a supportive culture, and are reflective and able to participate in significant decision-making in school, maintain their motivation and satisfaction in the essential core of their work-classroom teaching.”(Huberman, Helsby & McCulloch, 1996, p.118)

Through the work that I embrace with the intergenerational researchers, a new community is being formed that learns together. This is an emergent community that expands and adapts to best fit its purpose i.e. supporting the school in knowing itself better.

It is a community that has been formed, not out of a pre-defined need by the school, but rather the specific desire of some students within the school to increase their capacity for enhancing the learning experience. This is a space that brings together a diverse range of stakeholders within the school and asks them to see with different eyes. It is a community asking the school to open its eyes to new possibilities of learning about itself.

“How can we help develop a love of learning from an early age? In our current education system, are we offering a curriculum appropriate to the needs of the learner? In higher education where talk is of knowledge transfer rather than pedagogy, are the learner’s needs being overlooked?

How can I, as a higher education educator initiate and help to co-create a curriculum with my learners? What if we did something different? Wouldn’t it be interesting to step into the shoes of the learner at the other end of our classroom and experience what it is like to be looking in from the other side?” (Farren, 2005, p.2)

7.2 Motivation through enquiry

“This phase of my inquiry marks a shift in my attention from the general to the particular. That is, from the general focus of how to create a learning environment that is supportive of the goals of the program to the creation of a safe space for learning and the creation of a loving and life affirming relationship with particular students.” (Hartog, 2004, p.77)

Church (2005) describes how networks can increase our capacity for love, not solely that of the group working together as a whole, but for each individual within that structure. I reflect upon my own growing sense of love for humanity that has arisen as a result of my involvement with the student researchers. This has allowed me to embrace my enemy as a potential critical friend. Certain moments held within my memory come to mind: a summer's sports day when I sat upon the grass with Shane (1) and talked, oblivious to the runners on the track: walking to my classroom after break and exchanging a smile with Harry and Theo (2): realising the potential of my colleague's question "What's this all for?" with regards student-research. These memories have arisen from our joint work and the experiences that we have shared, and they have challenged each of us to work in a new way. Cho (2005) calls this love we share a "*common pursuit of new knowledge within the world*", and I for one am very glad to have experienced this within my work.

Church (2005) also talks of "*working together for a common purpose*" within communities. I believe that alongside this shared purpose; we all have our individual reasons for our involvement. Whilst the third-generation researchers are looking for increased responsibility as they move towards the sixth-form, the second-generation are looking for their work to be valued across the school community. The H.E. Researcher working alongside the group is looking to see how intergenerational student-led research adds to the current debate on students-as-researchers. The Headteacher asks what his school can benefit from work of this type. Each person asks: "*What can I learn from this?*" Although we have our noble reasons for being involved within the research, we all have our own selfish reasons behind this. In this way, Church has expressed knowing herself better as a starting point for her research:

"I start from an understanding that knowing myself better will enhance my capacity for good action in the world. Through questioning myself and writing myself on to the page, I can trace how I can resist community formations, whilst simultaneously wanting to be in community with others." (Church, 2005, abstract)

In a similar way it is our own learning as teachers in the classroom that is our intrinsic motivation for doing what we do: that daily source of renewal and surprise that wills us to participate in a wider professional capacity as outlined by Huberman (1993). I would argue that it would be impossible to find a classroom practitioner that does not

wish to gain personally from his/her classroom experience, and who does not enjoy being occasionally surprised by his/her own learning.

Cockburn (2000) cites another teacher's (William's) motivation for his professional life:

"You just know that you have made a difference in their lives." (Cockburn, 2000, p.229)

Yet, at the same time, do they not make a difference to our lives? I would argue that alongside student learning in William's classroom, William himself is also evolving in his understanding of his own practice whilst enjoying the sense of achievement that he personally gains from seeing the students' progress.

Working with intergenerational researchers has allowed me to recognize that it is still the *classroom experience* that is my intrinsic motivation for what I do. The researchers have allowed me great insight into their learning processes and I have learned alongside them about how to enhance my classroom practice. If I were to remove myself from the classroom, a large part of me would be unfulfilled, a part that that would yearn for a return to that environment.

I consider how Simon, my husband, is now virtually without classroom contact in his role as Assistant Headteacher. I remember how vividly he used to describe his classroom experiences within his former role at Westwood St. Thomas School, where he was Head of English. His face would light up at the mention of a name or of a situation that he had encountered. Still he retains this sense of pleasure in his classroom experience:

"I can still do it! My value added results were the best in the Department, despite the roughly six weeks that I wasn't there to teach the group. It helps to know that I still can rise to the challenge." (comments by Simon on GCSE results day August 2007)

"For teachers, going to school must be about learning as it is about teaching. They must have time each day to learn, plan lessons and critique student work, and support improvement as members of learning teams..Staff development cannot be something educators do only on specified days in the school calendar. It must be part of every educator's daily work schedule." (Hirsch, 2001, p.10)

This relates to Church's description of a reason behind networks of people working together:

"A network thrives on the drive, commitment and passion of its members. It is the combination of diversity (many autonomous institutions and individuals) and a common purpose, which gives a network power and energy. It is thus vital for a network to know what resources its members have and would be prepared to contribute and share. The aim of a contributions assessment is to hook into where the energy lies for the members, and involve people through their passion and drive to make a difference." (Church, 2005, p.24)

Simon is finding his place within a new network at Bitterne Park School, in which he argues that the leadership team give the school its drive and common purpose, ultimately derived from the school's Headteacher:

"Even in my early days as a senior leader it was pretty obvious that it was the senior team making the difference within the school: it's the senior team that sets the vision and direction, recruits the staff, trains the staff and so on. Without the strong senior leadership team in place, the school wouldn't be the outstanding, as assessed by OfSted in March 2006, school that it is. One conversation with an Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) within the school drew out the following comments:

'...it's such a strong presence in the school...the senior team here runs things and motivates me to want to improve what I'm doing...it's about the challenge it sets...' (Conversation with AST, February 2005)." (Riding, S., 2008, p.187)

I am arguing for an extended network within a school, one that taps into and embraces students as a part of their shared community. I am arguing for the school network to be opened up to student involvement, so that student research may support teachers in their motivation to learn as individuals and collaboratively within their existing networks. Through utilising the resource of students-as-researchers, boundaries between Departments, school stakeholders and the Leadership team begin to open up. This desire to contribute to the school was recently expressed by the second-generation researchers:

"Throughout our time as researchers we have worked together with a wide range of people. This has been an essential element in making our research successful, as it

means that we gain and share more knowledge from and with these other groups. The research term of “triangulation”, we use to emphasize the importance of groups of people working together to make this research work. We believe that without the involvement of these groups: teachers, our Headteacher, other students and our research mentor, the whole research process would be compromised” (shared voice of the second-generation researchers, June 2006)

As the students seek a channel for their energy to enquire in their evolving role as student researchers, Simon’s intrinsic motivation for what he does fulfils a similar role, as he looks to embrace the learning he experiences within his new position. He is finding that the colleagues with whom he works allow him the same sense of learning that I share with the students:

“I recognise that when my leadership team is faced with a challenge or issue, we do not sit around and draw on theory in order to solve it, but rather we draw on our own experiences and lives in order to come to a solution.” (Riding, S., 2006, p.201)

The progress that the school has made under Simon’s own initiatives allows him to revel in this *work well done*. Simon and I are both channelling the passion for this learning through creating a narrative of experiences that may lest be forgotten:

“My own personal engagement is with narratives and stories that remind me of the buzz and passion involved in the profession that I am part of.”
(Riding, S., 2008, p.186)

These narratives allow us to make meaning from what has occurred and to reflect upon the images, words and questions that arise in our minds:

“Images, phrases, concepts and questions around which I organise my sense of inquiring can arise from a variety of sources, but when they “appear” they can have an intensity which makes me recognise them as powerful, or invest them with such power. They have an evocative quality for me, repeatedly catching my attention, and/or are rich phrases which echo in different areas of my life.” (Marshall, 1995, p.4)

This reflection allows me to re-find energy and motivation for the ongoing enquiry. As time passes and the enquiry evolves, this energy shifts to different foci. Some issues have been resolved and some now seem less important than they once did; yet as

my focus changes I still carry the resultant energy from my past investment into these. The enquiry has been altered by the energy invested in it from its various participants. One enquiry merges into another as the journey through life continues. Alongside this journey I retain the energy from the past in the shared standards that I seek to live out. I disagree with Marshall that past enquiries are emptied of energy, as I believe that the energy from an enquiry continues with the life of that researcher:

“Typically, when I engage in the kinds of enquiry I am discussing, I notice that my focus of interest and questioning moves on as I sufficiently resolve specific issues. There may be an iterative process in which I cycle through similar themes again, but enquiries which I have lived full tend to become emptied of energy.”

(Marshall, 1995, p.5)

Enquiries that have been fulfilled give a sense of achievement and learning. Enquiries that have not been fulfilled are experiences to be learnt from. We carry this new knowledge from these differing experiences. In the era of self assessment by schools, enquiry with students can play an increasing role in allowing the school to know itself better.

I now move onto the significance of these shared living standards of judgment as motivation for my life of enquiry in the following Chapter. I hope now to make meaning of what has been and how this will effect what is to come.

Chapter 8: Standing, looking back

This section of the enquiry allows me to reflect and make meaning from what has occurred, and also to respond to the key questions that I asked at the beginning of this enquiry. I ask alongside this if the methodology that I have employed (as principal narrator of this *living* enquiry) has allowed the enquiry to respond and develop in a way that is worthy of sharing.

I see this section as space in which to reflect upon the significance of what has occurred. I consider how shared living standards of judgment in the personal carry life-affirming energy that motivate in the professional. I consider how my shared living standard of recognizing the other, shared with my husband, has led to support the development of intergenerational student-led research as a way of recognizing the contribution that students can make to the school. I ask how this enquiry is significant in its contribution to original knowledge and how others including researchers, students, practitioners and schools, may gain from it. Only if this significance is clear to the reader of this text have I succeeded in my role as narrator of this enquiry.

8.1 Evolving living educational standards of judgment

I still remember vividly the journey into my new school in September 2003. On that day, as on all days, I carried the strength and motivation afforded me by the loving shared standards of judgments that I hold with my husband. I wanted to be worthy of the trust that he placed in me through *being the best that I could be* in my new role. I looked to *recognize the other* and the *contribution that they make*. I looked to recognize *work well done*. I wanted to draw upon our shared commitment to embrace and enjoy professional life:

“From (the student’s) comments it seems that my values are being drawn out: my sense of enjoyment of education; my sense of democratic approaches to education; my sense of wanting to get the best from education for people; my sense of raising expectations; my sense of valuing the student voice.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.30)

The interconnectivity between energy in the personal and professional has been profound for me. To ignore the effect of one upon the other would form an obscured picture of the life that we lead. Simon and I believe that we have the right to enjoy the workplace and the shared professional relationships of which we are a part. Senge

(1990) quotes the president of Herman Miller, Ed Simon, as one person who embraces this concept of *enjoying* the professional:

“Why can’t work be one of those wonderful things in life? Why can’t we cherish and praise it, versus seeing work as a necessity? Why can’t it be a cornerstone in people’s lifelong process of developing ethics, values, and in expressing humanities and the arts? Why can’t people learn through the process that there’s something about the beauties of design, of building something to last, something of value? I believe that this is inherent in work, more so than in many other places” (Senge, 1990, p.144)

My husband arrives home each evening both energised and exhausted by his working day. The kitchen becomes the arena for a discussion of his achievements and frustrations. He needs this time to celebrate what he has chosen to do in his professional life and to recognize his passion for his work. Successes to celebrate and challenges to creatively work with reinforce this view.

I have learned through Simon to embrace the enjoyment of the professional life that I lead. I acknowledge my own value of learning and how educational practice affords me this opportunity. I acknowledge that after eight hours teaching foreign languages in a classroom, I wish to return home to continue learning the languages that I teach: to hold onto the enjoyment that this brings to me.

I therefore demand much from my workplace. I demand that it is a place where I can learn and where I can develop. I demand that it is a place of enjoyment for those sharing space within it. In this way, I sit within the space created by intergenerational student research and seek enjoyment through the shared learning that takes place.

Amongst the student researchers, there is a strong sentiment of wanting to enjoy their work as researchers. Earlier I quoted the words of these researchers as they shared their enjoyment of leading the student learning forum and in receiving the Headteacher’s commendation of their work. On several occasions one of these researchers has stated how the presentation of their research is *“the best bit”* of the enquiry they undertake, for it is a time when they are recognised by the school.

At the end of a school day, my hope is that other practitioners feel as I do: reviewing the day’s events whilst considering *“How do I improve what I am doing?”* (Whitehead,

1995) This improvement does not however stem from a deficit model, but rather from an energised model of ongoing improvement. I enjoy improvement. Whitehead's question reflects the standard that Simon and I hold together of asking other to be the best that (s)he can be in improving educational practice. I hope to inspire others to embrace this same value as others working within the field of student research have inspired me. Jean Ruddock is such a person, whose work in this field has been inspirational. I feel I connect very much with her views on the role of students within schools as active and vibrant members of the community. In her recent obituary published in the Guardian, the following appeared:

"She argued for the necessity of teachers letting students know what they were trying to do and why, rather than simply doing something very differently, however imaginative and potentially liberating it might be... Teachers and students needed to be encouraged to move towards a commitment to the mutuality of joint exploration, described by the teacher Ted Aoki, in a phrase she quoted regularly, as "a communal venturing forth".

Second young people's perspectives on learning and teaching, combined with their holistic experiences of schooling, contain important messages about these matters that could contribute significantly to school improvement at both an organisational level and on a day-to-day basis in the classroom.

Third, some dialogic relationships and a much more open partnership between teachers and students are both possible and necessary if student perspectives are to be honest, accessible and productive of real change.

We will miss Jean's fierce integrity, her sense of fun, her kindness, her modesty, and her resolute belief in the beauty of life and the necessity of young people's contribution to a "new order of experience". (Fielding, 2007, p.1)

Jack Whitehead would refer to Ruddock as leading a "*productive educational life*" (Whitehead, 2005, p.2). I hope to have the same passion in my own work, asking that this work is the *best that it can be*. Simon reflects on how the Westwood St. Thomas in-house teacher-researcher group held this standard between them:

“Our meeting was once a week. Twelve members of staff who wouldn’t normally talk to one another talking about how you can improve your practice in school. What can I do better? You think of the theoretical side from the University, ‘Well actually this is what theory says about this...’ Mix all these together and you come up with lots of ideas and you can then go away and try to improve. What was important, was that every member of staff who went to those meetings accepted they could do their job better and I think that is one of the hardest things for teachers to admit... that we can do it “better”.” (Riding. S., 2008, p.30)

Having the space to question and reflect was fundamental in the group’s success. When both Simon and I left the school and hence this shared space, we retained this standard between us and sought to live this out in our new schools.

