

CHAPTER 3

A 'LIVING' EDUCATIONAL THEORY FOR ONLINE COACHING

'We all have a...two-part corporate responsibility:...maintaining...the communicative 'currency'...in terms of which we conduct all our social transactions, *and* that of developing and updating it to cope with changes in our surroundings as they occur...our ways of 'making sense'...have not been given us as a 'natural' endowment...[they are] what we have 'made' possible'.
Shotter, 2008. p 21

In this chapter I want to introduce you to important aspects of how I've gone about *improving* my educational coaching practice *and* how I've gone about *studying* this process and its effects – hence my reference in the Introduction to the AERA mission statement, and the Shotter quote above. In other words, following the more careful positioning of my research in the various 'fields' it conjoins offered in Chapter 2, here I want to talk about my methodologies – both coaching and researching the coaching - and how these then lead to the 'findings' I explore in Chapters 4 to 6, and my conclusions in Chapter 7.

Despite the early doubts identified by Ladkin et al (2009), about how a situated and practical activity like leadership could be taught on a distance learning programme, it has since become clear that not only is this possible but also an effective way of offering this kind of practice focused education. But why and how it works is something that was not obvious in those early years of the new programme. And so it has become the central focus of my own work since then, first in terms of improving my own coaching practice, and secondly, in taking steps to translate this 'insider' knowing into a form suitable for the public domain, where - in holding myself to account for my practice - I'm able to offer explanations for my educational influence in my own learning, the learning of others, and the social formations in which we work (Whitehead, 2009)

DEVELOPING ONTOLOGICAL SKILLS

In Chapter 1 I offered a narrative of my development over four decades which would have shown you the diversity of my intellectual and professional interests. What would not have been evident in that account, is my intense and long term interest in two important dimensions of this diversity: the all encompassing influence on human consciousness and behaviour of *conversation and dialogue*; and the critical importance of considering *embodiment* and ontological expressions of values as the standard against which to judge learning and performance. So here at the start of this chapter I'd like to repair this omission and briefly show you why what I have to say is so strongly permeated by these two perspectives, and why therefore, I can claim to be offering not just an intellectually defensible synthesis of my learning and practice, but also a personally grounded account of my coaching contribution and my research into the pedagogy in which it forms and performs a central function. As in other chapters the basic writings that inform these views is supported in a set of appendices to this chapter.

The effects of multiple exposures

Regarding *dialogue*, I remember many times when facilitating development workshops and 'awaydays' in the BBC and other large organizations, I used the saying 'the fish is

the last to know it lives in water' to provoke new thinking on communication practices. Like fish in water, we humans are unaware that we are immersed 24/7 from birth in the 'hustle and bustle' of conversation/language/words, and we grow up to believe that we can actually *choose* the 'what-when-how-with whom' of communicating, and *not* communicate the rest of the time. My own experience has been that we do so at our peril, and I've spent many enlivening weeks over the decades exploring and experiencing different perspectives and approaches like NLP (Dilts, 1998), Ericksonian Hypnosis (Erickson and Rossi, 1979), Systemic Family Therapy (Jones, 1993), Process Work (Mindell, 1995), Clean Language (Lawley and Tompkins, 2000), and Narrative Therapy (White, 1989) as well as large group interventions like 'future search' (Weisbord and Janoff, 2000) and 'forum theatre' (Boal, 1995) in exposed, vulnerable, and deep ways. In all the approaches mentioned, my involvement has gone well beyond introductory 'taster' workshops, and has usually involved some kind of certification and practice over many years. This active involvement has also been accompanied by wide reading, reflection, and engagement on the theory side with people like Pearce (CMM theory - Pearce and Cronen, 1980), Gergen (social construction - Gergen, 1999), and Isaacs (dialogue - Isaacs, 1999), in addition to the varied writings of e.g. Argyris and Schon (1996) and Shotter (2008). All of this exposure has certainly alerted me to, and deepened my understanding of, the complexity and mystery of human communication that I'm so drawn to.

Perhaps even more intensely, the meaning and practice of *embodiment* has been never been far from my attention. I've been fascinated by what it takes to reach a level where the learning, skills and attitudes, not to mention beliefs, values, and sense of identity, reach a stage where performance could be said to be natural, creative, and embodied. Obviously from what I've said before about Polanyi's ideas, I've a considerable interest, respect, and passion for exploiting and helping others exploit their tacit knowledge – the basis for *all* knowledge – which I see very much as a bodily or embodied phenomenon. So, as for dialogue, I've been 'possessed' by the mystery of embodiment, and the challenges of achieving it, for many years, and have passed through many 'gateways' in search of this, like 'inner game' methods (Gallwey, 1974), 'shiatsu' (Beresford-Cook, 2010), Feldenkrais (Feldenkrais, 1977), 'dreambody' work (Mindell, 1995), and various 't'ai chi/chi gung' practices. All of these approaches work directly with the 'body', seeking to enlist all the human faculties in more integrated ways.

What my extended, deep and intimate experiences of this diverse range of conversational and embodied states of being-in-the-world means, is that I'm able to speak from the 'inside' generated through a form of 'joint action' between me and these special states of being (Shotter, 2008). I believe this allows me to claim that what I offer here does very much represent my own living theory situated and grounded in my own experience of these ideas, both as development subject and as facilitator of others' development, in a variety of surroundings over a long period of time.

Learning from one exemplar

Let's now look at how these in-depth experiences might contribute to inquiries into practice *and* what prospects such a view of performance (and the implications for development and facilitating development), might mean in the target context of leadership development on the MA in Leadership Studies. As a case in point, I've been studying singing over the past few years, and here I offer a short video clip from one of my singing lessons which I think, amongst other things, provides a clear example of

what embodied performance means, what is involved in achieving such states, and the close and creative intermingling between dialogic and bodily processes. I believe it also shows the activity of ‘presencing developmental possibilities’ clearly at work, and the ‘inclusional’ nature (Rayner, 2010) of the teaching/learning process. In this video clip - ‘*speak versus sing emphasis*’ - my teacher Carol is working with me on the challenge of singing smoothly through a musical phrase i.e. singing *legato* - a critical and central element of an engaging singing performance. In Appendix 1 I provide a more detailed analysis of this clip (and the clip that precedes this) and here provide just highlights as we work on improving my ‘legato’ style of singing.



6. *speak versus sing emphasis*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kyrGD3o5pH4>

What initially impressed me in seeing myself in these clips (especially the first one which you can see in Appendix 1, p. 95, clip 5 - *ruddier than the cherry*) is the extent to which I seem to be taken over, even ‘possessed’ (Wittgenstein, 1958) by the singing process. Once the piano accompaniment starts all my attention and ‘bodied’ resources like breathing, voice production, facial expressiveness, gestures are fully engaged, and I can’t seem to step off the roller coaster. In terms of process there is very dynamic yet co-ordinated interaction with both of us taking our turns to speak and sing with little overlap/interruption, and with the meaning of what we are doing, seeming to emerge from a lively dialogue which mixes humour, serious talking, demonstration, practice, and feedback. The intense level of feedback, vocal, gestural, and in words from Carol, enables me in a short space of time to improve the way I’m uttering quite a difficult phrase.

I’m also aware in looking at the clip of the many ‘subsidiary’ elements – to use the Polanyi framework – that are brought into play for me to correctly utter the ‘focal’ phrase in a more legato manner. These include a relaxed posture, control of diaphragm breathing, seeking purity of the vowel/diphthong sounds, keeping an open and relaxed throat (‘yawn’), and producing a consistently resonant sound on both low and high notes – what Carol calls the ‘ping’. Without these elements, it would be impossible for me to deliver a convincing rendering of the musical phrase in question. I also notice how I’m trying to develop a *bodily* feel for the work I need to do, practicing smooth ‘horizontal’ moves with my arm, loosening my jaw/opening up my throat, and so on, so I am ready to ‘body forth’ (Merleau Ponty in Shotter, 2008) my learning in the moment.

What does this clip tell us about the nature of embodiment, the development challenges involved, and what new ideas, if any, this might bring to the leadership development table? I believe the singing lesson provides an excellent illustration of what it means to

learn to be a particular kind of person in an exchange in a context¹¹ - in this instance learning to be able to deliver a song as a vocalist to an audience in a convincing manner. You can see what it takes to learn something and to see/know when it works – it's all there in front of you. In the tight domain of a singing lesson there is no escape and in contrast to ordinary life, I do know what what I do, does – Carol doesn't hesitate to point this out to me! The clip demonstrates how presencing in the moment can aid the development of ontological skills like navigating, relating, engaging, and so on, that are needed 'to know how to go on' – in this case how to deliver a smooth but expressive melodic phrase, allowing the intentions of the composer to be re-animated for singer-and-audience for yet 'another first time' (Garfinkel, 1967).