In this way, within the student-researcher group, individuals have challenged the students to improve what they are doing. The intergenerational student researchers, alongside the H.E. Researcher and I, have asked the group to improve in an energising way. We share the value that the research must be *the best that it can be* in order to convince the school of the true value of intergenerational student-led research.

I refer now to Shane’s (first generation researcher) comments made during the students’ initial enquiry, as he worked with the students of the second generation:

“At Westwood St. Thomas, we didn’t really own what was going on..we were asked about our opinions by various teachers instead. I felt quite empty about being asked but having no ownership over the research myself. Here (referring to my current school) not only are you (to the students) aware of what is going on, you are also in charge of it. You decide what the focus is, how you research into it and where you are going. This is my understanding of what action research is. It is being in charge, knowing where you are going and how you’re going to do it! It’s also about changing your plans as well when you need to.” (March 2006, during a student researchers’ meeting)

Simon, in his work developing practitioner-led enquiry, asked the emerging practitioner-researchers to reflect upon their enquiry and to improve what they were doing as a result:

“If we move onto the importance of the group, as a school we are starting to see that each of the research projects has filtered into the whole school improvement. Now, looking at the different enquiries, we are starting to ask “How can we make use of these?” we are starting to use the skills that people have more. People have got good research skills; those who have actually thought it through know how to do action research. And that is useful in terms of improving what is going on in classrooms.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.60)

The standards lived out within my personal and professional life form part of my emergent *living educational theory*:

“I believe that a systematic reflection provides insights into the nature of the descriptions and explanations which we would accept as valid accounts of our educational development. I claim that a living educational theory will be produced by such accounts.” (Whitehead, p.67, 1993)

The creation of a shared living educational theory has allowed me to consider the *“knowledge-making capacity”* (DeLong, 2002) of the research, in that it truly reflects what has taken place and invites the other in:

“Throughout this text I am attempting to recognise the other within it: through my educative value of living through others I am attempting to live through the experiences of the other in order to try and improve their educational experiences as well as my own.” (Riding, S., 2006, p.107)

I believe that *through* my work *with* the student researchers, the co-creation of knowledge has occurred between us. The in-house practitioner-researcher group at my husband’s school is creating knowledge through inter-relational enquiry that allows each enquirer to see through different eyes. As these practitioner-researchers (and student researchers) live together in enquiry, my husband and I are living *with* and *through* each other to understand the significance of this work. The intergenerational nature of the enquiry taking place at both schools also becomes clear. At Simon’s school, the Newly Qualified Teacher enquires alongside the classroom practitioner of twenty years. At my school, the first generation enquires alongside the third.

This research has allowed me to recognise the evolving nature of the living educational values that Simon and I hold. I believe that through our contact with others, shared meanings of values evolve that reflect and define our ongoing *productive educational life* (Whitehead, 2005, p.2). In this way, my engagement with students has seen the value of student research grow for me. This value has seen a transformation from teachers working with students as active participants in research, to teachers becoming active participants in student-led research. Simon and I both look to creatively challenge the system within which we work, in order that it may accept a new way of learning about itself through student or practitioner-led research. We both view *learning as an improvement* (Biesta, 2006) that is the journey of any school:

“The journey seemed possible, and better than throwing myself over the cliff. But still, it did not seem a very exciting or useful way to travel, with so much landscape to explore on either side of the narrow track, and so many ways to explore apart from following his single step. And how would I carry with me all the garlands, sarongs, shells, and songs of previous journeys, if I was not allowed to offer them and share them on the way?” (Spiro, 2006, p.1)

This creative path has seen the value of enquiry evolve alongside Simon’s work. This path has seen him move from being a teacher-researcher within the group at Westwood St. Thomas to creating the space for such a group at his new school. Although Simon is working with teachers and I with students, the space we look to create invites teachers and students alike to become a part of the process.

Alongside the emergent living educational values that we share in our marriage, so our enquiries begin to merge at various points. We both look to examine the impact of the relational within our enquiries. We both seek to give voice to the enquiry participants in a dialogic way. We both seek to fulfil our values in the workplace. This mergence can no better be demonstrated than through bringing our enquiries together within this space. The first point at which the values shared between us, is through embracing the pleasure our educational life brings to us. In this way:

“For me the classroom is a safe place to live. It is a place of fun and enjoyment. It is a place of possibilities...Every day I smile. Every day I laugh. Every day I build relationships and enjoy what I do.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.60)

“Through this writing, I hope to show how teachers can learn from students and most importantly embrace the often forgotten word of enjoyment in this process.”

(Riding, K., 2008, p.157)

Simon and I also share the importance of recognising the *voice of the other* within our enquiries, and seek to examine the nature of influence that these significant others have:

“This thesis addresses the vastly important influence of relationships within education and explores how these relationships impact on my practice as an educator. The text incorporates and captures these relationships through enabling these others to speak through their own voice.” (Riding, S., abstract, 2008)

“This thesis is centred on how relationships allow us to realise our dream of learning as we live and create together... I aim to share with you a dialogic approach that recognises we as the participants of the research. These participants read and engage with my writing, and challenge or support the claims to know that I make on our behalf.” (notes from my own journal, May 2006)

We both look to create space in which practitioner-researcher or student-researcher can emerge and subsequently be valued by the school:

“This thesis essentially explores how I was able to create the shared space necessary to enable teacher-research to occur and flourish... This thesis reflects on the potential impact of enabling teachers to engage as teacher-researchers within their own school and accounts for the process I went through in order to make this happen.” (Riding, S., 2008, abstract)

“I have been able to gain much pleasure from working with these individuals in our shared space, asking that student-led research be promoted and accepted by the school.” (notes from my own journal, March 2007)

Our tutor, Jack Whitehead, makes the following comments about the living dynamic that Simon and I share:

“I believe that the way you are developing your 'relational' account, with your relationally dynamic standards of judgement is most significant. I'm sensing you both

developing a relational ontology, through your loving relationship and socio-cultural identification as being husband and wife and mother and father as well as educators and educational researchers. I've this strong feeling, with evidence in your writing that you are clarifying the meanings of your relational ontologies in the course of your lives and forming new living epistemological standards of educational judgement as your produce your theses.” (e-mail communication, February.2007)

The merging of our enquiries at various points shows our increasing influence upon the other in our life of enquiry. The process of writing and reflection that this allows has brought about the recognition of relational ontologies that emerge through our lives. We have moved from two researchers fiercely protective of our individual research, to an inclusional way of enquiring. We have matured in our approach as we have matured in our roles as husband and wife. We have become co-enquirers, going so far as to work with each other in our current schools and opening up our enquiry to critique. We are supportive of the other, hoping that our support will allow each other to improve as a result. The permeable boundaries between our enquiries have evolved so that this space is now held between us. This is evident in the development of living *epistemological* standards of judgement held between us. I believe that this indicates our *shared love for enquiry as pursuit of new knowledge together* (Cho, 2005) into the world alongside the traditional love between man and wife, mother and father. This space is described by Farren (2005) as our “*web of betweenness*”:

“My values have been transformed into living standards of judgement that include a 'web of betweenness' and a 'pedagogy of the unique'. The 'web of betweenness' refers to how we learn in relation to one another. I see it as a way of expressing my understanding of education as 'power with', rather than 'power over', others. It is this 'power with' that I have tried to embrace as I attempt to create a learning environment in which I, and participants (this is how I describe students on the postgraduate programmes), can grow personally and professionally. A 'pedagogy of the unique' respects the unique constellation of values that each practitioner-researcher contributes to a knowledge base of practice.” (Farren, 2005, p.1)

This “*web of betweenness*” grows and evolves as we learn through the other and as we bring with us the learning that we share with significant others. In the space that we have created for practitioner and student-led research, we each seek to enable the individuals in this space, giving them the time and resources needed to develop

their own sense of enquiry. This space embraces *living* action research as a way of learning between its participants, in which boundaries with others are permeable so that they may learn alongside and make meaning of what has been and what is yet to come:

“Living theory and living action research is the process by which I make sense of the world, how I put my (o)ntological experience into practice and then into words. I can do this because of the relational, loving community in which my learning has been nurtured. I have come to know my truths through knowing, being part of, and being understood within this community. That does not mean that I expect my explanations of my learning to be understood by others outside, but that by being part of this community, I am more able to develop explanations that make sense to others.”
(Farren, 2005, p.1)

The traditional power relations between teacher and student have evolved through this enquiry, as students now ask teachers to work alongside them in their research. Similarly Simon removes his mask as Senior Leader within the practitioner-researcher group and becomes a co-enquirer within it.

The *pedagogy of the unique* (Farren, 2005) that Simon and I hold as individuals stems from our *web of betweenness* (Farren, 2005): contact with significant others that has asked us to consider new values and ways of working. Naidoo stated in 2005 that: *I am because we are* and I believe that Simon and I exemplify this way of living. As time has progressed and we have each moved onto new schools, we still carry within us the values that we shared with other practitioner-researchers from Westwood St. Thomas School. The lifeblood of these values remains and forms part of our epistemology, meaning in turn that our uniqueness as individuals comes about as a result of the shared life we have led.

8.2 Permeable and impermeable boundaries between us

Church (2005) states:

“Threads join us together through the knots of our joint activity. It is the relational, engaged in the creation, which creates this structure. The threads tie together in knots and create the strength to hold us. The coordinator or secretariat is the artisan.

Keeps the nets in good order, knows which knots are best for what, notices the breaks and fraying and seeks to rejoin them.” (Church, 2005, p.87)

The joint activity that Church describes is my participation in student-led enquiry. It is the shared dynamic standards shared between this group alongside those between my husband and I. The “knots” between these participants are fluid and evolve over time. New knots are formed as new researchers arrive, eager to take up the challenge. In my role as teacher-advocate for the student researchers, I do not seek to repair all the frays, but instead acknowledge that some students need to move on. The roles of participants also evolves, with those once leading content to listen and those who were once silent finding their own voice.

Church (2005) draws upon the shared purpose of networks in the following way:

“Through this process I enquire with others into the nature of networks, and their potential for supporting us in lightly-held communities which liberate us to be dynamic, diverse and creative individuals working together for a common purpose. I tentatively conclude that networks have the potential to increase my and our capacity for love.” (Church, 2005, abstract)

I agree wholeheartedly with Church’s description of a network as being “*lightly held together*”. This for me embraces the evolving nature of boundaries between individuals that is essential for real collaboration to take place. I feel that all are transient members of a particular network and that as some leave and others join there is a continuous renewal process. The student-researcher group is held together by a core purpose of a shared love for research and what results it can bring. There is still a need for one or more persons to hold all the balloons together to celebrate success and to give the group roots. This has been my role; learning to let the balloons go when their time has come. Roles have however merged, altered and evolved within the network of the student researchers. I have coordinated and I have listened, I have been active and passive within the network, listening to learn and voicing my thoughts.

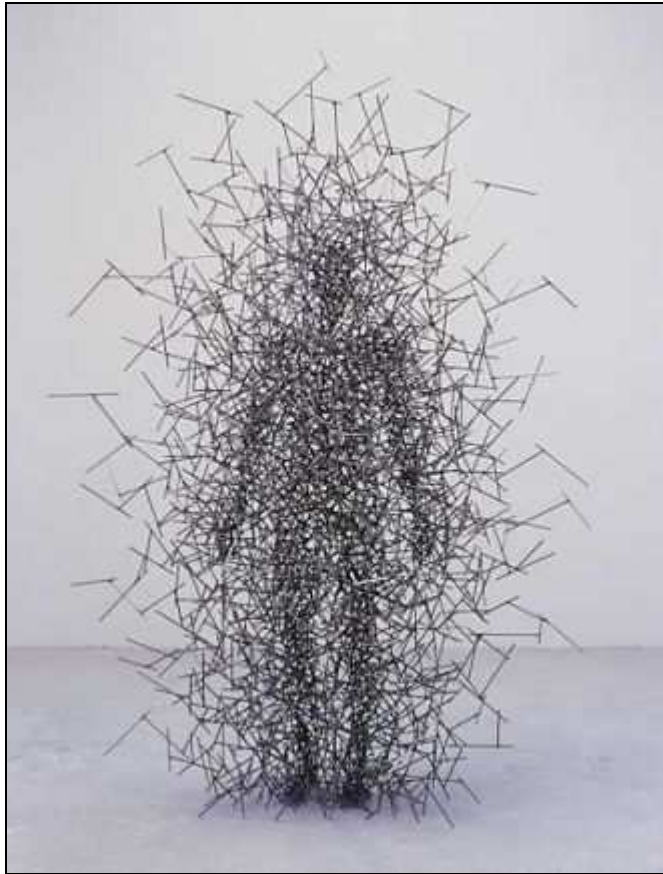


Figure 29 Gormley's Quantum Cloud XV (2000)

Gormley's cloud reflects the evolving nature of the researcher group, in which members leave and others join in an intergenerational capacity. Keeping the group together is the core purpose of shared enquiry; the shared living and human standard of love in the pursuit of knowledge into the world. The shape of the group is dynamic; a living quality responding to its environment whilst seeking to improve it at the same time. Of this period of his work, Gormley states:

*"It was important that it was through the repeated action of touching, forming, placing apart from the body and making conscious, that each person found their own form. The extraordinary thing was the distinctiveness of the forms that were found."
(Gormley, 2000, p.1)*

This quality of distinctiveness I see reflected in the student researchers' group. The group exists for a unique purpose within the school. The individuals who form the group are distinct, giving the group its own distinct qualities. I ask where the group would be if it were not for the input of the generations of researchers coming together in their common purpose, each participant adding to the group in a unique way.

Recognising the nature of the boundaries between individuals has been a learning curve within this enquiry. I have tested the boundaries that I share with others, in order to see how permeable they are. Where relationships of mutual trust have formed between myself and others, these boundaries are exciting places. They represent the coming together of ideas and of learning, and evolve as collaboration takes place.

On the other side, I have also needed to learn where boundaries once permeable have become impermeable and where the journey between me and another is at an end. This has indeed been the case with the work between the H.E. Researcher within this enquiry and me. Where once the boundaries we shared were malleable and exciting places to be, our shared living values began to fragment after six years of shared work. The boundaries have grown dense and impermeable as our values have ceased to be shared and our ongoing enquiries take us in opposing directions. This leaves me with a sense of sadness that this journey is one at an end, yet I still retain the learning and energy from our shared work with the student researchers. Recognising that for some individuals their shared path must end, is important in giving those involved an opportunity to invest their energy elsewhere. Where continuing along the same path would have been most damaging, a full stop has been put in place which has allowed both of us to move on.

8.3 Ethical considerations

The ethical considerations that I make within this enquiry come from an emergent way of working between teacher and student. These considerations have emerged from experiences shared between individuals that have asked them to consider how they relate to and respect each other. The guidance provided by both the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2004) and Kemmis and McTaggart (1981) have supported the research group in developing a set of living ethical principles that it adheres to its life of enquiry. The BERA guidelines allow me to focus upon research undertaken with young people, whilst the Kemmis et al. (1981) guidelines provide generic principles.

As this enquiry is focussed to a great degree on enquiry undertaken with young people, I felt again that the ethical procedures offered by BERA warranted separate consideration. I need to be convinced that I have acted ethically as an adult researcher in a position of responsibility, and with it, power. The consideration of

others' frameworks has supported the living theory approach taken by this enquiry, through the need to develop a participatory method of ethical considerations that takes into account both adult and child. As principle narrator of this enquiry, I needed to respect the others participating within it and their own knowledge.

The British Educational Research Association (BERA) states that:

"The Association considers that all educational research should be conducted with an ethic of respect for:

- *The person*
- *Knowledge*
- *Democratic values*
- *The Quality of Educational Research*
- *Academic freedom" (2004, p. 5)*

I believe that I have undertaken this enquiry and the representation of this enquiry in an inclusive way. This recognises the participants within the research, how their knowledge contributes to this enquiry and the democratic values that determine their right to choose their level and nature of participation. These *participants* are defined as:

"...the active or passive subjects of this enquiry and its observations." (BERA, 2004, p.5)

In this definition I include all those who have shared the boundaries of this enquiry, both those researching alongside the enquiry group and those affected directly or indirectly by the research undertaken. I believe that I have operated within an *ethic of respect* (BERA, 2004) that has asked me as a researcher to act in a responsible, moral and responsive way towards these significant others. Kemmis & McTaggart (1981) address the need for others who have a stake in the improvement to shape and form the work. I believe that I have listened to the comments made by participants in this enquiry. I have included within the account their ideas and wishes. This has included both supportive comments and challenges to my own representation of events. In part has led to significant amendment of the enquiry presented here. An example is Appendix 1, in which I outline the significance of my

relationship with Graham as a co-researcher in this enquiry. Graham, in response to my writing, asked for several amendments. In his words:

"I'm not saying that I didn't say that or didn't think in that way, it's just that the way it's represented just doesn't sound like it's coming from me." (July 2004 in response to Appendix 1)

Part of this ongoing connection with the enquiry participants has been the systematic sharing of the enquiry as it has emerged. Kemmis et al. (1981) refer to this principle as "*keeping the work visible*" in terms of the written enquiry. I believe that this is significant in allowing participants a more immediate way of responding to the enquiry than simply by presenting a *fait accompli* at the end of my writing. The immediacy of the events described is also retained in much richer detail by the participants through this approach.

Part of my responsibility as principle narrator of the text has been to ask the participants for their informed consent prior to the research commencing:

"The Association takes voluntary informed consent to be the condition in which participants understand and agree to their participation without any duress, prior to the research getting underway." (BERA, 2004, p.6)

"Observe protocol: Take care to ensure that the relevant persons, committees, and authorities have been consulted, informed and that the necessary permission and approval has been obtained." (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.150)

In the case of the young people who have undertaken student-led intergenerational research in this enquiry, I needed therefore to seek permission from a parent or guardian. Each student participant involved therefore had a letter sent home to parents asking for their consent for their son's images, audio-visual inclusions and quotations to be referred to explicitly, at the start of the research process. This letter stated clearly that any participant had the right to withdraw their consent at any time and also to review and respond to the way in which their participation was represented in the enquiry.

This however seemed to bypass the principle participants however, and I proceed alongside this to directly ask the students themselves for their informed consent at

the outset of the research process. I stated that I felt it was important for both their parents *and* their own consent to be obtained, and that the individual's right to withdraw their permission would always remain intact. I felt that I needed to respond to their evolving views of the enquiry as the student researchers matured in their research experience. I needed to recognise that the 14 year old researcher may have a different or more developed viewpoint to that of his 11 year former self; that his view or reflection upon an event would alter over time.

As stated above, I explained directly to the enquiry participants that I would systematically share with them the account that I was producing, so that they could respond to and challenge interpretations that I had made. The BERA ethical framework (2004) refers to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (1989), concluding that the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration of any educational research and that children should be granted the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them. I believe here to have gone beyond BERA's guidance that the enquiry only be shared with participants upon its conclusion:

"The Association considers it good practice for researchers to debrief participants at the conclusion of the research and to provide them with copies of any reports or other publications arising from their participation" (BERA, 2004, p.10)

I consistently reinforced the message that the inclusion of their words and image would be anonymized and that their permission could be withdrawn at any given point. Each student however stated clearly that they felt it was their right to have their work acknowledged in the enquiry and indeed expressed anger at being left without a voice in their own enquiry:

"In some contexts it will be the expectation of participants to be identified." (BERA, 2004, p.9)

"Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality (or for naming participants.)" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1981, p.150)

This decision to name student participants in this enquiry has come from the feelings of injustice that the first generation of student researchers felt at not being named in previous research that I had undertaken. I have discussed their feelings of anger

within this enquiry (Chapter 4) and this has made me aware that the student researchers have the right to be named if they so wish. This has been a way of working that has been agreed between the student researcher group and me. As some student researchers have left the group I felt it important to continue to share my writing via the school website so that the ongoing enquiry remained visible to those involved. This was particularly the case when the first generation left the school to go onto University.

The student researchers' inclusions within this enquiry remain unaltered where included, as I wished for these inclusions to an authentic representation of their voices. The BERA guidelines however state that:

"In the case of participants whose age ...may limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand...researchers must fully explore alternative ways in which they can be enabled to make authentic responses." (BERA, 2004, p.7)

An authentic response I view as a response that comes directly from the child without modification. If a school is to truly learn from intergenerational student-led research, a shared language needs to emerge that allows both sides to have their authentic responses understood. If an adult researcher asks the children involved to enter their arena of research, therefore restricting the research terms used to those accepted and recognised within educational research, then the quality and purpose of the children's involvement is compromised. Each generation of researchers has their own language and understanding that they bring with them into the enquiry. This enriches the enquiry space and opens up new ways of thinking and new concepts. This is a position supported by Bernstein:

"Our task is to assume the responsibility to listen carefully, to use our linguistic, emotional and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being said in "alien" traditions. We must do this in a way where we resist the dual temptation of either facilely assimilating what others are saying in our own categories and language without doing justice to what is genuinely different and may be incommensurable or simply dismissing what the "other" is saying as incoherent nonsense." (Bernstein, 1991, pp. 65-66)

This enquiry has sought to embrace this diversity and not to limit it. The key has been to involve all participants, adult and child, in these learning conversations so that all

perspectives are considered. An eleven year-old researcher brings a unique perspective to an enquiry as does a student researcher about to leave for Higher Education. Each is an expert in his own right with regards the knowledge that he holds about learning. The intergenerational approach here has sought to evolve boundaries between generations of students and researchers so that authentic perspectives are considered which are rich and embrace the social spectrum of the school.

As each new generation of researchers has joined the process, part of the initial work undertaken by the established student researchers and me has been to explain how their participation will be represented. This has been a shared discussion in which the established norms of the group are extended to involve this new group of young people. Parental consent was sought at each initial point of a further generation joining the group.

This way of working, in which the enquiry has been shared with participants as it has emerged, has been a vital ethical consideration that has remained constant. When one participant subsequently withdrew her permission for her inclusions to be named, I sought to make these anonymous to respect her wishes. I did not, as the BERA guidelines suggest, attempt to ask her to give her consent again. I felt that this process would have been more harmful than good, and I choose instead to respect her wishes as they stood. I am supported by Kemmis & McTaggart (1981) in choosing to still include this participant's inclusions in this enquiry in retaining my academic freedom. Kemmis & McTaggart (1981) state that researchers should maintain the right to report their work provided that the accounts do not necessarily expose or embarrass those involved. This I feel is indeed the case here.

In its final consideration of ethical guidelines with regards researching with children, the BERA framework states:

“Researchers must recognize concerns relating to the bureaucratic burden of much research, and must seek to minimize the impact of their research on the normal working and workloads of their participants.” (BERA, 2004, p. 8)

Within the student-led enquiry undertaken here, the intergenerational nature of the group has reduced and shared the bureaucratic burden of the research between participants. The physical process and time needed to conduct their enquiries has

been undertaken voluntarily outside of their own commitments and academic studies. Such wide-ranging or comprehensive enquiries would not have been possible without the range of participants being so wide.

On the other hand, student-led enquiry has taken the burden of undertaking enquiry away from teacher-researchers working within the school. I myself do not have the time within my professional day to undertake the enquiries proposed. The school has a new way of learning about itself that employs the resources already available to it. The benefits of this approach come full circle as the students see their ideas and conclusions brought into the classroom as a result of enquiries into good learning practice.

These ethical principles shared between the group and me have evolved to become part of the shared living standards of judgment that the group live by. *Recognising the other and the contribution that they make* have been two foundational values that are reflected within the ethical way of working undertaken by the group. They have emerged through dialogue and they have emerged through practice. They are based upon the best way of working that the group has developed through experience. They are living ethical principles that evolve as new challenges are met (such as the case highlighted above) and as new experiences are undergone. They are reflective of the dialogic quality of relationship shared between the group.

Buber (1957) places importance on this dialogic quality of relationship. This idea is for me central to the ethical consideration of this enquiry, emerging out of a relationship in which each participant has learned to acknowledge the other.

I connect in this way with Rogers (1995) as he talks of a *person-centred approach*. The ethical considerations here have emerged from people recognising each other and the contribution that they can make. Ethics is about people and how they seek to relate and respect to one another. Both Buber and Rogers view the role of an educator as recognising the other in the students with which one works; establishing trust together and communicating with each other in a mutually intelligible dialogue:

“The relation in education is one of pure dialogue.....Trust, trust in the world, because this human being exists – that is the most inward achievement of the relation in education. Because this human being exists, meaninglessness, however hard pressed you are by it, cannot be the real truth. Because this human being exists, in

the darkness the light lies hidden, in fear salvation, and in the callousness of one's fellow-men the great Love." (Buber, 1961, pp.124-125)

Throughout this enquiry, I have highlighted the importance of trust. I believe that trust needs to be established between individuals before they can begin to learn and truly communicate together. I also consider here how students can initiate this dialogue about trust, as I myself have been shown in my role as teacher-advocate for student-led research. I also recognise that the role of educator is not pre-defined as synonymous with teacher, for the students have shown me how they too are educators in their own right. A recognition of the other which is founded in trust must ethically consider both teacher and student.

Hodes (1972) talks of Buber living out his own view of an educator. I strongly connect here with the view of not wanting students to follow the educator docilely, but to take their own individual paths. Buber talks of posing questions that forces pupils to find their own answers. Within this enquiry, I have been honest with the student researchers from the outset that the research path ahead was not pre-defined and that they would be creating this enquiry themselves. This for me was a founding ethical principle of the research, in my honesty of the unknown path to be created ahead. However, as Buber talks of pupils' own paths possibly challenging the teacher, I have demonstrated within this enquiry how the student researchers have creatively worked *with* the school to widen and sustain the impact of their research. They have met challenges from teachers and have looked at these challenges as a way of strengthening the integrity of their work.

As the students have faced these challenges together in an intergenerational way, they have lived humanely together in society (Hodes, 1972, pp.136-7). Living educational space has been created between teacher-student and student-student in which confidence has been won and both have been accepted as a person (Hodes, 1972, pp.136-7). Buber (1957) talks of the importance of winning the confidence of pupils; of trust between student and teacher so that students feel ready to ask. I talk within this enquiry of the importance of earning trust before either student or teacher can begin to share the space of enquiry together. I also talk of the importance of dialogue shared and owned by all members of the enquiry group, so that communication can be made and understood on an equal footing between student and adult researchers.

Buber, in relation to an educator, states:

“You do need a man who is wholly alive and able to communicate himself directly to his fellow beings. His aliveness streams out to them and affects them most strongly and purely when he has no thought of affecting them.” (Buber, 1957, p.13)

The building of a shared language and the living out of shared standards of judgment between members of the research group has led to an *aliveness* shared between us. This energy is shared through both verbal and non-verbal gestures: conversations, glances and smiles. Yet the power of the communication between us is affirmed through these gestures, and allows me to feel wholly alive in the pleasure of the shared work undertaken. It is this energy that allows each of the participants in the group to continue. I have talked in this enquiry of the ebbs and flows of energy in life cycles, and of the need for people to either take or contribute to this energy at given points. Simon, on his transition to Senior Leadership, needed to take energy from our shared living standards, whilst I needed to do the same two years previously.

The ethical considerations of this research framework have been built through a dialogue about what is important. As stated above, recognising the other and the contribution that s/he makes are assumptions that have underpinned the research work undertaken. In wishing to act in a humane way towards each other, it has been important to retain these living standards of judgment as part of the ethical assumptions of the enquiry group. Therefore, when relating to the Buber-Rogers (1957) dialogue, I connect strongly with Buber’s statement of the importance of an *I-Thou* relationship:

“The one-sided inclusion of teaching can become an I-Thou relationship when it is grounded in a common situation, mutuality and trust.” (Rogers, 1995, p.191)

I refer to the living out of shared values between me as teacher-advocate for student-led research and students as student researchers. I remain a teacher and an educator, yet the students have also taught me the value of recognising them as human beings. I learn from them as they learn from me, but more importantly, we learn from each other. It is this element of learning that I feel is not represented in Buber’s statement of an *I-Thou* relationship. I have grown in my understanding as a person, in terms of the value of student-led intergenerational research to the school community. This has been a journey of understanding undertaken by

intergenerational researchers working within the school: both adult and child.

Together we have grown as a group through sharing these standards:

“I am no longer simply talking about psychotherapy, but about a point of view, a philosophy, an approach to life, a way of being, which fits any situation in which growth-of a person, a group or a community-is part of the goal.” (Rogers, 1995, p.17)

The learning space that the group has created has allowed both teacher and student researcher to grow. I have come to understand that my classroom work allows students to progress and enjoy their learning, whilst the students have seen the value of their work to the school. Natural curiosity about the other side of teaching and learning has come from both sides. I have not unlocked the students’ curiosity in my role as teacher advocate; moreover they have unlocked my own.

“(I urge) that teaching focus on the whole person, that a learning environment of acceptance, genuineness and empathic understanding be created.. that efforts be made to build self-esteem in the student and to unlock natural curiosity.” (Rogers, 1995, p.10)

Through the student researchers’ work, they have connected to a greater extent with the educational community of which they have been a part. This was noted by Harry (2) as he stated:

“Before I used to think that teachers would just turn up...I didn’t realise so much planning was involved.” (2004, in conversation)

Similarly, when referring to the role of psychologists in schools, Rogers urged them:

“.. not to content themselves with treating students damaged by an obsolete and irrelevant educational system, but to change the system, to participate in designing an educational experience that would liberate the students’ curiosity and enhance the joy of learning.” (Rogers, 1995, p.8)

At every stage of the research, the ethical considerations shared between the group have emerged as shared living standards of judgment between us. I cannot separate

the ethical dimension of this enquiry from these living standards for they share the same qualities: recognising the other and the contribution that s/he can make, asking the other to be the best that s/he can be. I believe that this intertwining goes beyond adhering to an ethical framework, in that the enquiry lives alongside these principles that are grounded in dialogue and experiences shared together. These principles evolve as new experiences and challenges are encountered; not to lessen their importance but to take into account situations that the group had not previously encountered. The anger of the first generation student researchers at not being named within my own previous research and the decision of one researcher to have her contributions made anonymous are cases in point. The living theory approach to this enquiry has allowed these ethical principles to emerge in a responsive and responsible way to the enquiry participants. It allows the living nature of shared enquiry to be represented in a similar way.