By illustrating these ontological skills, singing provides an enlightening exemplar for what might really be involved in learning how to offer leadership in an organisation, and be convincing in the role. Because we can't get the kind of focused feedback and demonstration of what would be 'right' in any specific leadership interaction, as we can in singing, our learning tends to be very hit and miss, and we muddle through. And because we 'don't know what what we do, does', using feedback as the basis for improving practice can be very tricky. So this is the challenge facing leadership development programmes – how to help people develop the 'inward feel' and ontological skills that are needed to do the job 'in a context' and 'in an exchange' – and the consequent challenge to anybody seeking to help facilitate learning and improved performance in this domain.

So with this perhaps unusual and provocative view of the challenge for leadership development – as I see it now after some 7 years in the coaching role – how have I gone about addressing the question I've been using to guide my action research: 'how do I improve my practice as an online coach on the MA in Leadership Studies, helping mature students self-educate and develop their ontological skills to be able offer leadership more effectively in a world of 'supercomplexity' (Barnett, 2000) - to themselves, others, and in the social formations they live and work in?

TRANSFORMING MY COACHING PRACTICE

Following the introduction in Chapter 1 of the many events and elements which provide highlights in my development biography, I would now like to focus more specifically on the development of my *action research* practice as it has emerged in three broad phases which cycle dynamically between action and research in an inclusionary way. The emphasis is more on action in the earlier phases with research more foregrounded in the latter, but each is inextricably intertwined in the other throughout the period. This offers a useful distinction in terms of what I was foregrounding for a time but should not be seen as suggesting that 'action' and 'research' are in any real way separate from each other – each reciprocally informs the other. I see them very much in a flow form relation as defined here: '...recognise all natural form as *flow-form*, an energetic configuration of space in figure and figure in space (Shakunle and Rayner, 2009, p 6)... this logic moves on from opposing "one" against "other" or "many" through their mutual exclusion of space to *including each in the reciprocal dynamic influence of the other* through their mutual inclusion in and of space (Whitehead and Rayner, 2009)' (Rayner, 2010, p 2)

¹¹ I'm influenced here by the concept of 'dividual', as against 'individual', created by LiPuma to indicate the more momentary and situated identities that people take up in particular roles and contexts (LiPuma, 1998)

- The first phase was about me finding my feet and basically learning *with* the students how to go on in the coaching role, with very little guidance from the Centre or colleagues. This phase included my self study writings and also my ‘formative’ work on the MA i.e. integrating research in phases, criteria for marking essays, embedding formative feedback in student writings, and so on. So this phase is mostly about the *doing* – and learning from the doing - which has continued of course, most notably with the re-design of Phase 1 in 2008.
- In the second phase I started to take more of an interest in *researching* what I was doing, with the surfacing of various features of my pedagogic approach like my *responsive repertoire*, the identification of *fleeting moments* of influence, indwelling during *development episodes*, ontological changes as revealed in *reflexive biographies*, and the emergence of the idea of a *learning relationship* or *development container* which supports a culture of inquiry.
- Building on this learning, the third phase with the looming need to write a thesis, has been driven much more by the need to meet the formal standards of academic research. This phase has been characterised by the more active involvement of a number of my students in what I’m doing, seeking feedback on my ideas from other Exeter colleagues and fellow PhD students at Bath, and much more dialogue with my supervisor. I also start exploring other ‘criteria of progression’ which are related more to *ontological* standards of judgement, looking for support through engaging with students in a *third kind of knowing* (Shotter, 2008).

Because many of these developments feature strongly in Chapters 4 to 6 and are put under the spotlight in Chapter 7 when I bring together all the elements of my coaching pedagogy, here I offer a much simpler and abbreviated account creating an impressionistic picture of the nature and sequence of these various transformational developments. A fuller account of these ideas appears in Appendix 2 to this chapter.

FIRST PHASE: finding my feet as an online coach

When I first started being an online coach in 2004, I didn’t have a thought-through or set way of working with the students. Although in my facilitation work I’d often worked on a one to one basis with senior executives, I had never done formal ‘coaching’ as such. The MA programme director at the time, Peter Case, gave me a free hand and so I found myself responding to the learning logs and then the formal essays in quite an open, exploratory ‘take things one at a time’ basis, just trying to be helpful, finding out ‘how to go on’ (Wittgenstein, 1958) very much as the students found theirs. After a period I started to get curious about patterns emerging between us, and in the second year, encouraged by Donna Ladkin, initially a colleague coach and then the programme director, carried out some initial interviewing of a sample of the students. I was surprised and encouraged by the results of these informal discussions: the programme seemed to be working in a much more ‘constitutive’ manner (Grint, 2000) than Donna and I had thought possible. It did seem possible to transform what on the surface seems ‘distant’ learning into something much closer to work practice.

The evidence for this claim was mainly impressionistic in nature, and so one of the later actions I took was to look far more closely at the foundational data – the learning logs and essays – and to see to what extent these claims could be supported. Being a practitioner rather than a researcher at heart, I was curious just how educational influence of this kind was being accomplished in a largely virtual relationship. I started

looking for personal examples of possible influence from my student logs – what I started called ‘fleeting moments’, a phrase in an article on a process view of leadership written by an Exeter colleague, Martin Woods (2005). Though obvious examples of these were few and far between, they nevertheless did seem to offer enough support to encourage further inquiry: students raised specific issues, directly or indirectly, in their learning logs, I responded as insightfully as I could, and they seemed to find my responses useful. Encouraged by this and other forms of informal appreciation, I decided at this stage to focus my PhD research very much on this aspect: what kind of contribution can an online coach make on a distance programme concerned with a situated and timely practice, and how is such influence achieved?

During this first phase I also involved myself in some practice improvement work which I later realised was to have a ‘formative’ influence on the MA (or at least my and my students’ experiences of it). I wrote this work up in several internal papers covering what I felt to be important aspects of how the MA was being managed: the idea of *integrating research methods* into all the phases of the programme rather than just the final phase (Appendix 3); developing a clearer set of criteria to guide the *marking and grading of formal essays* (Appendix 4); and proposing that we use a range of more *formative methods of assessment* within the university’s grading policy (Appendix 5). I also found myself exploring two other coaching practices which at the time I didn’t write up as formal papers as I didn’t experience them as unusual. These were the move towards the *personal ‘tailoring’* of the nature of programme materials to suit the needs of particular students both in terms of content and timing, and the inclusion of *embedded feedback on essays* and logs of a ‘stream of consciousness’ nature.

SECOND PHASE: improving my understanding of educational influencing

Though I now see ‘leadership’ as being more in terms of *framing/relating/orienting* work in order to ‘know how to go on’ together with others, during these early years I thought my role was more to do with improving students abilities in *problem solving* and increasing the ‘know what’ and ‘know how’ needed for this (Kotter, 1996). So during this second phase of developing my coaching practice, I decided to look more closely at my interactions with students to find out to what extent, and how, I was working at this. This meant looking at the extensive and rich textual record captured in the weekly learning logs and termly essays, and seeing if I could tease out any patterns and get glimpses of the kind of influence I might be exercising in this virtual world. As a single student’s ‘learning logs plus coach responses’ can on its own amount to well over 50,000 words, I initially focused on a detailed review of the interactions with just one student (06-08 cohort), carried out sampling checks with half a dozen others, and then based on the findings, started to make this kind of ‘noticing’ (Mason, 2002) a normal part of my coaching work. I also applied this more sensitive observing lens to my work with students on their essays and dissertations.

Over a period of some five years this ‘noticing’ and the many cycles of reflection and action on what I was noticing, gradually led me to identifying/creating a range of learning and development concepts and artifacts. Amongst these are six which, as I will discuss in Chapter 7, now constitute the key elements of my own personal coaching pedagogy. These are *fleeting moments*, *development episodes*, *reflexive biographies*, the *systemic mindset*, a *responsive repertoire*, and the *learning relationship or development container*. Here I just provide very brief details of each to show how these emerged and transformed my everyday practice. I deal with each of the first three – which provide

different 'glimpses' of development influence - in great detail in Chapters 4 to 6 and the others in Chapter 7.

Fleeting moments: by noticing some evidence of influence in what I called a 'fleeting moment', I meant finding in one or more learning logs/essays a specific comment on something I'd said which the student recognised as having had an immediate impact on their thinking/behaviour. I discuss the concept and how it has developed in Chapter 4 particularly, but to give you a sense of what I mean, here's an example of an interaction in a student's learning logs spread over a period of a few days:

KK comment: Perhaps, rather than using the combative tactics that have served you so well over the years on your climb up the hierarchy, it might be more effective to support/guide and demand more of these more rational/technical efforts of others with less experience than you. Don't fight them - ask for 'more and better' so that your intuitions can be tested against so called 'harder' data. You might see this as 'compensation' but equally it could be seen as shrewd use of your unique talents.

Student response (three days later): Thanks for that comment. I can see that asking for "more and better" is a tactic I can productively use now. I have been asking for this but in a negative way rather than a positive one - by reversing the negative psychology here the whole atmosphere could be far more productive and beneficial to the team.