8.4 The role of literature within this enquiry

The internal reader who has responded to this enquiry made the following comment:

“I think your work would benefit from deeper and wider engagement with literature and being explicit about the role of literature in your research. Which bodies of research did you (and might you further) engage with, why?” (Barrett, 2007, p.8)

This leads me to consider what has been the role of literature within this enquiry and how engagement with literature has allowed this enquiry to progress.

The main concern I have with the literature considered here is that such engagement is never a *fait accompli*. There is always another key text, another key researcher whose work I have not yet encountered. Webspaces have opened up the possibilities to access others' work, for example through online journals. These provide a wealth of resources with which to engage, yet not all research is available through this medium.

Literature within this enquiry has lived out several roles, bringing challenge and critique to the enquiry alongside support through the ideas of others. It has opened up this enquiry to other possibilities and other ways of thinking. Crucially it has also given me motivation to take the enquiry in new directions and allowed me to make sense from non-sense.

Engaging with other's ideas is an infinite process that continues over a lifetime. I will always encounter new ways of thinking that challenge me to continue in a different way. The nature of this enquiry is that the account itself must have an endpoint. I believe to have engaged with the literature that has fulfilled the roles exemplified above. The difficulty lies in where to stop with regards to creating the written text whilst my knowledge evolves through further engagement with new ideas and new authors. Even when I stop officially writing, the enquiry with the student researchers has continued, my understanding of the living and loving standards that I share with others evolve and my engagement with literature takes me in new directions. One of the learning curves of my role as researcher is therefore to know at what point I draw a line under a written text and allow myself to be satisfied. Within a living theory paradigm this is even more difficult, as my own life as a researcher continues and my own understanding evolves alongside it.

Within this space of engagement with other's ideas, I have found it difficult to encounter the authentic voices of other intergenerational student researchers. Schon (1995) calls for the emergence of a new epistemology for educational knowledge with the expression and clarification of new living standards of judgment that can contribute to enhancing educational space. I believe that one of the ways in which to achieve this is to provide webspace for student researchers to explicate their work and the development of their shared living values in their work as researchers. As on my school's website, where space is devoted to this development, I am calling for student researchers to share their research stories in a wider context so that others may learn from them. I believe that the research community should not ask student researchers to fit into existing forms of publishable research criteria, but instead recognise the shared language of enquiry between their school and themselves. This language moves from *them and us* to *we* as a research community learning together, bringing H.E. Researchers, practitioner-researchers, student researchers and the school together. Farrell and Rosenkranz (2007) talk similarly of building "learning in community" through inquiry and collaboration:

"Teachers at all levels are increasingly called upon to engage in professional development that enhances their knowledge. Professional development is a requirement of educational practice, yet teachers are challenged to find opportunities to engage in learning that increases their impact on their students' learning, while augmenting continuous growth. Structured professional development that immerses

teachers in higher-order teaching strategies, while allowing for “learning in community” through inquiry, collaboration, and critical conversation about practice, must be considered (Wenger, 1998).” (Farrell & Rosenkranz, 2007, p.1)

Farrell et al. do not acknowledge here the impact of learning from students that can provide a wealth of professional development opportunities for teachers. Within their paper, I see no evidence of learning in community with students. This I believe fails to recognise the students’ own influence over teachers in supporting them in understanding their professional learning.

“As we work to cultivate our living theory through our collaborative self-study, we will continue to document and validate our educational influence on the learning of our students (the teachers we are working with), while engaging them as researchers of their own learning.” (Farrell & Rosenkranz, 2007, p.4)

Farrell et al. acknowledge here the role of students as being engaged as researchers in their own right, yet still the conversations resulting from both teacher and student led research seem to be separated rather than emerging from research undertaken together. I emphasize the importance, within this inquiry, of a shared dialogue owned by all involved in “learning in community”.

Having considered in this Chapter the significance of my shared living values as motivation to enquire alongside how the ethical assumptions of the enquiry have been underpinned by literature, I now turn to look outwards in the final Chapter. I look to the significance of this enquiry in offering an original contribution to knowledge and in allowing me to understand my living educational theory.

Chapter 9 My emergent living theory and contribution to knowledge

I look now to consider the wider impact of this enquiry by responding to the key questions that I asked at the beginning of this narrative account. In doing so I look to clarify my own living educational theory that has emerged through this enquiry and to understand the contribution to knowledge that this thesis makes.

1. *What is the significance of this enquiry in offering shared living standards of judgment as motivation to enquire?*
2. *Does intergenerational student-led enquiry provide a platform for enhanced, sustainable research in schools?*
3. *How does the methodological approach that I employ support my claims to knowledge?*

1. What is the significance of this enquiry in offering shared living standards of judgment as motivation to enquire?

These shared living standards are no better demonstrated than by focussing on an example shared by my husband and me. This demonstrates how we both look to share the quality of relationship in the personal within the professional, albeit through different interpretations. My husband defines this standard in the following way:

“The re-creation of the quality of relationship that I have had with others in my personal life within the professional domain (living myself through others).”
(Riding, S., 2006, p.1)

As I too seek to re-create the quality of the personal in the professional, I look to both live myself *with* and *through* others. I live *with* my husband in the personal and *with* the intergenerational student researchers in the professional. I seek to draw upon the motivation given to me by this living standard of judgment. This standard is one example that energises me and asks that I recognise the contribution that others can make. Sharing this standard with my husband gives me the courage to seek to live this out. This is a strength that I may not have on my own.

I also live *through* others in the sense of sharing these energizing standards as a motivational way of being in the professional. I look for the students, the teachers and the school with whom I work to each recognise the contribution that the other can make. Through this a dialogue has emerged between them that supports learning and is understood and owned by all involved.

I talk of the generalizability of this account in an inclusional sense. Through this account, I have shown the love and pleasure I gain from working with significant others in relationships of trust and shared motivation. The boundaries between us have fluid and dynamic. Emerging from a difficult transition year in a new post, in which narratives of ruin record my journey of learning, I have learned to embrace a *clean* space with others. This is a space in which the complexity and misunderstanding of before is cleared, as the pleasure of sharing living educational standards of judgement is embraced. In the complicated nature of a shared life, I offer this as a refreshing approach to the professional life that I and others choose to lead. I believe that I can and do choose this life within the society that I belong to. Reflecting upon how and why these choices are made is something worthy of enquiry.

I offer this thesis as an original contribution to knowledge in the context of how the relationships shared between us evolve into agreed ways of being. These standards, by which we choose to live, are grounded in the shared values and experiences between individuals. These standards are energising; they give me the motivation to go forth into the professional and seek to live these out. Simon and I are both writing the same thesis in the context of how the quality of relationship that we hold gives us energy to live out these standards in the professional. Our enquiries merge at many points, sharing living boundaries that evolve over time. Our enquiries also challenge each other's viewpoint in a creative way, as the standard exemplified above demonstrates.

I referred earlier to Gorman's Quantum Cloud XV (2003) as symbolizing the evolving nature of the networks in which we live and the boundaries that we share. In the centre of this living entity, I would place two beings in order to represent the relationship shared between my husband and I as the foundation from which our professional lives emerge. Whilst others join us in the creation and extension of these living shared boundaries, we remain constant as the grounding point for each other in the standards that we embrace. We each bring to and take from this shared life.

As Simon looks to bring the quality of relationship gained from our shared life into his work with teacher-researchers, I look to embrace this within student-led research. We are both creatively challenging the system within which we work, asking it to accept a way of working that communicates in a different way. We are both asking the social formation of the school to grow and evolve in new understanding as networks build between individuals in dynamic relationships of trust. Simon looks for his school to embrace practitioner-researchers whilst I look for my school to embrace intergenerational student researchers. This undertaking has led to the creation of a shared language that is owned and understood by all involved, whether teacher-student, teacher-teacher or student-student.

The relationship and standards that Simon and I hold are generative in their nature. We have moved from a position of son/daughter, to husband/wife and mother/father. We subsequently carry emergent living standards that reflect these experiences and we carry these into our professional relationship. We learn *from* our life with others and we give this learning *to* others through our professional lives and through procreation in our roles as parents. We are both learning that the dialectic can positively respond to the system within which we work.

Vasilyuk talks of the relationship between energy and motivation, meaning and values:

“Equally problematic are the conceptual links between energy and motivation, energy and meaning, energy and value, although it is obvious that in fact there are certain links: we know how ‘energetically’ a person can act when positively motivated, we know that the meaningfulness of a project lends additional strength to the people engaged in it, but we have very little idea of how to link up into one whole the physiological theory of activation, the psychology of motivation, and the ideas of energy which have been elaborated mainly in the field of physics.”

(Vasilyuk, 1991, pp. 63-64 in Whitehead, 2007, p.2)

Vasilyuk acknowledges how a person can act energetically when positively motivated, when there is meaning to his/her work and when he/she is living out his/her values. Through shared trust and faith, a dialogue emerges that creates excitement about learning. There is a dynamic, living quality to this learning that

evolves into relationally dynamic standards of judgement. Each person revels in the connections of understanding made:

“In answering the question “How do you understand what happens?” I answer that the way I understand what happens is intimately related to the logics I use. In developing my understandings I draw insights from propositional and dialectical theories. My understandings are continuing to evolve as I focus on developing values-based and relationally dynamic standards of judgment for my theory of educational knowledge.” (Whitehead, 2007, p.2)

Therefore as I joined my current school, I carried with me the values from the Westwood St. Thomas practitioner-researcher group²³ of recognising and valuing the other. I sought to build similar relationships of trust with others and to create living educational space in which shared learning was the motivation.

Within this first year in post, many mistakes were made. I class as a mistake something which did not reach a positive outcome, something which if done again would be done differently. Accepting these “mistakes” as learning opportunities, and recognising what I can gain from embracing my enemy as a potential friend, has allowed me to embrace the pleasure found in a flow of knowledge between participants. My husband Simon acknowledges the role of mistakes in a similar vein:

“Through my ability to use the action-research cycle (this) allows me to actively reflect on my practice... I am able to improve what I am doing and not be afraid to make mistakes, providing I can learn something from them.” (Riding, S., 2008, p.137)

Johnson asks: “*Are you happy?*” (2005). This is in regard to teachers living out their professional lives. I believe that the simplicity of embracing the *happiness* in our shared lives leads to fulfilment. It is the simplicity of clearing the space in which we find ourselves to acknowledge our pleasure in what we do. It is not allowing mistakes to provoke ongoing feelings of guilt and wretchedness, but as learning opportunities. In this way I recognise that living enquiry in a loving way with significant others affords me pleasure and a *pleasurable* way of being.

²³ I have talked of Westwood St. Thomas Upper School as my former school in which the development of an in-house practitioner-researcher group was very significant in shaping the values that I hold today.

“I feel energized as people share their stories of their learning as they seek to live more fully the values they recognize as carrying hope for the future of humanity and their own. Given the daily stories of killings, violence, abuse, corruption and dishonesty in the media, from around our world, I feel hope in the stories of individuals who are seeking to live lives that are characterized by hope, love, care, justice, compassion, pleasure, passion, enquiry, learning and knowledge-creation.”
(Whitehead, 2007, p.2)

This way of being gives me courage, drawing upon the strength of my shared life. I no longer need to hide behind the impersonal in my account or in my professional life. I take ownership of the learning acknowledged here and the pleasure that I gain from it. My professional life brings pleasure to the personal and vice versa. Contact with others allows this to be possible, as pleasure is for me a shared emotion. I have added to Kincheloe’s (2003) comment below (shown in brackets) to show the understanding that I have gained:

“As enquirers grow passionate about what they know, they develop a deeper relationship (with others). Such a relationship produces (a shared knowledge) that initiates a synergistic cycle—a cycle which grants them more insight into the issue being investigated.” (Kincheloe, 2003, p.65)

2. Does intergenerational student-led enquiry provide a platform for enhanced, sustainable research in schools?

The student researchers are knowledge creators. They have moved through and beyond the role of students as active researchers as identified by Kellett (2005a) in her paper *“Children as active researchers: a new research paradigm for the 21st century?”* They do not perceive generic prescriptive types of student research as reflecting their way of working; they use instead a responsive way of working in which they engage with their school. They have shown *methodological inventiveness* (Dadds & Hart, 2001) and a developing sense of ethics and shared values in their life of enquiry. They are demonstrating their capacity to generate knowledge with their school in the webspace that they have created:

http://www.bws.wilts.sch.uk/extracurric/Student%20Research/student_research.htm

Intergenerational student-led research is a *possible* way of working within any school. Making this *probable* has been the motivation of the student researchers with whom I have learned. The old leading the young and vice versa, each member with a unique viewpoint, adds to the richness of the experience for all. I believe, as Ruddock & Flutter (1994) demonstrate, that committed individuals are capable of bringing about a change in the social formation of the school. The acceptance of this change becomes *probable* through the emergence of shared language between the students, Headteacher, senior leaders and teachers within the school. The support of these key figures changes the focus of the student-led research from small-scale to whole-school and opens the possibility of dialogue between school stakeholders about this.

Dialogue about student-led research is opened up through hard work on the students' behalf. Although as teacher advocate I can provide resources and space for the group to meet, in the reality of the school day I cannot offer more. The students have shown my colleagues and me the value of enjoying the process from the *outside-in* (Rayner, 2005) as we stand on the sidelines outside the research process, but most importantly from the *inside-out* (Rayner, 2005) for those who are ready to begin this dialogue with students.

Rayner (2007) talks of *path-finding and path-following*. I however see the student researchers' work as path-creating, in which established paths did not best support the school in learning about itself. Through this, I mean the processes in place within the school for the student body to contribute to knowledge did not allow for open dialogue between teacher, student and school. The students needed to work creatively to open up new avenues and ways of working. In order to do this, they invited the school stakeholders into this creation process in order to work creatively with rather than against the prevailing wind.

The intergenerational way in which the student-research has developed has been a natural and logical process, in which the research group has been able to draw upon a wide body of experiences and viewpoints. Each generation has joined the group to give it new motivation and direction, whilst allowing the work of the researchers to become sustainable in the social formation of the school. In this way, the workload between researchers has been manageable with different researchers able to commit at different points in the enquiry. Established researchers have been excited about communicating their work to the new generations coming in, and listening themselves to new ideas and perspectives.

Intergenerational practice is an area of research for the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), which claims the following benefits of this approach:

“Interest in intergeneration practice and what it can achieve has grown amongst practitioners and policymakers in the UK and Europe since the 1990s as the outcomes can contribute towards achieving the goals of many government policies... For example, there is some literature which suggests that intergenerational practice may be effective in achieving outcomes such as reducing ageism and stereotyping between generations and achieving some Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes for children and young people.” (NFER, 2007, p.1)

Intergenerational research extends not only between the students themselves but also to the practitioner researchers and H.E. Researchers working alongside them. This has allowed the enquiry to take into account different perspectives from the wider academic field alongside those “*at the chalkface*”. Each participant brings something different to the enquiry and each subsequently takes something different away. In an e-mail I received from Shane, one of the first-generation researchers, in October 2006, he stated:

“Hi from London! It’s strange being the new boy again. Say hello to the research group from me-it’s strange not to be a part of them anymore... I’m only in my first term here, but already I want to get involved with the Students’ Union as I can see that there is little communication between us (the ones who pay loads of money to be here!) and them. So here I go again-third time lucky!” (electronic mail, October 2007)

Whilst the space created by the research group remains intact, the group participants and emerging values continue to evolve. This has been felt most strongly in the methodology employed by the researchers as they learn from past experience. They are now able to select a methodology and an ethical framework that they see as most appropriate to the research they are undertaking, whilst seeking new ways to research in order to respond to their enquiry. Their ethical framework includes the right of participants to choose whether to be named or remain anonymous. It also includes keeping their report visible to participants as it emerges. Social validation of their claims is therefore made through systematic sharing of the enquiry with their participants and in the public format of the school’s website.

The dynamic energy of the group I believe is only possible through the intergenerational nature of the participants. This is its strength and its lifeblood and is the only true way in which student-led research can have a sustained impact upon the social formation of the school. It brings life-affirming energy to their life of enquiry

I believe that this enquiry offers generic principles about the development of intergenerational student-led research. These are not intended as a model to be carried over identically into new practice situations, but they are intended to act as elements to consider in the development of sustained dialogue about learning between teacher, student and the school:

- For student-led research to occur, there needs to be a teacher-advocate in place who is willing to offer the students the time and space to enquire
- Beginning student-led enquiry within the classroom practice of a sympathetic teacher will act as a springboard for wider reaching enquiries to take place
- The support of the Headteacher and the school's Leadership team is vital if the students' work is to be embedded within the school
- The language of communication used by the students, teachers and the school needs to be understood and owned by the entire group i.e. grounded in lived-out experience
- Working with an academic researcher from outside of the school allows the research process to have an objective viewpoint and critique. It also allows the localised research to connect to the current debate on students-as-researchers
- Evolving one generation of researchers into an intergenerational approach is a logical sequence for their work to be sustained over time
- Systematically sharing the enquiry's findings with the school stakeholders allows these to be further validated i.e. keeping their report visible
- The ethical framework employed by the group needs to be identified at the outset of the enquiries undertaken. This should however respond to the wish of certain participants to withdraw their consent or want their work to be recognised and named as the enquiries continue
- Communicating the research findings with student peers is an invaluable validation process and facilitates oft-forgotten dialogue between student-student of different cohorts

- The roles undertaken by the student participants needs to be re-established as new generations join the group alongside clarification of the ethical framework that the group employ

3. How does the methodological approach that I employ support my claims to knowledge?

Dadds and Hart (2002) talk of methodological choice as:

“...a fundamentally important aspect of the quality of the research and, by implication, the quality of the outcomes.” (Dadds & Hart, 2002, p.166)

They also perceive that:

“...traditional empirical research (is) just one of the viable and valid methodologies available to practitioners, alongside many others which have already been created and others which will, inevitably, be created.” (Dadds & Hart, 2002, p.167)

A living theory approach to my methodology has allowed me to create a personal signature in response to this enquiry. As I have gained more experience as a researcher, I have wanted to take more ownership over the methodological approach employed. I have seen the living contradiction that I am in not being able to live out my shared standards of judgment in the professional, and have sought to overcome this. As I seek to understand my own living theory, it has been important that the methodology I employ can respond to this task. A living theory approach has allowed me to write from the perspective of “I” whilst acknowledging and respecting the participants’ role within this enquiry. I have chosen to take the responsibility for sharing this enquiry with you and therefore responsibility for the quality and rigour of the research itself. Responsive methodological choices have allowed me to reflect the living nature of the enquiry and the need to respond in different ways at different times, so that the richness of data collected can be fully embraced.

Through this account, the energy that my shared living standards of judgment bring into my professional life has been explored, leading me to recognise the other in the contribution that students can make. The accounts, observations and audio-visual support a living, breathing account of a shared dialogue emerging between student, teacher and the school. The purpose of incorporating audio-visual data is to sustain

the connection to a particular event and allow the reader to connect to that event directly. Audio-visual allows the subtleties of the expression and values and energy to be lived out:

“(I feel) a connection with the energy and values within and between the individuals shown on these clips. Probably because I know the majority of individuals within the clips I feel a strong resonance with the values and understandings being expressed in each others’ living space and through the educational boundaries of each clip.”
(Whitehead, 2007, p.3)

I believe that it has been important to reflect upon the meaning of each clip to the enquiry, so that my own and other’s reflections of it are carried alongside.

Responding to each account, observation and audio-visual inclusion has been carried out in a responsive way. I have sought to embrace the richness of the data offered, rather than limit it to a pre-set list of criteria. Although I have responded systematically to each data source, the reflection has not been carried out in an identical way. This has been part of creating my unique living theory methodology that best fits the needs of the enquiry. I have drawn upon my experience as a researcher and upon wider literature in order to build a methodology that does justice to this enquiry. I am creating my own jigsaw, using pieces that I have previously employed such as living action research, whilst adding new approaches such as accounts. I do not pretend to adopt any approach wholesale, but rather to tailor it to this enquiry’s needs. Such an approach does not weaken the quality or reliability of this account; rather I believe that it strengthens the appropriateness and fitness for purpose of the methodology employed.

I now consider the rigour employed in this living theory methodological approach, in order to see how a reflexive methodology can still be rigorous in its undertaking. As stated earlier I wish the account to be rigorous both in terms of what has occurred and the claims to knowledge that it makes. I therefore intend to refer to Winter’s (1989) six key criteria for rigour as a test of this, embracing this theory to validate my own claims.

In the first of Winter’s criteria for rigour, *reflexive*, I have shown that the norms of practitioner-researchers working with student researchers are being challenged and expectations altered as a result of practice. In the second, *dialectic critique*, I

describe to you how I am living with creative tension in the contradiction that I recognise myself to be. Kok (1991) responds to this criterion in the following way:

“In applying this principle, the researcher should be able to identify the contradictions not just within herself but also in the conversations with her collaborators and others such as her students and document them. She should also be able to trace in parallel her own educational development alongside the development of the conversations from uncertainty, contradiction to resolution and transformation” (Kok, 1991, p.58)

Through the narratives that I have shared with you in this account, I have identified the living contradiction that I was in my first year in post. I have projected a path back towards these events alongside considering the voices and reflections made at the time. This parallel allows me to see my own life from the *outside, looking-in* (Rayner, 2005) alongside the *inside, looking-out* (Rayner, 2005). Including the voice of the other within these narratives has supported this perspective and has allowed me to transform my own understanding of how I have acted or reacted within a given context.

In the third criterion supplied by Winter (1989), *risk*, I describe to you the willingness that I show both in the work with the student researchers and in the position of risk that I have placed myself at various points in this enquiry. I have experienced failure and I have learned to transform this into a position where I want to learn from this and risk again. Never so is this more evident than the persistence to value the student voice within the school, particularly after the experience of such negative feedback in my first year in post.

Kok (1991) in response to *plural structure* proposed by Winter (1989) states:

“Although I agree with Winter’s idea of a plural structure and his arguments for it, I am concerned that the presentation should not be a disjoint collage of events but rather it should have the characteristic of a montage – a combination of accounts each with its own distinctive feature but without being confusing because of the disparity in form and style of writing. Even if the report is in the nature of a “plural text” it should still fulfil the requirements of conciseness, clarity, and coherence.” (Kok, 1991, p.6)

This account embraces a multi-voiced text, with reflections and comments included from the key participants. These I have sought to include as a way of presenting a panoramic view of the same event, in that their voice combines with my own to reflect the same event. I offer through this a dialogic perspective of reflection that allows my reader to decide on the truth value of the account I offer through the perspectives given.

I have already discussed the importance of Winter's (1989) fifth criterion, *multiple resource*, within this section, as I refer to the inclusion of multimedia within the text. Finally, in the sixth criterion he offers *theory practice transformation*. I am creating here my own *living theory* (Whitehead, 1995) in which I embrace the shared standards that I seek to live out with others. These come from and into the relationship with my husband and allow me to understand the motivation and energy that I have for what I do. None so more is this evident than in working with intergenerational student researchers as a way to value the other.

Winter's criteria have allowed me to contextualise the rigour within this account and have asked me to consider if the claims I make to rigour can be upheld. Alongside these criteria, the role of the other is most significant in asking that an account is rigorous. Although, as principal narrator, I can state that this account fulfils the criteria exemplified above, I need my co-participants and co-researchers to uphold these claims I make. Rigour is not a lone enterprise, but rather one that is shared in the account of an enquiry.

From this enquiry I carry away the importance of a responsive methodological approach. The approach I employ is fit for purpose and appropriate in this context. It has been developed whilst being mindful of validity, triangulation and reliability. Through producing an I-account, I believe that I take responsibility for producing an enquiry that can satisfy rigour. In this enquiry I have employed my own methodological inventiveness to connect approach with outcomes.



Figure 30 *Image January 2007 Simon, Sophia and I on our third day as a family. Nearly three years on from the image of our wedding. I hope that this image shows the hope we continue to share for the future of humanity.*

My words should not be the ones that end this enquiry but the students' own. I have been able to gain much pleasure from working with these individuals in our shared space, asking that intergenerational student-led research be promoted and accepted by the school. They are the lifeblood of this enquiry and have shown beyond all expectation how they can work with a school to change its social formation.

These are the words of the second-generation researchers summarizing their contribution to original knowledge:

We are writing this in order to persuade other schools, researchers and students that different year groups of students working together to produce research is worthwhile. We believe that any school can undertake student-led research, but that each school will do this differently. However, we believe that there are numerous things that we have learnt as a result of our work that it would be useful to share.



Figure 31 The second generation researchers

This is the second time that I refer to this image and for me it is a powerful image that captured a moment of pleasure in shared enquiry.

Throughout our time as researchers we have worked together with a wide range of people, and we have learned the importance of doing this. This has been important in making our research successful, as it means that we learn from and with these other groups. We believe that without one of the groups the whole research process would be compromised.

As an example of the strength that others have brought to our project, the two sixth formers who became both our mentors and useful allies in supporting our research. We all agree that they were very helpful in the "terrifying" presentations to the staff, giving us the confidence to be able to do this. It is true that as we have continued to research, we have become more experienced and the presentations of our findings now seem less daunting, but in those early days their experience and knowledge helped us tremendously.

The role of (the H.E. Researcher) who has worked with us has also been crucial in supporting our work. She helped us to discover what we wanted to do, why we were doing it and how we thought we should approach it. At first, the whole project seemed very strange and confusing, but after working with her we were able to find a direction to move in and how to move towards it.

(Our Headteacher) has been a really important part of what we have been able to achieve. He has given us a sense of pride in our work, and has shown us the he

supports what we are doing. We were all really proud to receive his commendations in front of the whole school recently. Without him and (the Deputy Headteacher) we wouldn't have come this far.

Our research has not been uneventful, and we have met many problems along the way-some students dropping out or losing interest, problems between some individuals who liked to "hog the limelight" during meetings, and finding times to meet when we could all be there. This last point proved especially difficult, as we have done this research largely in our own time. Lunchtimes huddled with sandwiches whilst trying to ignore the noise from the football games outside. Mrs. Riding talks of "space" that we share, and we also think of having peace in a room when we need to talk without shouting!

Asking other years groups to get involved has been crucial. Shane and Alex have now left the school, and without the Year 11 students (third generation) who we asked to become involved, we would have very little "manpower" left. In the future we hope to take more of a backseat and to mentor other students as Shane and Alex (first generation) did with us-this helps the research to be fresh and brings in new ideas.

The other main problem that we have encountered is working with teachers and our school in a way that they and we find acceptable. We do not name teachers in our research and we do not fire criticism at some teachers directly. We need to encourage them to work with us, and not turn them against us. However, only good feedback is of little use, and by sharing examples of classroom learning that is going well alongside "general" examples of what pupils don't find as useful, we hope to make our research more useful overall. If someone says to us "well done" we haven't actually learnt anything. We are open about what we are doing, and share our research as we go along. We believe that if any teacher strongly objects to a statement, then we need to discuss it with them instead of simply deleting it. This has been really difficult, and takes a lot of courage, yet we think we have gained more respect from teachers as a result. Before we put any material onto the KEEP Toolkit (Carnegie Foundation) or school website, we check with the people involved first. This has been really important with other pupils as well as with teachers, as they have a chance to say no.

We know that we can't expect everyone to support what we are doing, and this will no doubt be the same in any school. We had to show some teachers that this was worthwhile. We will always remember the question "What's all this for?" after our first presentation. At first we were really disappointed at her reaction, but then it gave us more energy to answer it by asking her to work with us.

We have always considered the impact that our research has had upon our school: Have we really made a difference? At the end of our first project, the results were at first not very dramatic in our eyes. It was clear to us that some teachers had listened and had started to introduce some of our ideas in to their lessons. We felt real pride when seeing them using our ideas! However, we later discovered that most of the teachers in our school supported us: not necessarily introducing our ideas into their lessons, but giving us positive feedback about how this had made them think again as teachers.

Encouraged by this support, we want to share our work with a wider audience. We have now set up our own section on the extra-curricular part of our school website, expressing our ideas and thoughts in a way that is easily accessible to anyone (school, teachers or students) interested in student-based research as a way forward. This website has been made possible through the (H.E. Researcher) with whom we have worked. The website address is the following:

http://www.bws.wilts.sch.uk/extracurric/Student%20Research/student_research.htm

We strongly recommend including a wide range of year groups within any student-led research group. This means that there is a wider basis of opinion and that the research methodology can be distributed more evenly, as well as giving us access to a wider range of teachers with whom we can work.

Most importantly, this work asks that our teachers listen. Although we find presenting our findings nerve racking, knowing that we have a captive audience is a real boost. For our latest project we used a "big fish" picture to show what we meant by the "big picture" of learning. This got us a laugh, and we think that even if this is all a teacher takes away with them from our presentation, it is still something that we have achieved.