I gained considerable support for this notion in 2009 when I came across the most recent work of John Shotter in his recently revised edition of *Conversational Realities*. In this he allows the notions of bodily responsiveness and 'now'-ness (Stern, 2004) to come through in his writing and, using the ideas of Wittgenstein, Vygotsky, and Bakhtin in particular, is able to construct a very persuasive argument about the nature of influence in what Bakhtin calls 'dialogically structured' situations (Bakhtin in Shotter, 2008, p vi). In reading this I realised that I needed to differentiate between 'now' moments that took just a few seconds and that according to Wittgenstein, created a 'reaction', the primitive form of a new language-game (Wittgenstein in Shotter, 2008, p vi), and longer term changes in outlook and development of ontological and other skills that might follow. I decided to reserve the term 'fleeting moments' for these passing but potentially powerful interventions/reframes, and use the term 'developmental episode' for the unfolding of learning and development that might then take place (in context) in succeeding weeks and months, to support real changes in practice.

Development episodes: when working earlier in my career with groups involving different disciplines e.g. accountants and programme makers, I often felt that they were just talking *at* each other with no real communication taking place. There seemed to be little appreciation of one's own standpoint, or that of the 'other', suggesting that they would benefit from becoming more aware of e.g. their own assumptions and beliefs. In approaching this difficulty I found the ideas of Polanyi and his 'we know more than we can tell' conception of tacit knowledge to be inspiring (Polanyi, 1983). He says whenever we use an idea or theory to function as a 'proximal' term of tacit knowledge, we incorporate it into our body and attend *to* the world *from* the theory by *dwelling in* the particulars; and in this process we create at a tacit level an alternative way of viewing experience. However for us to rely tacitly on this new way, so allowing our body to become the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, we need to

'interiorise' it and use it extensively to interpret experience. So something needs to happen between the 'aha' experience of a 'fleeting moment' and performing effectively.

This perspective helped me understand how I myself have experienced Wittgenstein's 'reaction' which then during a period of *indwelling*, has given me the time to develop the new perspective and abilities – the ontological skills – I needed to become a legitimate player in a new 'language-game'. I decided that such indwelling activity taking place during a development episode, filled an ontological as well as an epistemological 'gap' between the fleeting moment of an arresting insight, and the potential effects on general capability and identity that one might get over the longer term; and so this new framing concept was born. I'm not able to offer a simple example of this process here – as with the fleeting moment - but talk much more fully about it in Chapter 5 providing examples from student work, as a preliminary to looking at what might then follow in the longer term in e.g. a 'reflexive biography' - which is what I comment on next.

Reflexive biographies: in 'noticing' the possibility of there being fleeting moments and development episodes, I felt I'd identified two useful elements of educational influencing in a virtual world. But was there more that I wasn't noticing? In the light of the 'contestability' of knowledge frameworks, Ronald Barnett in his book on Realising the University (2000), suggested that there was. Barnett felt that universities have a responsibility to assist students on the formation of their 'reflexive biographies' which are regarded as being *made* largely in and through action, through a purposive engagement with the world. He felt these were 'distinct from having one's biography made for one by the manifold forces that dominate this supercomplex world' (Barnett, *ibid*, p 158).

So raising my head from the much shorter and medium term clues occasionally visible in the weekly learning logs and termly essays, I realised that taking a much longer term view of the development process, as suggested here, could add another valuable element to the possible 'mix' of indicators of online influencing. One way of looking at these 'biographies' would be to get myself/students to inquire/respond to basic questions which inquire into issues of identity, values, and behaviour and shifts in these over time (see a possible list of such questions in Appendix 7). I deal with the development of this idea more fully in Chapter 6 which is devoted to this concept and offers examples of how this idea has worked out in practice.

A 'systemic' mindset: while I was exploring the nature of influence in the logs/essays on the Exeter MA, I was also working with other external organisations in leadership development programmes, using what I called a 'systemic' approach. This was something I'd been doing full time since 1988 and had adopted and adapted the term from my experiences of family therapy with the Milan School of family therapy (Jones, 1993), particularly working with Cechin and Boscolo. I was also doing consultancy work during this period, including working with the late David Campbell who, while based at the Tavistock Clinic, had been one of the most influential supporters of this approach in the UK. During 2007-8 David asked me to contribute to a chapter in a new book on 'systemic practice' clarifying my take on the term and offering some examples of my work in practice (Campbell and Huffington, 2009). In this I introduced the notion of a 'spiral' of seven loosely linked perspectives (see Appendix 13 in Chapter 1), which provides a view of the many 'roots' or ways of knowing that influenced this metaphor. As I say in the paper in that appendix, it has helped me 'loosen the grip of common sense ways of looking at things and find novel ways of knowing a particular

interaction’ - which I have in turn been able to offer to others to see problems in a different light. This is something I’ll speak to in Chapter 7 as I show how this informs my ‘systemic responsiveness’ to students.

A ‘responsive repertoire: in looking back over the learning logs of various students and my own responses, I began to get the feeling that there were some patterns emerging between what they were offering me and how I was responding. I wasn’t too surprised by this – after all I knew I was working from some set of principles that I’d been developing over the years, like the ‘systemic’ mindset, at a below conscious level. So there should have been some signs of this in how I was relating to the various issues that students were raising, or I was glimpsing in how they wrote about these and other matters. So as I mentioned earlier and will discuss in more detail in Chapter 7, I decided to start a more systematic analysis of the textual record contained in the logs and essays to see if I could discern any forms of patterning, and glimpses of influence and relationship development.

Though I did find that there were some patterns that occurred throughout the 18 months of directed work, some were clearly more likely to arise in the early months of the programme when most students felt awed by being at university again, and overwhelmed by the volume of work. Others seemed to arise later when students had settled down, were more trusting of their relationship with the coach/university, and could face up to significant development difficulties they were experiencing. Of course this timing varied considerably with some students ‘getting there’ earlier than others. The preliminary taxonomy I developed of some twelve plus strategies which inform my ‘responsive repertoire’ (see Appendix 6) bears a family resemblance to other such tutoring classifications (e.g. Denis et al, 2004, referred to earlier in Chapter 2). But I felt that there were also new ‘moves’ that appear original in nature in this field, and that the *macro* world view that went hand in hand with this repertoire – see ‘identifying the values grounding my pedagogy’ later in this chapter - together with the dynamic use of these relational *micro* tools, would in time be shown to constitute a novel form of online coaching that I would later call ‘presencing developmental possibilities’.

Learning relationship/development container’: while I found this early model building work on my ‘response repertoire’ very interesting, I decided not to pursue this line further at that stage. I was by then more interested in looking at another aspect of the pedagogy – what I refer to as the *macro* world view above – which I felt needed further investigation. As indicated above, I seemed to be using a repertoire of ‘interventions’ to stimulate and support student development of a particular kind. And though this ongoing ‘shower of arrows’ seemed to involve a high degree of redundancy (in the sense that the student often did not have the time/was not able, to respond specifically to each of them as such), they did seem to be having a positive effect on the learning relationship/climate they and I worked within.

The asynchronous nature of most of the interaction, the unceasing movement each week onto yet new ideas and models, and the predominant focus of log and essay questions on explicating academic theories, works against there being many obvious direct links between the specifics of student offerings and coach responses. So I tried a more hermeneutical approach (Weinsheimer, 1985). This involved me in trying to calibrate my micro-level offerings with the more general metaphors that students offered me when I asked them about the impact of the coaching. The breakthrough eventually came when I started to think of ‘influencing’ in terms of moderating the nature and depth of

learning that takes place in the virtual time-space that the student-coach interactions construct over time. I realised then that these continual ‘showerings’ of supportive and provocative ‘arrows’ could lead to a higher level and emergent *relationship* (which I’ve since called a ‘development container’) in which students could freely explore questions about who they were, why they were here, and what leadership might mean for them.

THIRD PHASE: seeking evidence of the effects of my educational influence

While Phase 2 represented a very encouraging development, I had become more and more aware – helped by Jack Whitehead’s promptings for ‘evidence’ – that I myself wouldn’t be happy with the quality of evidence of these findings created in largely asynchronous written exchanges. What I wanted/needed was a more *dialogic* form of evidence where the students and I could agree on what had happened between us in the moment, and the logs certainly offered a very indirect and ungainly vehicle for achieving this level of validation. So building on the learning in the first and second more *action* oriented phases – ‘how to improve my practice?’ - this third phase has been driven much more by my *research* needs.

With this now uppermost in my mind, I encouraged the more active involvement of some of my students in the research aspect, especially Colleen, John, Jim, Paul, and Ian. I also sought critique from other academic colleagues like Ann O’Brien at Exeter, Marie Huxtable and Jacqui Scholes-Rhodes at Bath, my long term Exeter consulting colleague Roger Niven, as well as my various teachers in singing, Feldenkrais, and other interests external to the MA itself. In this period there’s a more active and disciplined looking for evidence relating to various working hypotheses. There’s also the start of an exploration of *criteria of progression* related to potential ontological work in the ‘development container’, which I discuss further in Chapter 7. I also have the opportunity during 2009 to translate a lot of my learning and ideas into the re-design of Phase 1 of the MA programme in ways which I hoped would set the tone for the entire programme.

So in this phase I began to work more actively on what I could do to transform the valuable record of evidence in the logs/essays into something more like a ‘third kind of knowing’ (Shotter, 2008), a dialogically constituted form of knowing between persons in context. In this I needed to show how this model of ‘ontological going on’, could also usefully be applied within the rather different virtual ‘conversations’ that take place in asynchronous and online coaching interactions during the MA, and that can be experienced as ‘close learning’ (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004). To clarify further what I’m saying here I offer a short video clip - ‘*using video clips to strengthen validity claims*’ - showing how I understood the difficulty I faced here, and how I intended to



7. *using video clips to strengthen validity claims*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WIEYoSX-oqg>

address it. It comes from a supervision discussion with Jack Whitehead in June, 2010 with the clip starting just as I summarise my viewpoint about the need for multi-media presentations to strengthen claims to validity.

I begin by saying that what I call the 'back up' process for checking the validity of my hypotheses, has to be more 'real' – by which I mean through face to face conversation, as in Shotter's 'third kind of knowing'. I sketch out my methodology for assessing influence online, talking about four glimpses or 'evidences' of influence (note: these later became the three that I've described above). I make clear that in addition, I want to get videos of any discussions I have with the students, so we can develop richer and more rounded understandings to use to check out the validity of any claims. My body language during this clip I think amply demonstrates my 'living' commitment to seeking a more demanding level of validity: 'so that's my research methodology... where the other person and I create a 'joint reality': *that's* what that means to *us*!

Before looking in more detail at the 'living theory' that I've been 'organising and organised by' in the next section, I'd like to comment briefly on two main developments that came to the fore in this last more research oriented phase: the search for a more 'ostensive' form of evidence of meaning making that I could use to strengthen the validity of claims - that the video clip has just referred to; and seeking 'criteria of progression' within the textual record that I could use dynamically to assess progress along more ontological lines.

Use of ostensive multi-media evidence: as I've just shown, my felt need was to strengthen the validity of my claims through generating face to face conversational accounts that could approximate the 'third kind of knowing' or momentary, localised epistemology that Shotter so eloquently articulates. This kind of knowing is reserved for those participating in the dialogue who are in this sense 'in the know' about the subtleties of gestural language and the important legacies and implicit rules that constitute the relevant history of both the general surroundings and the particular exchange itself (Shotter, 2008).

So how to convey this special quality of communication to outsiders in an informative and convincing manner? As Jack Whitehead has explored in recent writings (Whitehead, 2009), what seems to be key in these exchanges is to be able to show how living/life affirming energy and values combine to convey visually and viscerally the striking qualities of passion and commitment that are felt. In this he looks to Vasilyuk's concept of 'creative experiencing' (Vasilyuk, 1991) which describes transforming reality as a process of *atonement* which can be seen as a 'sensory-practical, bodily aspect' - hence the virtue of an audio-visual record. This is now becoming a more popular approach for research: as Heath et al say in their recent publication *Video in Qualitative Research* (Heath et al, 2010, p vi), video provides opportunities for 'fine grained analysis of social organisation, culture, and communication' as well as enabling 'new and distinctive ways of presenting insights' in areas as diverse as operating theatres, control rooms in the Underground and news rooms in the BBC'. Furthermore: 'Audio-visual recordings are increasingly used to support research that examines the situated activities and interactional organisation through which knowledge, skills, and practices are shared and disseminated...[and there is]...burgeoning interest in using video to also examine the ways in which knowledge is revealed, shared and embodied in...informal settings.' (ibid, p 8).

My own first videotaping venture came when I interviewed one of my past students, using material from my ‘glimpses of virtual influencing’ to stimulate our discussion and assess the validity of my hypotheses. When first viewing the tapes afterwards I was rather disappointed in what we’d produced and was rather critical of myself and how I’d managed the session – we didn’t seem to capture many of the real changes that I/we both felt had occurred. It was only later after sharing some clips of the video with Jack Whitehead that I realised I was perhaps looking for the wrong things, and often at the wrong person: I had been focusing on the student whereas Jack had focused on me! In doing so he had seen a range of things that I had discounted/taken for granted - like my passion for the work, my close but open and encouraging attention to the views and learning of the student, and my general responsiveness in the moment. I was showing a quality of living energy that Jack associated with the expression of embodied values... and I’d missed all that! It was very good learning and opened a whole new horizon for how I felt I could now approach the task of assessing the validity of my claims.

Criteria of progression: but this ‘move to video’ did not mean I was finished with the textual record in the online system. I was still wondering how I could extract more value from this rich historical material, and a chance remark at an MA Exam Board meeting in 2009 led to my next sortie into the assessment area. The new examiner at her first meeting expressed some surprise at what she called the ‘lack of progression’ of student marks as they made their way through the two year programme: they were getting privileged coaching from experienced practitioners, so why weren’t their grades improving over the year? As I got over my initial defensive reaction I too asked - but a slightly different question: why don’t we have progression criteria that go *beyond marks* to help us assess the quality and level of *development* in e.g. ontological skills? A summary of what I’ve done so far appears in Appendix 8 to this chapter. This is still very much a ‘work-in-progress’ and my appreciation of this initial work appears in Chapter 7 when I look at it in the context of my overall pedagogy. I believe this will become an increasingly important area especially if we take to heart Barnett’s view that students should be experiencing not only epistemic but ontological uncertainty and dislocation, if they are to develop the qualities needed to perform effectively in a world of ‘supercomplexity’ (Barnett, 2000).

* * *

Beyond the still emerging relations between the *systemic mindset*, the *responsive repertoire*, and the nature of the *learning relationship* - and now links with possible *inclusional criteria of progression* - it seemed to me that I was being energised by other still largely tacit sources of energy and direction. So there was still more digging to do, and it is to these grounding values driving my coaching that I turn to now.

IDENTIFYING THE VALUES GROUNDING MY PEDAGOGY

At the end of Chapter 1 I offered a view of the transformations in epistemology that have come about over the period – from ‘systems’ to ‘systemic’ to ‘social constructionist’ to ‘embodied practice’. And of course these have undoubtedly influenced very strongly how I’ve thought about my overall ‘living’ approach to my work and life. From the analysis of my ongoing development in both action and research terms, I think it’s probably becoming clearer how what I’ve been doing, though

influenced by the ideas of others, is very much a unique response shaped by my history and how I've responded to my students and the exigencies of the evolving situation. In many ways, and with Polanyi always in the background, it feels like the process Moustakas calls 'heuristic inquiry' which begins with 'something that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown.' (Moustakis, 1990, p. 13) It's open-ended, self-directed, and auto-biographic and 'requires a passionate, disciplined commitment to remain with a question intensely and continuously until it is illuminated' (ibid, p. 15). But of course I've not been completely adaptive and flexible, ready to get blown hither and thither by the forces in the situation. No, something has been helping me with my continual re-relating and re-orienting as I've developed my own ideas about how I want to live my life; and it's not just what Polanyi referred to as a scientist's feeling-sense of the characteristics of their still tacit eventual goal (Polanyi, 1983)

As mentioned in the Introduction, Dadds and Hart (2001) highlighted that practitioner researchers often place a great deal of importance on their methodological inventiveness as they seek better resolutions to their challenges: 'what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes' (ibid, p 169). And it is this kind of framing that has encouraged me to follow my intuitions and inventiveness rather than laid down formal methodology, to improve my own work practices and be motivated subsequently to carry out the more systematic research needed to create knowledge suitable for wider public dissemination.



8. relating 3rd kind to online dialogue
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkSxsFJ1cHQ>

To illustrate this I offer the following video clip – '*relating 3rd kind to online dialogue*' - in which I explain how I'm hoping to relate a *face to face* dialogically structured epistemology, that Shotter calls a 'third kind of knowing' (Shotter, 2008), to what I believe is happening in the *online* written interactions my students and I engage in.

The clip begins with me recounting a story of how one of my students has transformed his leadership style as a result of a 'fleeting moment' of influencing, and that our discussion was captured online – so there's some direct evidence of this. I go on to describe other pieces of evidence for my hypothesis about influencing in face to face situations, using Wittgenstein's ideas about 'primitive reactions' and 'language-games', and how I believe it can be, and is, happening online as well. I emphasise that I see the real challenge (in writing Chapter 3) is to show how a conversational approach to meaning making, where meaning is an unfolding and negotiated process often about 'knowing how to go on', is happening in my coaching interactions with students. I've

seen glimpses of this phenomenon, but...? I believe the video vividly captures my own 'anticipatory' and 'unfolding' vision of how we figure out how to go on in conversation, and my desire to make a convincing case for this also happening in the virtual world.