We have noticed quite a big change in some of our lessons as a result of working with teachers in this way. This was an excellent result that shows even though we are students we can still make a difference to the classroom. For example, some teachers now use a black background on the interactive whiteboard, making it easier for us to see. We now see more teachers moving around the classroom to help us with work instead of sitting at the front. More teachers now write up objectives for us to help us know what we should be learning. We have also noticed that more teachers are telling us what is coming up and why-the big picture again-so that we are not being led in the dark. We hope that this evidence shows that we have made a difference-to our teachers and importantly to other pupils. These ideas all came from them when we asked them what really helped them to learn.

We believe that this type of research can take place in any type of school. It is very easy to do and such a simple and effective idea that we can see a bright future for it even in the most difficult of circumstances. The fact that the Ofsted inspectors interviewed us and came to watch our assemblies in December (2006) shows us that this work is important to the school. In the future we want to extend the current website describing our research to include guidance for other students wanting to do similar work.

All you need for effective student-led research are keen pupils and a teacher (or teachers!) willing to speak up for you and give you the time and energy that you need to do research. It always helps when they supply biscuits. This research takes commitment and energy, yet every step is new and all the time everyone will be learning new things. We believe that through our work, things are changing. Other pupils are thinking about what they do in the classroom that really helps them to learn. This is being shared with teachers, and teachers are taking these ideas on board in their lessons. We hope that by doing this, we are helping our school as well.

(paper written in response to this enquiry by Harry Jenkins, Chris McNulty and Paddy Flood (2), December 2006)

Appendix 1: Learning with others: Graham Lloyd



Figure 32 *Graham in 2005 watching the student researchers first draft presentation*

Graham is here giving his own time to support the work of the researchers. He is demonstrating his capacity to value and recognise the other.

In this enquiry I have talked of the shared space with others, including practitioner-researchers. Here I seek to share the relationship I hold with Graham Lloyd as Deputy Headteacher at my current school. He has been instrumental in providing the space and developing listeners for student-led research through his unending support.

Graham is a practitioner-researcher working at Bishop Wordsworth's School and a student of Jack Whitehead at the University of Bath. Prior to joining the school, I read Graham's enquiry entitled:

"How do I/we help students in Key Stage 4 improve their learning if they are in danger of underperforming?" (Lloyd, 2003)

At that time, I was excited at the prospect of sharing our enquiries and of working together in co-reflection given our shared localized context. It was significant to me that Graham was the first colleague to introduce himself to me upon my arrival in September, and the first to offer support. He offered in this gesture the possibility of a shared space between us as researchers.

Despite our shared passion for enquiry however, it was only in passing each other in the staffroom that we would briefly comment on our research. Without the two key elements of time and space, we were unable to share our enquiries in any depth. As I said to Jack Whitehead in October 2004:

“We are like ships passing in the night...Our depth of co-enquiry extends only to “Which Module are you on now?” or “Have you decided on the focus for you next enquiry yet?”.In short there is no forum for the sharing of our enquiries, and we therefore seem to be unwilling to organize one for ourselves. It is almost as if we are waiting for a facilitator before we can begin to share our embodied knowledge as practitioner-researchers.”(e-mail, 2004)

Following Jack’s suggestion that this was an opportunity not to be wasted, I suggested to Graham that we “*share our latest writing*”. Prompted by Jack’s words Graham and I duly promised to share our reflections on each other’s enquiries. What excited me about Graham’s writing was the localized context of his enquiry. I *wanted* to explore this with him. The first assignment I very much connected with; in that it was bringing in the self to the enquiry and that it contained a narrative explanation of events that I enjoyed. I could sense Graham’s motivation behind the text, and feel the energy that this enquiry had given to him.

Graham’s description of events working with several underachieving students was a pleasure for me to read as he described:

“At the end of the session, one of the five boys I had been supporting came up and shook my hand and thanked me for everything I had done for him in the past year. The words that he used which struck me the most were, “thanks for putting up with me”. I had spoken to his mother regularly over the twelve months and she indicated that he felt I was supportive towards him, but this conversation for me was to demonstrate my educational influence in this situation.” (Lloyd, 2003, p.10)

In Graham’s writings, I recognise a style that demanded the agreement of the reader of the text, similar in approach to the style of my husband. In Graham’s sentences, there is no room for negotiation about his claims to knowledge. He does not seek to persuade the reader, but rather expects their commitment to his words. Examples of this are included in Graham’s master’s assignment:

"The evolving nature of pastoral care in education: a critical literature review of four articles." (Lloyd, 2004):

"At Bishop Wordsworth's School I have introduced change and had to manage different staff relationships in order to achieve the desired outcome to the process." (Lloyd, 2004, p.9)

"At Bishop Wordsworth's School I have implemented strategic change in the Middle School pastoral system through the greater involvement of parents in mentoring their son's progress and appropriate use of external agencies to help support the boys." (Lloyd, 2004, p.13)

With regards this style of writing, I quote Gubert et al. (2000) in their reflections of how the *"pen is mightier than the sword"*:

"His pen's power, is not just the ability to generate life but the power to create a posterity to which he lays claim...In this respect the pen is truly mightier than its phallic counterpart the sword...as the author of an enduring text the writer engages the attention of the future in exactly the same way that of a king "owns" the homage to the past. No sword-wielding general could rule so long or possess so vast a kingdom." (Gubert et al., 2000, pp.6-7)

Graham later shows a different side to his writing, one in which he begins to open up to the reader in sharing problematic events. He is quick to acknowledge his failings in terms of methodology that he uses and to connect with his inner self within his research. He does not recount a smooth story of self. In this way he writes:

"I had decided to record this meeting via a web cam connected to my laptop in order to have easy access to the images to reflect my unseen reactions to our conversation...I found I was unable to record the actual meeting due to feedback from the mains supply in my office." (Lloyd, 2003, p.5)

This type of writing I compare to Coleridge's *"The other side of the Mirror"*, in which Gubert et al. (2000) akin to:

"looking long enough, looking hard enough, she would see an enraged prisoner: herself":

*"I sat before my glass one day,
And conjured up a vision bare,
Unlike the aspects glad and gay,
That erst were found reflected there-*

*The vision of a woman, wild
With more than womanly despair"*

(Coleridge, 1898 in Gubert et al, 2000, p.15)

It would appear there is a duality in the way Graham communicates to his reader, combining certainty in his statements of how past events have been achieved, whilst also looking within himself to show the embodiment of his own living energy.

Graham, in response to these comments, announced his frustration at having to conform to rigid criteria that did not provide the opportunity for more engagement of the self within his writing. He explained, that whilst completing some of the taught modules for his Master's degree at the University of Bath, he was given a writing frame to which he needed to adhere. In Chapter two of *"Educational Leadership and Management"* (Wallace & Poulson, 2003, pp.59-62) he was instructed to follow a given structure of a dissertation or thesis: a Chapter-by-Chapter outline using prescribed formula.

Graham responds to my comments:

*"When I looked through your writing, I firstly looked at the part about me"
"I recognise that I have these two sides to me..You talked about a masculine and feminine side in your response to my assignments. I feel that this masculinity comes as a result of being restricted by criteria and needing to fit into a mode of writing..It is not having the space to write as you may wish that leaves me almost afraid to bring the "self" into my work. When completing the portfolio (Master's) units with Jack (Whitehead), I have been "allowed" almost to write as I should wish to write..and this is where my "feminine" style, as you refer to it, comes into its own" (November 2004, in the Bishop Wordsworth's staff room)*

After this discussion Graham shared his latest writing with me. Upon reading this, I felt the tension that Graham had described in bringing his "self" to his enquiry. The

use of “I” was infrequent, and I came out of the enquiry uncertain about the motivation behind this enquiry:

“The school leadership group has identified, through the school’s strategic Development Plan 2003-2004, the need for an expansion and formalization of activities that could be structured into a “House” system”. (Lloyd, 2004, p.2)

The school leadership group shows a shared motivation for this work, yet no-one appears to be taking responsibility for its development. I wanted Graham to state how much he was part of this motivation, and what had motivated him into becoming the change agent in this enquiry. Graham is a committed professional to the pastoral system at Bishop Wordsworth’s School, and what I learnt first about him was the extent of his compassion in his previous role as Head of Middle School. I find myself wanting Graham to write in such a way that he is singing from the rooftops about this passion that he holds, showing the reader how he is translating this into action research.

In response to this, Graham commented:

“This may now be a little flat, no pun intended. You have to attend rehearsals and sing in the chorus before you can have a solo role! (Thoughts like this happen when you have a 45-minute car journey.) Hopefully next year I can link up with Jack to do my dissertation, which may enable me to ‘sing up’.”

(Lloyd, November 2004 in www.jackwhitehead/roller)

Graham shows the lone nature of his life of enquiry. Whilst I had the support around me of the teacher-researcher group at Westwood St Thomas I was not alone in my development. There were educational conversations on the development of research every day in the classroom and in the staffroom, even if the practitioner-researchers were considered “*slightly different*” by some of our colleagues. I recognise myself within Graham, that had I not been in this environment, I would not hold the shared values that I have today with the practitioner- and student researchers. I look forward wholeheartedly towards Graham’s dissertation in which he can at last explore what he feels passionate about.

“Research needs criticism to improve. But of course, if criticism is based on ignorance, on a partial reading of the evidence, or on a “straw man” constructed from a distorted version of our own argument, then it is rightly resented.”

(Mortimore, 1999, p.13)

Graham and I share a passion for student involvement in their learning. With regards this commitment, Graham and I appeared to be lone crusaders in 2004. Colleagues working at the school mainly shared the opinion that “asking the boys” would lead to a stream of negative comments related to individual teachers, and that there would be a loss of the sense of control amongst teaching staff. The student body were on the whole, a passive yet positive body, an aspect that was viewed as a strength of the school. I was now asking to move this student body to active engagement and to give them space in which to support the development of their school through opening up their conscious awareness of the processes around them.

In conversation with Graham, he offered the following advice on trying to break down the barriers of fear that accompanied creating hearers for the student voice:

“Start small, within your own practice. That way no-one can be affected by your actions expect yourself...Gradually people pick up on things that you are doing, hear about good work which isn’t devastating to what the school is doing. I ask for my students to feedback, I am able to come outside of my role as Head of Middle School and become a shadow of myself, still Graham, but Graham without the baggage that I carry with my role...I can become a classroom teacher trying to improve practice”

(November 2004, in conversation in his office)

Graham has developed his passion about the voice of the other through his work in Africa. He has become an empathic practitioner who responds to others’ needs. He has lived outside of the system that Bishop Wordsworth’s School represents, and has life experiences that allow him to see the system in which he is working more clearly as well as the barriers that this system represents.. In this I connect with Graham, as I believe that my work abroad and in socially disadvantaged schools has allowed me to develop my own sense of empathic awareness. I maintain however that this sharpness of vision dulls over time, as we assimilate into the school in which we find ourselves. The knowledge gained from the past begins to lose the sense of nearness that it once held. Now outside of the shared space in which we gained this perspective, we no longer enjoy the contact with those individuals and those

experiences that allowed us to revel in the new knowledge and understanding we gained as a result.

Graham commented upon how his time spent in Africa had altered his outlook: *“When I think of the problems here, they are nothing, absolutely nothing. When you are in contact with boys..and girls for whom AIDS is a daily threat, you ask them “Why didn’t you use a condom?”, and they reply that on top of finding food and work and money on a daily basis, that AIDS just isn’t that big a deal. So, when I now consider the problems which are brought to me here..they don’t even come into comparison.” (November 2004, in conversation)*

In May 2005, Graham and I were able to work more collaboratively in our enquiries. In return for Graham observing the trial presentation by the student-researcher group, I interviewed a sample of his Year 10 class, in order to establish the effects of using *“assessment for learning”* (DfES, 2004) in Design Technology to increase awareness and performance. The Qualifications and Curriculum Alliance (QCA) identify involving students in their education as one of the founding principles behind this initiative:

“Research has shown that pupils will achieve more if they are fully engaged in their own learning process. This means that if pupils know what they need to learn and why, and then actively assess their understanding, gaps in their own knowledge and areas they need to work on, they will achieve more than if they sit passively in a classroom working through exercises with no real comprehension either of the learning intention of the exercise or of why it might be important.” (QCA, 2006)

After the trial presentation, Graham and I sat and talked. Our focus was directed towards the role of the student voice in the school. The students had left and we still remained there. It was one of those rare times in school life that we allowed ourselves the time to openly discuss what mattered to us without a sideways glance towards the clock. We ventured into a shared space.

I met four students from Graham’s class on a Wednesday lunchtime. The first realization for me in this situation was that I was seeing the students here in the same role as at Westwood St. Thomas as they moved towards active members of their community.

These four articulate young men were very encouraging in their response to Graham's work. They provided comments such as:

"I think it was an effective way (of working). It showed us areas in which we could improve. I could see, oh he's got a better mark than me, so what can I do to get my standards up to his."

"I think it's better when you mark it (coursework) with your peers, because you get more feedback and what each individual person thinks the mark should be instead of just one individual. It gives you more of an idea of how well you have done."

"I know, I, for one have nicked other peoples' ideas, that they have got good marks for.. ..If you borrow the ideas then you can get full marks as well."

"I've been really involved in my own work. That might seem slightly odd, but it's quite useful to see it as other people see it, so that you can know your own work."

The day after the interview with the boys, I saw Graham in the staff room. I gave him the positive responses from the boys about the work that he was carrying out with them, and his face lit up. I return to Jack Whitehead's notion of *work well done*, as I felt that for a Senior Manager such as Graham, there was little opportunity in which he was told that he was doing something well. Even at that level, I feel that we still seek reassurance, and I felt very pleased to have been able to supply this acknowledgement of his good work.

In his first few weeks as Assistant Headteacher in September 2005, I felt that Graham was clearly in that hinterland recognised by my husband as the transition to Senior Level Management. On the outside, he looked a very contented individual, taking the time to talk to colleagues and to patrol the school cite. There was a smile on his face, although the fact that he was considering what to do in his new role was etched behind his smile. There was also a glint in his eyes that spoke of changes to come and apple carts to be upset: all in the name of improvement of course!

In Graham, I knew that I had an ally in the process of student-led research and also in the process of developing hearers for the student voice. I felt renewed hope for bringing about a culture for learning with the student researchers through intergenerational research.

Appendix 2: The student researchers' methodology

In Chapters 6 and 7 I have referred to the methodology employed and developed by the student researchers. Within this Appendix I would like to exemplify these methodological tools and state how the decision was reached to utilise them in the course of the students' enquiry. This appendix is intended to serve as a summary of the data tools established by the researchers during their research over the span of the four years at my current school. Not all these tools were developed for the same enquiry; instead they have each served at different points in the course of the researchers' work and been re-employed or adapted as the students have needed to use these tools.

I believe that these methodological tools have therefore been used in a responsive way by the student researchers, as they have developed and utilised different methodology at various points in their enquiry.