So having identified the nature of the challenge facing me, how have I grown to understand 'living educational theory'? As Wittgenstein has said 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life' (1958, no. 19), and this has very much been my experience with the language and form of life made possible by the living theory approach to action research. But I've not found it easy to get a handle on the words 'from the inside' so to speak, the forms of living they enable and constrain, and the knowing this generates. As in other matters it has taken me some time 'dwelling in the subsidiaries' to make progress, as shown in my dialogue with Jack Whitehead in Appendix 17 in Chapter 1. Let me summarise my thinking about this concept:

At the level of everyday knowing-in-action, I'm using some 'inner' momentary and sentient criteria to decide whether what I'm doing, as a person and educator, is right or not. As Shotter notes in this regard 'the character of our judgements...are present to us only in terms of their unfolding temporal contours' (Shotter, 2008, p 29) which I can identify and clarify through reflexive practice as they emerge in my relations with others. And as these values emerge they perform a dual function: firstly, they help me more consciously and confidently improve my practice and direct my actions towards what I regard from a space deep within me, as worthwhile; and secondly, they help me assess and account for the outcomes and consequences of what I'm doing, and how I'm achieving these. In the latter case, these embodied values are transformed into 'standards of judgement' which provide a unique personal resource for helping me evaluate my influence in my own learning and doing, and my influence on the learning of others and the contexts in which we work together (Whitehead, 2009). This ontological framework provides me with the means to realise who I want to be, who I am, and how I can deal with the contradictions between these states, in my daily interaction with others. In this way I am enabled to know something of and be able to offer an explanation for, Foucault's consequential 'does' (in 'knowing what what I do, does'), allowing me to make public and seek validation for my own living educational theory.

So what have emerged as crucial elements in my living educational theory, the fundamental energies that have combined to sensitise, motivate, and enable me to do what I do, in the way I do it, and for the reasons that I do do it? What are the beliefs, values and activities that make my approach distinctive and life enhancing to myself and those with whom I work? I offer my response to these questions by exploring the constellation of flow form dynamic energies that seem to form, mobilise and guide my living and working existence, in three sections: core ontological skills – the 'what'; embodied axiological values – the 'why'; and the momentary epistemological standards of judgement – the 'how'. I support these textual explanations with video clips taken from supervisory discussions with Jack Whitehead.

WHAT – this is *what* I'm doing

I have an educational *practice* which involves me in doing certain things in certain ways. Looking at a video clip of myself, I might see e.g. that I am asking the student questions about a claim he has made, in a certain tone of voice/facial expression that 'casts doubt' on his interpretation as being *the* answer, and encouraging him to seek other and possibly multiple, answers. There might be several reasons why I use this

particular form of behaviour - which I will come to later but for now - 'this is *what* I'm doing'. Moving up to a higher level of definition, it's become clear to me as I've inquired into my practice, that there are three main things that I do that seem to form the focus of my unceasing efforts concerned with the question 'how do I improve my practice?' and that capture the cycle of 'living life as development' (a play on a phrase 'living life as inquiry' used by Judi Marshall, 1999) that energises and guides my work forward: *creating new knowing; developing praxis; and facilitating development.*

Creating new knowing – this term captures an intense desire to find out more about how individuals and human systems 'work', develop, and change. I think you can see this writ large in the narrative of my learning described in Chapter 1, the many sorties into the fields of therapy and bodywork mentioned at the start of this chapter, and the various transformations in perception and sense of self that I've undergone over that period of four decades. But this is only the start of my inquiry cycle...

Developing praxis – Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* defines praxis as 'reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.' (1970, p 36), and this idea captures a seemingly unending drive in me to put new ways of understanding to practical use *and* in so doing, continue to improve that emerging practice and the knowing associated with it. And these improvements have always been inextricably linked to my work with others as referred to earlier on page 16.¹²

Facilitating development – my journey from 'expert consultant' to 'development facilitator' to 'presencing coach' bears witness to a marked shift in focus towards helping others help themselves. Over the years as part of my search for not only personal insight but methods of helping others do the same, I've completed many 'personality profiles' which support this claim. For example in Torbert's Leadership Development Framework I was assessed at being at the 'alchemist' stage, as someone who is committed to transforming themselves and others as well as changing the institutions in which they work, and show an 'ability to renew or even reinvent themselves and their organizations in historically significant ways...an extraordinary capacity to deal simultaneously with many situations at multiple levels...talk with both kings and commoners...deal with immediate priorities yet never lose sight of long-term goals.' (Rooke and Torbert, 2005, p 6).

The video clip that follows - 'three drivers' - shows me offering a very brief summary of these three basic ontologically or 'becoming' oriented activities. I provide it here because I believe in a few moments it captures the passion that I feel for what I'm doing, and clearly demonstrates the cyclical nature of this process which seems to provides an unceasing flow of energy even as I reach 'three score years and ten'.

¹² I can identify at least seven clear passages of time where this has been the case, stretching from my first consultancy role in 1975-79, my work as HR director between 1981-89, my second period in a boutique culture change consultancy in 1989-91, as director of the management consulting unit at Kings College London during 1989-91, as a member of several development consulting 'teams' working for the BBC during the period 1990-2000, in two capacities at Exeter - as a CLS Fellow during 2004-08 and as a coach on the MA during 2004-2011, and finally as a founder with CLS colleague Roger Niven of the Proteus Inquiry Network in 2009 – see www.the-pin.co.uk



9. 'three drivers'

<http://www.youtu.be/vgdn2ROeFG8>

So these three activities are very much the focus of my work on responding to 'how do I improve my practice?': through working systematically on these three 'whats'; and by noticing and dealing with contradictions that I discover in my practice between the 'is' and 'ought', particularly between how I'm orienting myself to 'how we go on' together in the coaching relationship, as against focusing instead on matters of efficiency and problem solving. This *is* my practice and as I have pursued these activities largely implicitly for many years, I realise that they have been and are fuelled and supported by deeper ontological values that provide answers to the question 'why do I follow these practices?', which I turn to next.

WHY – this is *why* I'm doing it

Embedded in the previous section of '*what I do*' are *educational 'living' values* that energise and motivate me to choose to pursue these activities, both generally as well as specifically with particular students/clients at particular times. They also shape the way I do these things as I offer clients/students a provocative hermeneutic inquiry process - from framing to micro-practices and vice versa. As the Shotter quote at the head of the chapter implies, our 'two part responsibility' in both framing and sustaining meaning in communications, both of which have to be negotiated within conversation (Garfinkel, 1967, p 40), has a moral-practical side to it which responds to '*why am I doing what I'm doing?*' In identifying these largely implicit values as they have emerged from reflections on my practice with students and clients, I've now reached a position where I'm able to refer to these as *explanatory principles* which I feel are adequate for explaining and justifying my claims of educational influence to others as to 'why I do what I do.' From such reflections, I've identified three core values which I believe provide the 'motor' of my living educational practice: *equity – levelling the field*; *educational empowerment- carrying the word*; and *efficacy - living a life that works*. Let me explain what these terms mean to me and the role they play.

Equity - 'levelling the field'

The word, together with its adjective 'equitable', speaks strongly to me of fairness, justice, and equality. Why should I be engaged and emotional about this issue? As I revealed in Appendix 8 in Chapter 1, one obvious connection must be to my upbringing in apartheid-ridden South Africa, and my sense of being an 'empty vessel' with little connection to the rich diversity that exists in that country. The notion of neutralizing the unfair effects of social power differentials is one of the things that attracted me to Foucault's approach, where the perception that we're living not in a universal world but in a world defined by particular discourses, opened up new possibilities for influence and sense making for voices marginalised

through inequitable power relations, and for a more diverse, engaging, and equitable 'multiverse' to emerge.

So despite being in an 'elite' of sorts at school and university, at a deep but largely tacit level I have felt frustrated by the domination of discourse by conservative 'mainstream' voices and quite easily slip into a 'problematizing' mindset – as a consultant I've often been told not to bite the hand that feeds me! My move towards 'participative' methods of facilitation is another illustration. I began giving up being an 'expert' consultant as far back as 1979 when I started working with the Grubb Institute, and have been 'beating' a path (in the sense of sailing into the wind) towards a more facilitative style ever since. My desire to confront marginalization in my work also explains my attraction to Michael White's narrative style of therapy which has been very influential in helping me find what he calls a 'de-centred' style which seeks to place the issues of the client centre stage (White and Epstone, 1990).

Educational empowerment - 'carrying the word'

This is clearly a value closely associated with 'equity' and is what has motivated me since the mid-70's to commit my career and working life to the learning and development field, and latterly to 'education' and 'educational research' proper. By 'carrying the word' I do not mean in a proselytizing way. No, what I mean by this term is acting in ways which help people empower themselves to take practical action to remedy and improve their working situation. And to do this mainly through using my wisdom and ontological skills to facilitate educational experiences which provoke, enrich, elicit and exploit their own embodied knowing. As I discovered in the late 90's when doing 'values clarification' work based on ideas developed by Brian P. Hall (1994) who had been influenced by the work of Freire, Illich, and Fromm whom he met while working with the Anglican Church in South America. What I remember most clearly was the high level summary headline offered at the end: 'you are someone who is not satisfied with gaining knowledge as such – you have a strong desire to "carry the word", to share your knowing with others, so that they may themselves benefit from your wisdom'.