Key concerns to the students when developing these tools were the following points:

- To check the claims they were making, the researchers sought to establish three different ways of collecting data about the same issue for each enquiry
- These three ways needed to cover a wide range of students and stakeholders and also needed to include both quantitative and qualitative data
- When the students had established their claims about an enquiry, they sought to validate these with the stakeholders they had involved. This involved peer group assemblies and student learning forums alongside sending the teachers and Leadership team a copy of their findings prior to their presentation
- All materials remained the property of the school and thus confidential within the school itself

I now describe to you the methodological tools employed in the following order:

1. Triangulation
2. Learning Diaries
3. The video camera as a living witness
4. Weblogs
5. Web-based snapshots (Carnegie Foundation)
6. E-based opinion polls

7. Interviews
8. Peer group assemblies
9. Student learning forums

Triangulation

The students see triangulation as gaining three different viewpoints about the same point related to learning within the school. For example, when working with the school stakeholders, they feel that it is important to gain the opinions of students, teachers and the Leadership team. This is in order to substantiate the claims to learning that they make through gaining feedback from a variety of sources.

As an example, they are therefore hearing about the use of lesson objectives in the following three ways: as a learning feature through the eyes of the students as recipients, through the classroom teacher as “giver” and through the Leadership team as observer of this process (through classroom observations made through the bi-annual Departmental reviews). Alongside these three “eyes” they have also employed the video camera within lessons from the students’ eye view in order to substantiate the viewpoints made.

Learning diaries

As part of their research on effective learning in the classroom, the students wanted to develop a methodology that would serve to gauge the students’ view of the learning within a lesson compared with the teacher’s own view. In order to do this, they developed a “learning diary” given to a sample of students (5) within 3 different teaching groups within a subject area. The sample students then needed to complete the diary each lesson over a two-week period, supplying details of what they thought the learning objective of the lesson was, alongside how they felt they had progressed in their own learning that particular lesson.

The teacher’s learning diary asked him or her to record the same details. At the end of the two week period, the diaries were exchanged between teachers and students. This evidence was then used to support the student researchers subsequently conducting interviews with the teachers involved in this methodological approach.

The diaries proved very successful in allowing both teachers and students to “see” the lesson from a different perspective. At first, some students in the sample were anxious that they should record what the teacher wanted to read. Giving the diaries anonymity however allowed the students more ownership over the process and the student researchers pressed the fact that there was no right or wrong answer.

In order to analyse the teachers’ and students’ responses in the diaries, the students looked at keywords /synonyms between the two sets of examples. Through this approach, they were able to conclude to what extent the two viewpoints matched or disagreed with each other. They recorded these key details over a two-week period.

The comments from the students involved in the sample were recorded by one of the student researchers after he had discussed the use of the learning diaries with one of the sample groups:

“I never really saw the links before between the lessons..I would go in almost “blind” and not sure of how one related to the next.”

“It really made me think about what I had learned as a result of a lesson..at first I thought that in some lessons it would be zero..but I realised that this was often me not wanting to think about my learning, but about breaktime instead.”

“I can’t go into a lesson now without thinking of that learning diary in front of me...once you start to do that...you can’t stop thinking. I come out really frustrated if I didn’t know if I had learnt anything.”

(comments recorded in October 2005 by a second-generation researcher working with three Year 8 students)

The video camera as a living witness

After trying to record two sample lessons using a video recorder on a tripod in the corner of the room, the student researchers were increasingly frustrated that the students “acted up” in front of the camera and that the camera felt like an intrusion, outside of the lesson itself.

They looked to develop a technique of working with the camera in which it would be part of the lesson itself; an insider that looked through the “students’ eyes in the room:

“With regard to (b) how to manage an equitable process for allocating students who elected to operate the camcorders as part of the classroom observations., the second aspect, advisors indicated that enlisting students to undertake video-recording of classroom experience, using a camcorder, in order to obtain a students’ eye view was likely to prove very popular.” (Bragg, 2007, p.9)

They then asked a sample student to hold the video camera throughout a lesson to record it. This recorded the classroom talk as a whole group alongside the collaborative work in class. It also showed the student’s written work and the visual and kinaesthetic learning activities within the lesson.

Of the lessons filmed in this way, the student researchers perceived that only some of these provided a good evidence base to share with the teachers involved. Others they felt could not be used given the amount of “playing up to the camera” displayed by some students within the room.

In order to analyse the video evidence, the students first viewed the videos together as a group and noted down what learning techniques were being applied i.e. note-taking, group discussion, whole-class feedback etc. They also noted what they perceived as key learning statements from both teachers and students.

This evidence they then compared to the learning techniques described by the teachers and students through the reference to the learning diaries and interview notes.

One crucial decision was to use one of the lessons filmed as evidence, despite some negative comments being clearly recorded during the lesson. The researchers felt that to omit this evidence would falsify the essence of the lesson and would mean that they were pre-selecting the parts to use themselves instead of offering the whole recording as the evidence for others to view.

The confidentiality issues linked to this sort of evidence were discussed alongside this methodological choice. The students decided that the ownership of the video

belonged to the teacher whose lesson had been recorded. They also recognised that this material could not be shown in a public domain, due to the identification of students and teacher within the classroom. However, where they wished to use extracts of the video to use on the teacher-training days to present their findings, they asked permission from both the teacher and students involved.

Web-logs

One of the major difficulties with discussing and advancing the students' research was trying to get everyone involved together physically at the same time and in the same space. This was particularly poignant given the movement of the first generation onto Higher Education and the distance between the school and the HE researcher, who could only visit at specific points during the project.

Jack Whitehead (University of Bath) therefore developed a weblog that could be accessed between the group members only, so that there was an online forum through which to communicate more regularly. This link is no longer live, although was accessed via: www.jackwhitehead/roller

Although this weblog was initially successful, the level of blogs recorded began to diminish after only several weeks of the weblog being available. The students commented that by the time they had logged on and recorded their comments, they had already seen each other and the research had moved forward again. The weblog was therefore continuously out of date.

The student researchers also commented that face-to-face communication was really valued by them much more. They felt they achieved much more through this medium. The group therefore began to meet on alternating days so that members with other commitments could attend as often as possible. Although it has never been possible to have everyone present all the time through this method, the group has been increasingly effective at talking to absent members and informing them of what has occurred and the next steps to be taken.

My role in this was to create the space for them to meet on a weekly basis and to remind each member of the meetings. This was crucial in that the days kept revolving and therefore each member needed prompting so as not to forget.

Web-based snapshots

Through the guidance of the HE researcher working with the group, they looked to develop a web-based method that would allow them to record what they had achieved and to make this available for a wider audience.

They therefore approached the Headteacher with a view to having a link to their work on the school's website page. The Headteacher readily agreed and the students now have a page as part of the school's website, in which the link to their research presentations, their comments, updates on the research projects can be found.

The website address of this page is:

http://www.bws.wilts.sch.uk/extracurric/Student%20Research/student_research.htm

The researchers developed, as part of this webspace recording of their work, KEEP Toolkits provided by the Carnegie Foundation to summarise completed research projects. This was done through the support of the H.E. Researcher. These they hope to share with other student researchers interested in developing research led by students within other schools, as well as providing the group with a method of recording "*what has been*" particularly in the light of older generations moving on out of the school and newer generations joining. The web-based snapshots bring together video, image and word to document the journey that the student researchers have undertaken.

E-based opinion polls

The group realised that the sampling of students they had undertaken would not be sufficient in gauging opinion from the student body, and that the results would therefore not fairly represent the viewpoints of their peers. They subsequently sought to use the school's intranet service as a forum in which students could record their opinions on the research issues they were involved in.

Currently, the students are developing their next poll for the intranet cite. They ask tutor groups from different year groups to go into the ICT suites and use a tutorial time to complete the poll, so that students have a specific time dedicated to recording their views. They felt that asking tutor groups to do this was vital in not leaving

participation to chance. The cooperation of both the tutors and the ICT staff has been vital in developing this methodology and the students have felt extremely well supported in this. Using tutorial time gave the poll an official feeling, as if this was something to be taken seriously. The student researchers provided each tutor involved with a statement to read out before attempting to complete the poll. This was so as to remind the students that their views on this were being taken seriously and therefore to treat the poll with due consideration.

One of the major difficulties of developing this methodology was however in the design of the statements that they were asking as then providing suitable evidence on which to part-base their findings. They sought to develop statements that could be responded to with "I agree" "I disagree" and "I neither agree nor disagree" or a scaled response from 1 "*I strongly disagree*" to 5 "*I strongly agree*". They found that this was the simplest response type to analyse afterwards. It would also give them quantitative data that they could then expand upon with their other methodology.

At first they asked student to include written comments in an additional field in relation to some statements. They however found that this generated too much material for them to include in their evidence base, and they subsequently decided to discontinue these additional comments within the poll. They wished to use the student interviews, video evidence and the learning diaries as expanded evidence of what had come out of the poll itself.

In order to analyse the results emerging from the opinion polls, the students totalled the number of responses from each statement in the relevant categories. This provided them with an overview of their peers' opinions on areas such as the following during their enquiry linked to lesson objectives in 2005-2006. Some examples of responses collected are shown below:

- The teacher makes me aware of what I am going to learn in each lesson (78% agree 15% neither agree nor disagree 7% disagree)
- In the majority of my lessons, I write down what I am expected to learn (30% agree 20% neither agree nor disagree 50% disagree)
- The teacher indicates how this lesson links to the previous work in the majority of lessons (65% agree 10% neither agree nor disagree 25% disagree)

- At the beginning of a unit of work, I am made aware of what I am going to learn in this unit (59% agree 24% neither agree nor disagree 17% disagree)

The main advantage of recording this type of data, according to the students, was the chance to have some numerical data that supported their subsequent work with the interviews, lesson videos and the learning diaries.

It provided them with a starting point for the interviews with both teachers and students and also gave them the opportunity to canvas a wide range of their peers in a relatively simple way.

The researchers however agreed that it was impossible to get these statements exactly “right” or to stop any one of their peers from entering false answers. In certain enquiries, they therefore needed to omit statements when their peers complained about their ambiguity.

Interviews

Following collection of their data sources such as the online opinion polls, the learning diaries and the video evidence, the student researchers sought to explore their findings with interviews of a sample of students from across the school years and teaching groups.

For each school-wide enquiry they selected six students from Key Stage 3, a further six from Key Stage 4 and a further six from Key Stage 5. They did this via asking the relevant Year heads for a list of names selected at random that would encompass a range of tutor groups and interests.

The first interviews that the researchers conducted were on the whole not successful in their own admission. This was because the students, although having prepared questions in advance to ask each of the three groups, were not prepared to record the answers in a systematic way or to develop answers that needed fuller explanations.

They felt frustrated at the lack of evidence with which they emerged from the interviews and asked the sample of students to return again the following week when

they could conduct the interviews in what they hoped would be a more effective manner.

This time I suggested that the researchers needed to look much more engaged and interested when addressing their interviewees. The researchers also assigned roles to scribes, observers and interviewers, so that they could record and analyse their evidence more effectively afterwards. They did not however look to create transcripts of the interviews, as they felt that this was too time-consuming a process, given the limited time and resources they had to conduct their enquiry.

The second round of interviews proved therefore much more successful in the researchers' eyes. The students hoped that by having two scribes present, a good range of opinions expressed would be recorded as evidence. I recorded the following comments by the student researchers following one of the second-round interviews in 2006:

“That went much better..I didn’t just stick to the list of questions we had...I asked for a bit more when I felt that it needed it.”

“I’m glad there were two of us to write down the responses...just me by myself wouldn’t have worked..I will have missed bits.”

“They seems much more relaxed than the first time round...they knew what to expect and didn’t seem as nervous...their answers were therefore a lot better

Peer group assemblies

Once the student researchers had established their findings, they then returned to their participants to check that these claims were an accurate picture of what had been recorded. They sought to do this through the medium of year group assemblies, in which they presented their findings and then invited students from that year group to attend a learning forum to further discuss the results.

When presenting their findings, the intergenerational nature of the group proved key in giving the boys the confidence to present to otherwise unknown year groups. During one of the assemblies, the students invited comments and questions from the floor once they had finished. One of the key developments here were the comments

related to “*opening of the students’ eyes*” to what was occurring in lessons, yet things that they may not have considered previously. One such comment stated (December 2006):

“I didn’t realise there was so much planning involved..I thought they (the teachers) just turned up!”

The researchers were also subjected to a difficult situation during the Year 11 assembly, after which some students in the audience took this as an opportunity to comment on teachers’ performance:

“I don’t get any of that from Mr. X..I don’t think he’s done that all year-do we get to tell teachers that they should all be doing this now?” (December 2006)

The researchers responded thus:

“One of our golden rules is that we don’t name individuals..it isn’t a fair way of doing things...not everyone does what we have shown you here..this is about the best ways of doing things in lessons that students like you have told us about..we hope through this that more people will do more of the same..take on these ideas.”

This statement I believe shows how well the researchers had developed an ethical sense of working, and recognised clearly where the boundaries lay in what was acceptable and what was not. Re-affirming this expectation under such difficult circumstances was courageous in my opinion.

Following the assembly, the researchers then invited members of the year group to attend a student learning forum the following week to discuss their results. The students interested had their names recorded and were subsequently given a copy of the main findings of the research presented to them. The researchers then asked the interested students to discuss these findings with their peers in their tutor groups in order to field a greater range of opinion.

Student learning forums

As stated in the point above, the student researchers sought to verify their findings before presenting them to the staff of the school, by inviting members of the student

body following the whole-year assemblies. Numbers varied from six in one year group to two in another, yet the researchers felt that any opportunity to evaluate what they were saying was useful. Asking those interested to first canvas opinion from their own tutor groups was crucial in gauging a wider range of opinion than simply those volunteers. The flaw with this method however was that only certain students within the tutor groups were asked their opinions and that therefore the full profile of any one year group could not truly be represented.

The learning forums proved a worthwhile event, with again the researchers dividing roles between them into scribes, speakers and observers. They invited comment in turn on each of their findings presented in the assemblies and then sought to add or modify this comment if there was strong enough evidence to do so.

The venue for these forums was important. When I moved these from a noisy classroom at lunchtime near the school yard to the school's conference room and added refreshments, the events proved much more successful in terms of numbers attending and the quality of the discussion.

Appendix 3: The value of Students-as-researchers to the school

In November 2005 I discussed with Stringer²⁴ the need for SaR work (Student as Researcher) to hold economic value for the school. Providing this evidence I felt would secure the long-term future of SaR work alongside the intergenerational approach offered in this enquiry. In an electronic mail he highlighted:

²⁴ Ernie Stringer is a researcher with whom I established contact through the H.E. Researcher involved in this enquiry. She provided a point of contact between us, as we shared an interest in promoting the student voice through SaR work. We both realised that this type of work needed to show value for money in economic terms, in order that it could secure a long-term future in schools.