At the time I was not in education but working as a change management consultant, but it was clear from feedback from colleagues that I always went the extra mile to make my work with managers much more than 'training'. This was also one reason why I switched from running large change workshops in the BBC, the main 'service' I had been offering them during the 90's, to facilitating much smaller and more educational action learning sets in my latter years with them. The fact that I was often cast in the role of 'inciter of rebellion against Birtism' does show a certain side to my character and my desire to help people 'learn' their way out of apathy.

Efficacy – 'living a life that works'

Efficacy has always been an important criterion for me - whether as an engineer, work study analyst, line manager, change management consultant, director of human resources, or later in life, a facilitator of educational and development events. In their influential book 'Soft Systems Methodology in Action', Peter Checkland and Jim Scholes (1990) proposed three criteria for assessing the success of a transformation of a socio-technical work system. These were named the '3 Es' as follows: 'efficacy' – does the system work?; 'efficiency' – does it use minimal resources?; and 'effectiveness' – does the system meet the longer term aim? With my old 60's work study engineer hat on, this straightforward 'does it work?' definition of efficacy appeals, and reminds me of the increasing impatience of

consulting colleagues during the 90's who would often despair at my seemingly inexhaustible capacity for re-designing development programmes in order to make them more efficacious, efficient, and effective; but efficacious first, in the sense of 'does it work – for us, situated here, and now'?

As I mention in Chapter 1, I found the idea 'searching for roots in the future' offered a fruitful frame for reflecting on my considerable and lengthy efforts to develop the efficacy of my own practices of consulting/facilitation over nearly four decades. I can also see that part of the energy here also comes from a desire to legitimise *personal knowing* - in the sense of eliciting and validating subordinated knowledges – thus helping create a kind of freedom and equity for others, not just for those who live in privileged positions in society (so back to my 'equity' value!). And, as my intent focuses on timely and situated performance, my criteria go beyond the usual academic requirements of a university, to include the kind of tacit and embodied knowing that leads to authentic and responsive performance in real life situations, and to learning to live a life that *works* and is 'in the service of human flourishing' (Reason and Heron, 1997, p 288).

HOW – this is *how* I'm doing it

I was one of two coaches on the first online MA programme introduced in 2004. Since then Peter Case, the director, Donna Ladkin, the other original coach and then second director, Annie Pye, the third director, all of whom were/are full time academics, have moved on. Scott Taylor, the current director, is also a full time academic. So in this sense, as the only practitioner associated with the programme as a coach from the beginning, and through my PhD studies, I'm probably *the* person who has been most keenly interested in improving the pedagogical effectiveness of the MA. I am in a sense carrying much of the history and dreams embedded in the evolution of the programme.

Here are a couple of quotes from the original online introduction to the MA written by Peter Case which I believe capture the spirit: 'Canonical concepts and toolkits will give way increasingly to what we term "upstream theorising" of the relational processes of leadership...hope to create...a deliberately reflexive theatre of learning in which your experiences...will play the leading role.' In response to this, in a position paper I wrote in 2009 before revising Phase 1 of the programme, I asked how we might proceed to create this 'reflexive theatre of learning'. My answer proposed that this would come from students 'experiencing a full, intimate and synthesising exposure to three 'domains' of experience and knowing: *literature* and familiarity with the contested nature of the field; *self awareness* and familiarity with one's values, assumptions, and behavioural patterns; and *practice* with familiarity of the subtleties and challenges of improving one's own practice and influencing the practices of others in local contexts'. (the full paper appears in Appendix 9).

Similarly, as all my students have passed well, several with distinctions for their dissertations, I could claim that through successfully mediating the academic standards of the university with my students – or as one student Colleen puts it in Chapter 6: being the 'fulcrum' - I've introduced and have had legitimated at least at a tacit level by the Academy, new forms of leadership knowing, as well as original ideas on how coaches can perform and influence the educational process. In doing this I'm posing new *standards of judgement* as to what leadership and leadership development means, for which amongst others, Furlong and Onacea in their paper on practice centred research, offer strong support.(Furlong and Onacea, 2008).

So what might these embodied new standards be that I've become both more aware of and more consciously committed to, as they've emerged in my inquiry into my coaching practices? As Shotter comments in relation to Bernstein's 'practical moral knowledge' (1983): 'It is our embodied feelings – and the embodied anticipations and expectations to which they spontaneously give rise – that are neglected.....But it is just these *contingent feelings* ...that work as the "momentary standards" against which our more explicit formulations are judged for their adequacy and appropriateness' (Shotter, 2008, p 29). I've identified three of these 'action guiding feelings' that seem most pervasive and whose presence I'm continuously monitoring in the moment, or in the 'temporal unfolding' of my actions (Stern, 2004), as evidence of effective educational support that can really make a difference to their scholarship and working lives ('living a life that works'). These standards are: '*presencing developmental possibilities*'; '*seeking evidence of ontological achievement*'; and '*maintaining a dependable relationship*'.

Presencing developmental possibilities

Since the mid 60's I've had this intense desire to get behind the conventional view of things, intrigued by any 'lens' that allowed me to *peer beneath* so to speak, giving me/us glimpses of other more shadowy forms of living, that gave 'relief' to everyday understandings warranted in mainstream thinking (in the sense of making them visible like a 'relief' [I thank my daughter Clodagh for this metaphor]), as well as relief from dominant viewpoints!) This seeking of multiple understandings, which I can now recognise as primarily *relational* in nature, can be seen as ways of foregrounding and re-punctuating from the tacit and/or commonly subordinated knowledges which are part of a continuous and inclusional background flow of experience, the routine and conventional meanings that guide our everyday behaviour¹³.

These experiences are clearly an early expression of what I'm now calling 'presencing developmental possibilities', where I've engaged in 'experiments' seeking and embodying new ontological understandings of living. I've plunged into these deep waters in order to develop the attitudes, skills, and sense of self that might equip me for more intelligent manoeuvring and adaptation to working and living in an increasingly uncertain and complex world – what Wittgenstein calls learning 'how to go on together' (1958), and in what Barnett has referred to as a world of 'supercomplexity' (2000).

In reflecting on my coaching practice over recent years, I've realized that this is also something I'm doing all the time with my students and that it has in practice become the central and 'leading' element of my pedagogic approach. In the process it has become a key standard of judgement I use to frame and evaluate what I'm doing, and in the next video clip I show how this term first emerged during a supervision session with Jack Whitehead, as a insight that would spark a 'reaction' leading to a new 'language-game' (Wittgenstein, 1958). In this clip - *presencing developmental possibilities part 1* - we have been talking about my practice of 'intuitive inferencing', and evidence that this seemed to be working, discussing in particular

¹³ as Shotter remarks, though these momentarily emerging 'forms' '...have no substantial existence in themselves...[they] have the character of 'real presences' (Steiner, 1989). While invisible as such, they are not 'nothings'; they are 'somethings' with a felt presence. Understanding their nature affords us not only a sense of 'who' the others around us 'are', but also of 'where they are coming from', of how we are 'placed' in relation to them, and of how we might 'go on' with them in the future.' (2003, p 246).

my experiences with one of my students who had found my several interventions ‘right on the button’ for her.

I’ve just been exploring my suggestion to her to read about ‘womens’ ways of knowing’ which produced an amazed ‘how did you know I needed *this*’ reaction from her. As I explain what I thought I was doing, I use the phrase ‘which is a kind of a presencing developmental possibilities’, offering students something *now* that I think they would find useful in the future. Jack immediately fastens on to this phrase, ‘a kind of presencing developmental possibilities’, and I admit that, although this notion has been in the back of my mind for some time, I’d not thought about that particular phrase before. The laughter and expressive body language provides visual evidence of the energy that is being released as this insight is revealed to us. As you will see later on in Chapter 4, I use this as an illustration of what, following Wittgenstein, I call a ‘primitive reaction’ leading to a new ‘language-game’ (Wittgenstein, 1958). See what you make of it.



10. *presencing developmental possibilities part 1*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZC-DvE7N50>

I first came across the term ‘presencing’ in Scharmer’s writing (Scharmer, 2003) and I’ll discuss this link further in Chapter 7. But here the idea of ‘presencing’ is related to something I’ve long been interested in called ‘reducing the transfer gap’ created by e.g. off site training/development courses (referred to earlier in Chapter 2). Building on the concept of ‘close learning’ first coined by Gosling and Mintzberg (2006), I try to create opportunities for people to learn and integrate that learning *while* they are doing; and not just ‘doing’ but ‘doing really well’. What I realized was that I wanted people to learn *and* to develop the skills to apply their learning *in context*, so that they picked up the ‘contextualizing skills’ - which are generally ignored - as well as the ‘tools’¹⁴. I’ve grown to believe that this can be done through a special kind of learning in the moment from everyday experiences, and therefore regard everyday work as a major opportunity for development, in which the so-called ‘transfer gap’ can be minimized. In this process, as in jazz improvisation, the gap between ‘composing’ and ‘performing’ can be reduced to a

¹⁴ This is a good illustration of what I refer to in the Introduction as ‘clues’ distributed throughout the thesis, that point attention to my deep interest in the issue of ‘contextualising’ that in July, 2011, quite suddenly came together to form my new version of ‘presencing’ i.e. presencing empathetic responsiveness to requisite situated practice’ – see pp 14-15.

moment in time. I see it also as foregrounding a dimension of the 'hidden curriculum' (Jackson, 1968) so that the issue of context and contextualising becomes a critical and legitimate focus for an educator like myself. As Freire remarked 'it's impossible for education to be neutral' (Horton and Freire, 1990, p 104) and the grounding influence of world view and local context of the teacher will be picked up tacitly by students.

Seeking/valorising evidence of ontological achievement

As indicated earlier, the coach has considerable discretion and influence over the marking process for the six formal essays and the dissertation, as long as he/she has the confidence of the director/external examiner. I have now achieved this for six years - so what kind of evaluative criteria have I applied to my marking practices, and how have I decided to assess and grade students so that they meet my interpretation of the universities standards? In my July, 08 paper on using a 'formative assessment' process (Appendix 5), I make it quite clear that students need to satisfy me on a broad range of criteria that certainly address obvious academic standards like 'answering the question', 'logical reasoning', 'critical engagement with sources', and so on.

I also use other less academic criteria to reach my final judgements, like e.g. I want to hear their *own voice* in terms of how they have experienced a particular idea/concept both in thought and deed - *in what ways has it changed them?*; and what are they doing or going to do with the now experienced idea, in terms of *applying it in their own practice* in order to improve their own and others' performance. In other words, I'm interested in them making a difference in their world of work: my intent is on their *situated performance*, exploiting the kind of tacit and embodied knowing that leads to authentic performance in real life situations.

It's this wider range of criteria that I look for and comment on in my feedback and grading work. It is also behind my need to seek out what Shotter calls a 'third kind of knowing' in follow-up interviews with past students, to generate a higher quality of feedback on the validity of my 'online'-based claims about the developments that students have achieved during the programme.

Maintaining dependable relationships

This standard of judgement has taken the longest to emerge, probably because it was strongly influenced by early childhood experiences. I frame it as providing ongoing and stable support for others without this being *contingent* on their responses. It plays a complementary role to the other two standards, offering the security of a dependable relationship as students deal with the anxieties and uncertainties of learning and development involved in knowing how to go on.

I first became aware of its important role in my performance when reflecting on my behaviour after some four years of coaching on the MA. Due to the 'isolated' and asynchronous nature of the programme, I have found myself intensely pursuing my aim of making a difference for my students for long periods of time, with little clear and detailed feedback either on how I was doing in regard to my central question 'how do I improve my practice?', or the encouragement and support for general performance one might normally expect - either from students, other coaches, or academic staff. Examples include responding with sensitivity and vigor to 'late' logs, even those submitted after a phase had ended, and feedback from one student

who said he experienced both ‘conditional and unconditional regard’, where he felt that ‘even though this (work) was poor/ weak and could be improved, I (the coach) will STILL give 100% attention to this.’ Here *my* standards had not been transferred to others and I’ve been happy to do what I thought was right, however others might react.

I realized that there was something powerful at work here. It has slowly become clearer to me that this very deep seated behaviour springs originally from growing up in a broken home where because of my Dad’s general unreliability, I was telling myself all the time that I would never be like him. So I spend a lot of time in ‘second position’ thinking about what the other wants/needs, never to let people down, and so on. This is most obvious in my relationship with my youngest daughter who lost her mother at 13, and where I bend over backwards to be an absolutely dependable father and supporter, without looking for anything in return. I can now see that this is also influenced by my desire to be receptive and responsive. So it doesn’t feel quite such an automatic response: I am choosing to be dependable in order to improve my educational influence.

So in summary, if I can notice that what I’m doing is meeting these three criteria, I feel able to continue working because there is continuity and coherence between these and the trios of ‘ontological skills’ and ‘embodied values’. As a result I can explain my influence and so claim that ‘this is what I do, *does*’, and say ‘this is *why* I do what I do’.

* * *

Having completed this review of the ‘steps’ I’ve been taking towards developing my own ‘living theory’ I can now summarise how I stand in relation to the ‘philosophical trinity’ of questions facing any serious researcher i.e. what exists or *ontology*, how do I know what exists or *epistemology*, and what is valuable or *axiology*? (Durant-Law, 2005). And of course to this must be added the fourth question about *methodology* that soon follows, which is how can a researcher discover whatever they believe can be known? (Guba & Lincoln 1998)’

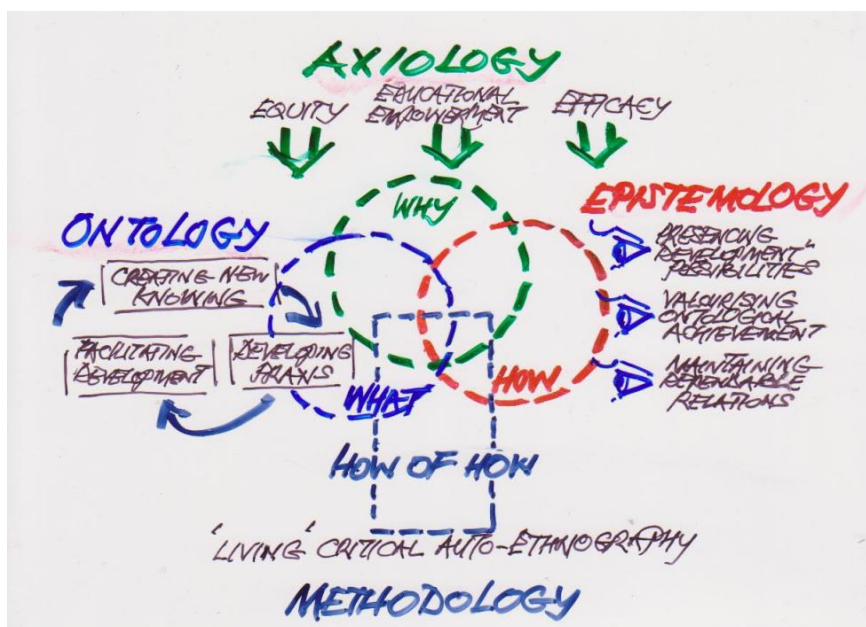
THE METHODOLOGY EMERGES

In talking about this quartet of ‘ologies’, and their own ‘participative’ form of Co-operative Inquiry, Heron and Reason (1997) position qualitative approaches like ethnography as being *about* people, about ‘halfway’ between positivist research *on* people and their own form of inquiry *with* people. They also offer an extended epistemology which warrants several forms of knowing like experiential, practical, and presentational which potentially provides a much richer palette with which to paint pictures of what’s happening. I’ll come back to their critique of a qualitative inquiry method like ethnography when I look at my chosen inquiry method of critical auto-ethnography in the next section.

‘Inventing’ an aligned methodology

Here is a picture of my version of the ‘philosophical trinity’ of axiology, ontology, and epistemology, which is based directly on the material I’ve provided in the previous section ‘steps towards a living theory’. You’ll see that the three *embodied values*

represent my 'axiology', and though they don't use the phrase coined by Heron and Reason, these are about 'human flourishing' as the reason *why* I do what I do. The three *ontological skills* represent my 'ontology', the 'becoming' form of reality I'm seeking to create in my work, and the *what* I do. And finally, the three *standards of judgement* represent my 'epistemology', the *how* I will assess and know whether what I'm doing and why I'm doing it, is coming into presence. I believe these are in alignment with each other, at least in the local context of my inquiry, and provide a powerful source of value-associated energy for both my 'doing' and 'inquiring' work.



THE CONSTELLATION OF VALUES, BEHAVIOURS, AND STANDARDS OF JUDGEMENT THAT CONSTITUTE MY LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORY

They also provide a particularly strong force-field to support my efforts to discover whatever I believe can be known, and the 'methodological inventiveness' I've generated 'to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care' (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p. 169), in building a methodology for supporting my inquiry. So in addition to wanting to understand how educational influencing can take place in an online environment, I've also been driven for a very long period of time to find better ways of doing this. And this has obviously included the issue of finding out how I'm doing at the moment: as, in most forms of action research, I've been inquiring into outcomes, finding out more about the 'what what I do, *does*'.