As a contributor to SAGE, he is described in the following way:

“After an early career as primary teacher and school principal, Ernie spent many years as lecturer in teacher education at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia. From the mid-eighties he worked collaboratively with Aboriginal staff and members of the community Curtin’s Centre for Aboriginal Studies to develop a wide variety of innovative and highly successful education and community development programs and consultative services. Their activities with government departments, community-based agencies, business corporations and local governments assisted many people to work more effectively in Aboriginal contexts. In recent years, as visiting professor at universities in New Mexico and Texas, he taught action research to graduate students and engaged in projects with African American, Hispanic and other community and neighborhood groups. As a UNICEF consultant from 2002-2005 he engaged in a major project that assisted development of schools in East Timor. He is author of the texts “Action Research (Sage 1999),” “Action Research in Education (Pearson 2004),” “Action Research in Health” (with Bill Genat, Pearson 2004), and “Action Research in Human Services” (with Rosalie Dwyer, Pearson 2005). He is a member of the editorial board of the Action Research Journal and is President of the Action Learning, Action Research and Process Management Association” (retrieved from www.paulchapmanpublishing.co.uk/authorDetails.nav on 12.01.08

“Keep up your good work. It will be sometime difficult as it goes against the grain of convention, but is highly productive if you can carry it through. Generally, I find much action research in the classroom is highly simplistic, with people's expectations merely serving to ingrain the conventional wisdom of a mechanistic “teaching strategy inputs leading to higher test score outputs.” Education is much more complex than that, and if all we had to do was apply an appropriate teaching strategy to achieve higher test scores it would have been done decades ago. Apart from the reality that we cannot expect “increased test scores” ad infinitum, education is a far more human activity than the factory-production process now being promoted under the banner of testing regimes. The research in business, industry and the community indicates that the corporate world and families want a more sophisticated approach to education that provides well balanced individuals who have extended capacities of creativity, initiative, independence and other similar qualities that a test-driven education is not able to provide” (May 2005)

Stringer (2004, p.23) refers to students as:

“...the primary stakeholders in any educational institution” (Stringer, 2004, p.23)

It is the primary reason why any educational institution exists, and it is the provision for these individuals within the institution that is the school's primary role. In promoting student research as adding value to any educational institution, I ask how this is taking place. As well as students and teachers asking *“What is in it for me?”* the institution itself has the right to ask the same question. Student research must respond to the UK current political climate of schools providing self-evaluated evidence as well.

“While it is clear from raw examination results if students are achieving above or below the expected level, it is not obvious which schools have helped students to make more progress from one stage of their education to the next. The progress schools help individuals make relative to their different starting points is usually referred to as value added. Value added measures are intended to allow comparisons between schools with different student intakes” (DfES, 2005)

Within this self-evaluation framework, much importance is placed on how the school *adds value* to students in terms of their academic performance alongside their

creative and emotional intelligence. The Department for Children, Schools & Families (DCSF 2005) talks of “*entrepreneurship*” skills being developed amongst young people, equipping each individual with life skills for the future.

In order to show how student-led research provides value-added, I wanted to consider the impact on students’ academic performance. This is in terms of the students’ increased awareness of learning alongside the enhanced classroom experience as a result of sharing best practice. In developing an empathic and equalitarian way of working between school, teacher and student, I believe that dialogue opens up that supports learning in the classroom. In 2001, Hannam tested this following hypothesis:

“In schools that are already taking “participation and responsible action” seriously for significant numbers of students of the full range of academic ability, an improvement in attainment would be found across the full range of GCSE Grades though not necessarily mainly at the Higher Grades. If the hypothesis proved accurate this might well be in part at least, a consequence of higher self-esteem and a greater sense of ownership and empowerment” (Hannam, 2001, p.3)

In his conclusions, based on an extended study across twelve schools, he states:

“Involvement in student participative activities brings real benefits to relationships between students and teachers which can in turn enhance attainment.”
(Hannam, 2001, p.8).

Later studies also provide similar evidence of increased attainment through participation by students in their school life. In 2006 Holmes concluded that:

“Student participation ensures that schools meet students’ needs at all levels, and in doing so it raises their ability and their desire to learn, directly contributing to a raise in attainment.” (Holmes, 2006, p.44)

Trafford, referring back to Hannam’s (2001) work, argues that:

“The evidence is now overwhelming. When schools behave in a democratic way with their students, they become better schools. They are happier, more productive, more effective. Exam results are better. There are reduced levels of alienation and

truancy. The whole process is happier for everyone – and the results improve too. It's a win-win arrangement.

To embark on anything new, most of us need to be able to answer the question, 'What's in it for me?' What's in school democracy for teachers, for students, for schools – for everyone – it's a better experience for everyone.

As I wrote at the start, I set out on the democratic path as a matter of principal. But in trying to persuade schools, school leaders and policy makers that it is the right course for them to take, we can now demonstrate beyond doubt that democratic schools are also improved schools.” (Trafford, 2003, p.12)

I believe that this enquiry shows that student research can provide a forum for teachers to consider and relate to what constitutes best practice. In providing this forum, those who have the capacity to listen to the student voice are able to evolve their classroom practice so that students can in turn best learn. As Hannam, Trafford and Holmes consider, so I consider how the school can learn to provide better learning opportunities through student-led research.

Developing students' capacity to consider their own learning also allows them to become more aware as learners. The assemblies, student forums and discussion with the student council, led by the student researchers, have all served to bring this about. Students are able subsequently to share this knowledge with the people charged with supporting their route to academic success.

At the end of the first year of the student researchers' work, after the students had researched into classroom practice within French, it was noticeable that three of the research group were ranked first, second and third in their end of year examinations within this subject area. Whilst I do not claim that this was a direct result of the research they undertook, I refer to the students' comments at that time:

“Doing this (research) has really made me think about how I learn-how we learn as a group-within French. As we worked with you, and you took our ideas on board, I was really aware of what we were learning and how. This should be our next step-explaining what this research is to our year group, so that they can then fully understand what is happening around them. It makes the classroom a different place.” (second-generation researcher June 2004)

The researchers' awareness of classroom practice was further highlighted in choosing their second stage enquiry. When deciding on the focus for this whole school research, the group quickly decided that assessment practice would be a theme relevant to all subject areas and all students within the school. This motivation on their behalf came out of a sense of frustration that good assessment practice was not consistent throughout the school and that as students their assessment *diet*, although varied, did not provide them with consistency. Their hope was to provide a forum through which good practice could be disseminated, and through which good assessment practice could be promoted between departments. This suggestion was strongly supported by the Headteacher.

Chatwin (2004) talks of Middle Leaders being key with regards improving classroom practice. In this second-phase enquiry, the students looked towards Middle Leaders as the key figures who could bring about changes to assessment practice:

"Heads of Departments are in the forefront of decision making because their foresight is such that they can see what's needed to make the school better..they implement the idea, they share the idea and then it is seen as successful and therefore the Head thinks, this is really working, will it work across the school" and that's how it becomes school policy" (Chatwin, 2004, p.14)

The students were asking Middle Leaders to influence their Department's assessment practice. There was a sense of bottom-up influence, in which the students themselves were the agents for change, asking those with the power to change practice to communicate with each other:

"When we did the objectives-based research into Mrs. Riding's French lessons, it was obvious that the results did not apply to every teacher..I saw some of their eyes glaze over when we presented our findings. Yet, afterwards there was a flurry of objectives in our lessons...everyone seemed to be doing it. Now if we can research an area that is relevant to everyone.. .hopefully our research can have even more influence on other teachers."

(second generation student researcher's comments in May 2005)

As already mentioned, the recent political agenda has seen schools evaluating themselves through a self-evaluation framework. The evidence schools provide

about their own progress and achievements are used by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) during the school inspection process

“We believe that you (the school) are best placed to recognise your own strengths and weaknesses. This is why we have a system that allows you to demonstrate that you can not only diagnose where your strengths and weaknesses are, but more crucially, do something about improving and developing them.

The self-evaluation form serves as the main document when planning the inspection, and is crucial in evaluating the quality of leadership and management and your capacity to improve.”(Ofsted, 2007, p.1)

The Headteacher of Kingdown Community School in Wiltshire, in an address to aspiring senior managers about the national self-evaluation framework, talked about the importance of:

“Measuring what we value, not valuing what we can measure.” (Address, November 2005)

This statement captured for me what the student researchers are trying to achieve through their research: valuing learning. They are trying to capture best practice learning within the shared space of the classrooms, studios, workshops and corridors. I remember first arriving at the school on my interview day, and immediately sensing an environment that promoted learning. This was through overheard conversations between students travelling to lessons, seeing students and teachers participating together in lessons that I visited (despite some of the most appalling buildings and classrooms that I had ever seen). This is an impression that I could not tangibly measure: it was a *value* that I could sense being lived out around me.

Co practitioner-researchers at the school have also tried to define what the school values. In a recent Master’s level assignment, in which my colleague and co-researcher Graham Lloyd was focussing upon the impact of the 14-19 curriculum proposals, he made the following statement:

“The students at Bishop Wordsworth’s School have a rounded education and are given, by the nature of the school, the additional skills universities and employers look for in people. These are further enhanced by success in extracurricular activities

such as BAYS (Bishop's Association of Young Scientists) and the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme plus numerous opportunities to compete in a variety of sports at regional and national levels." (Lloyd, 2005, p.12)

By stating that these opportunities are enhancing the education provided by the school, Graham stakes his claim on the value of a "*rounded education*" that he believes the school to offer.

As the school looks to identify what it values through the self-evaluation framework, dialogue about what is valued throughout the school is imperative. Within this dialogue I believe that students have a central role in this through working as researchers and through their role as classroom learners. This work allows the students to work in an entrepreneurial way: co-creating knowledge to be shared amongst the stakeholders in the school:

"What's this all for?"

I ask you now to reconsider the question that my colleague posed to the students during their initial research presentation. I believe that I have answered this in considering how their intergenerational work can allow a school to measure and enhance the learning valued within it.

I am writing at an exciting time. The research group has just presented their latest enquiry findings to the staff, and have engaged in dialogue with these staff to further enhance teachers' understanding of what it is to learn as a student. The students are now looking at the impact evidence of their enquiry for the school, moving their work forward with support of the CARA2 (Creative Partnerships) bursary of which they are in receipt. They have also received recognition of the importance of their research through the Ofsted inspection that took place at the school in December 2006 and have now set-up a student-learning forum based as a base in which they can test their claims to knowledge.

The boundaries between teacher, researcher and student-researcher have evolved through enquiring together. This research has seen students move from the position

of *active participants* to *active researchers* (Kellett, 2005)²⁵. Gunter et al (2007) acknowledge three ways in which young people are engaged in research: *consulting pupils, pupils engaged in school self evaluation and students-as-researchers* (p.7) I see these as stages of development of the pupil voice within a school; a journey to be undertaken. As trust of the student voice develops, so schools move through the stages to a more integrated way of working and learning with students. The students with whom I have worked do not look to recreate social science theory. They do not look to be trained to reproduce another's way of working. They look instead to respond in a creative way to methodological and ethical issues. They seek to form relationships of trust with others within the school that allows them to enquire. These relationships allow living standards of judgement to emerge between the research participants that reflect the individual nature of the enquiry undertaken. They respect validity and rigour, asking that their participants and peers respond to their emerging findings, asking that their enquiry bring "*capacity building and value for people*" (Furlong and Oancea, 2006).

A new sense of respect and understanding has developed between teacher and student, as the students conceptualise the intricacies of lesson planning and delivery and what this entails for a teacher. They also seek to conceptualise their own learning alongside this, considering what good learning means to them. Teachers have moved from a position of accepting students working as researchers within their school to engaging with them as co-enquirers about learning. Teachers seek answers to questions they have about classroom practice through the students' eyes. Policy is moving forward, embracing what can be learnt from engaging with students:

²⁵ This is the position that students held within previous research I have engaged with. Although students were invited to be involved, it was I as an adult researcher who invited them into the research. I asked for their views and consulted them, yet the research was my own motivation and not a shared enterprise:

"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.8)

I now disagree with my earlier statement "*this inclusion has allowed the research to be tailor made towards the needs of the students*" as the perception of these needs was undertaken by myself as principal researcher. In 2003 I was already acknowledging a different relationship between teacher and student as the result of research, although the learning resulting from this dialogue supported teacher more than student. There existed, as Kellett (2007) suggests, an unequal power relation in this context.

“There is a sense of a shared journey of learning between teacher and student, in which the teacher enjoys the perspective of learning about themselves through the eyes of students. The students perceive the sensitivity of a teacher as a human being.” (comments by the H.E. Researcher immediately after the students’ presentation in October 2006)

This heightened awareness was most noticeable in the conversations held between the students immediately after their presentation. When one student began to mention teachers by name and their reactions to the presentation, the others reinforced their expectation that naming individuals was not part of the shared standards of judgement that the group embraced. The students have begun to redefine boundaries to engage creatively with their school. They have come to an understanding of where their research would best benefit to the school, shown through their selection of research themes and the way in which they first seek approval from the Leadership Team before engaging with this enquiry. They have given themselves licence to enjoy their research as children play, asking how they can make the *possible probable* (Whitehead, Joan, 2004), yet remain within a framework that represents their developing shared values.

One of these values is the use of humour with research participants. I earlier stated how individuals could only employ humour when trust has been established between those sharing space in their pursuit of knowledge. The use of humour in the student researchers’ presentation highlighted this movement forward towards a relationship of shared trust with teachers in which humour could be used.

Alongside humour, another shared value emerging strongly between the group is the development of “we” alongside “I”:

““What do we want to call ourselves for the (school) website (link)? We are researchers...”(second generation researcher)

“I don’t consider myself a researcher. I have acted as the project manager: this should be my “title”” (third generation researcher)

“But, it’s not about you alone, it’s about us and what we are...we are a research team” (second generation researcher)”

(conversation recorded between two of the student researchers in October 2006)

The individual researcher remains an agent of change and action within the process, moving the research forward. Each individual assumes different roles at different times: leader, critical friend or scribe. These roles interchange and evolve alongside the needs of the enquiry, yet can also bring conflict between those students of different generations who wish to always retain a certain role within the group. This tension is highlighted above by the insistence of one member of the group to hold onto a certain role, when in fact this was a temporary role that supported the group through their second phase.

This tension has been inevitable as part of the evolution of the group to include a new generation. The original members have needed to adapt to the new dynamics, and some have been reluctant to evolve. This has been part of the *living* dynamic, in which the incoming generation has responded to the need to fit into the established group dynamics. As with my colleagues and I within the Department, they have needed to first establish relationships of trust before beginning to establish their own role within the group.

As the group needs to breathe as a living, organic entity responding to its environment, so the way in which the group works has evolved with flexibility and resourcefulness. A shared set of living educational standards have emerged in terms of the methodological choices that the group makes, the consideration of ethics with research participants and the power relations that exist between the researchers, research participants and the school:

“As a question-raising discipline, philosophy is appropriate to guide children's natural inquisitiveness through the educational process. It encourages intellectual resourcefulness and flexibility which can enable children and teachers alike to cope with the disconnectedness and fragmentization of existing curricula. It can help develop sound reasoning and ethics.” (Lipman, M., 1977, abstract)

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