One way of looking at this so-called 'inventiveness' is to see how in carrying out my research, certainly initially without a specific research methodology in mind, I've made partial use of a range of approaches used in qualitative methods of research. If I use Cresswell's review of qualitative methods (2007) of 'five' such approaches (first pointed out to me by Jack Whitehead), I can begin to see how I've been making use of

all of them to some extent, but in particular ways that have been conditioned by the largely implicit living theory 'trinity' I've been working within while registered at Bath. Here is how I see my 'inclusional entanglement' with each of these:

- as Cresswell indicates, '*narrative* can be both a method and the phenomenon of study' (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2006), and I've used this in 'patchwork' form in Chapter 1 to tell a story of about my development, in Chapter 6 to surface longer term changes in my students using the concept of 'reflexive biography', and in this chapter to make 'rationally visible' (Garfinkel, 1967) various educational influences in my own life.
- again paraphrasing Cresswell, whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, in *phenomenology* the focus is on describing what *all* participants have in common, thus reducing individual experiences within a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence. Though my use of Wittgenstein's 'primitive reaction' and Stern's 'unfolding contours of meaning' in Chapter 4 smacks of a phenomenological approach, my emphasis is much more on the unique experiences and explanations of educational influencing in individual working lives.
- in *grounded theory* the 'theory' is not something that is taken off the shelf but is generated from the 'grounds' of data generated by participants in a study, in order to provide a general explanation of a process or event. Though my work is 'grounded' in my detailed experiences with students, the explanatory principles I'm using here come from my experience of my *own* living values and their influence on my own education, and those of others I've worked with, and as such, are not abstract generalizations but unique personal expressions
- according to Cresswell, *ethnography* is the study of the meaning of behaviour, language, and interaction among members of a 'culture-sharing' group involving extended observation. I can certainly claim to have immersed myself in the day to day educational process, of myself in a real physical sense, and my students mainly in a virtual sense, where we have shared the culture of inquiry fostered during the MA experience. However I've been studying the educational process not just to 'explain' it but to 'improve' it, so my version of ethnography has involved 'critical' and 'educational influencing' dimensions.
- though some observers see *case studies* not as a methodology as such but as a choice of 'what is studied' (Stake, 2005) the last of Cresswell's 'five' methods is usually seen as a way of studying a complex and possibly 'messy' issue through the study of a bounded system. As you will note in Chapters 4-6 I've made use of the work of three students to act as 'cases' for the much larger group I've worked with over the past 8 years, where I've sought to develop an insider view of the educational process which could provide valuable information for the MA programme as a whole. But rather than seeing each case as bounded, my stance here has been to adopt a more open ended approach to the various influences which have been at work.

This openness is something that Whitehead, following Rayner, has described as being involved in 'a relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries' (Whitehead, 2009). In this 'inclusional' space, I believe my students and I have been more open to being mutually influenced by our *creative experiencing* of 'life-affirming energy' that Vasilyuk for one has linked to the expression of peoples' core values (Vasilyuk, 1991). In this process, the educational influence on us of others is always mediated by our own

life history, originality and creativity, a central feature of a living theory approach and a basic difference to these ‘five’ methods with which it bears a family resemblance. And having now set the scene, I’d like to say a little more about the particular form of the ethnographic method that I’ve evolved over time to inquire into the educational influence process in an online programme on a situated practice.

Using a critical form of auto-ethnography

In the previous section you can see that I felt I was using a form of this method of inquiry but one that involved both ‘auto’ and ‘critical’ dimensions. Let me say a bit more about how I now see myself as using an ethnographic version of living theory in this inquiry. If I submit my approach to the series of definitional criteria posed by O’Reilly (2009, p 52), I find myself nodding vigorously in assent: yes, I am doing all of these!

- uses iterative-inductive approach that evolves through the study
- involves direct and sustained contact with people within context of daily lives and cultures
- watches what happens, listens, asks questions
- produces a richly detailed account
- respects the irreducibility of human experience
- acknowledges the role of theory
- acknowledges the researchers own role
- views people as part object/part subject

Looking further into this, I can point to Chapter 1 as being a patchwork version of an extended period of ‘memo writing’ that I’ve been engaged in – both writings to ‘diary’ as well as seven years worth of digital files recorded on my Olympus voice recorder, most often while driving on the motorways between Exeter, Bath, Oxford, and Eastbourne! These personal thoughts have all been about understanding the meanings of ‘sustained contact’ between myself and my students, watching, listening, asking questions, producing rich accounts as against ‘thin conclusions’ (Geertz, 1993), being reflexive, using and building theories, and so on. But I’ve been doing these things not primarily for the more usual form of post-hoc analysis but to support a continuing process of experimenting and checking validity, in order to improve my practice in the moment. Hence my view that it’s a ‘living theory’ version of ethnography.

With regard to the ‘critical’ dimension, O’Reilly (2009, p 52) defines this as an ‘attempt to expose hidden agendas, challenge oppressive assumptions, describe power relations, and generally critique the taken-for-granted’, and, I would add, in order to change situations that are not supportive of ‘human flourishing’ (a term offered by Peter Reason in response to the ‘why’ question (Heron and Reason, 1997)). So critical ethnography goes beyond just *understanding*, to choose a way of seeing the world in ways that are judged to be ‘fairer, more just, even more truthful’, and to attempt to *change* situations which don’t meet these criteria (O’Reilly, 2009, p 52). When I look e.g. at my writing in Chapter 2 where I’m all the time looking to *problematise* mainstream ways of treating matters, I have little doubt that I’m very much in the ‘critical’ camp – and here as a major factor in this development, I acknowledge the influence on my thinking of Foucault and his ideas about ‘power-knowledge’ and disciplinary regimes.

Finally regarding the ‘auto’ dimension to my inquiry, I can see quite clearly that by foregrounding my own role and experiences in this account, and by writing reflectively

and reflexively about these personal experiences, I'm accepting the intimate relationship between researcher and researched. I remember the shock of recognition of this principle (again) when asked to write about the 'I' doing the researching in my first year at Bath! I say recognised 'again' because I'd first come across this idea a few years earlier when David Campbell, talking about first and second order cybernetics (Keeney, 1983), remarked that the shift occurs when you move from saying 'I see the problem' to saying 'what *I* see is *part* of the problem'. Of course this is something that is very easy to forget, especially when you regard yourself as an observer and not a participant, and don't keep reflecting on the fact that your personal fingerprints are all over your data!

So given this particular approach to the four 'ologies', how am I thinking now about the issue of validity, and what I might need to consider to interest others in my ideas?

EXPLORING THE CHALLENGE OF VALIDITY

While I'm no great respecter of formal discipline boundaries and eclectic to a fault in my search for new ideas I can try out in my professional work, I do remember being struck early on by the need to maintain 'alignment' between the methodology you use and the framing ontology and epistemology: mix your 'ologies' at your peril seemed to be the advice! Due to my interest in social construction and personally influenced by Ken Gergen's relational take on identity, I quite quickly came to the view that my epistemology would be *relational* i.e. I would seek to make sense of events/experiences in the context of relations and the sense making that takes place in conversations between interlocutors. I then struggled for some time to see what my view of ontology would need to look like to align with such a view on knowing. As you will have read in Chapter 1, a possible answer came to me while driving down the M5 to Exeter in an elaborated form of my metaphor of 'seeking roots in the future'. As you may recall I came to the conclusion that my 'seeking roots' in conversations with students, could also be understood as a search for identity in a 'becoming-in-relationship' – a finding out and creating who I am *as* I help others in dialogically structured relations¹⁵.

I believe that the ground I've covered in this chapter will have explored and cast further light on the extent to which my 'ologies' are aligned and appropriate for the purposes of my research, and will also have filled in some of the gaps on the nature of the methodology I've evolved. As I mention in the Introduction, I will be adding to this in each of the four chapters that follow. But since my exposure to Rayner's concept of 'natural inclusion' and Shotter's 'third kind of knowing' I believe I've developed a perspective where these four 'ologies' seem very much to be in relations which are 'including each in the reciprocal dynamic influence of the other through their mutual inclusion in and of space' (Rayner, 2010a, p.2). So e.g. my epistemology seems deeply entangled with aspects of ontological/bodily expressiveness, and my methodology dependent on situated, dialogically structured, gestural interactions which constitute a 'third kind of knowing', a knowing 'from' within a conversation. The boundaries between these philosophical concepts now seem to be more permeable and dynamic than they were a few years ago...and less critical to achieving good outcomes. What I want to do in the final part of this chapter is to look again at this question of alignment

¹⁵ As Shotter remarks in 'Rayner-like' terms: 'this makes it very difficult for us to characterize their nature: they have neither a fully orderly nor a fully disorderly structure, neither a completely stable nor an easily changed organization, neither a fully subjective nor a fully objective character—hence their primordial nature...They are also non-locatable, in that they are 'spread out' or 'distributed' amongst all those participating in them: that is, a real presence is a distributed structure, constituted in and by contributions from many different participants or participations. (Shotter, 2003, p 458)

and in particular at the question of the likely validity of the claims I make about the kinds of educational influence I believe I'm achieving.

Assessing the validity of 'praxis'

To set the scene for this final discussion in this chapter, I offer a quote from Hirst that Jack Whitehead drew my attention to. He said that much understanding of educational theory will be developed: 'in the context of immediate practical experience, and will be co-terminous with everyday understanding. In particular, many of its operational principles, both explicit and implicit, will be of their nature generalisations from practical experience and have as their justification the results of individual activities and practices... Rationally defensible practical principles, I suggest, must of their nature stand up to such practical tests and without that are necessarily inadequate.' (Hirst, 1983, p. 18). I'm very much encouraged in this support for my own intent to develop theory based on everyday practice, and that will 'stand up to such practical tests'.

There is further support for this view in a recent research paper surveying current methods of assessing quality in practice-based research, by Furlong and Onacea (2005). In this they refer to Gibbons et al (1994) who describe 'Mode 2' as an emerging form of 'context based knowledge production' where 'knowledge is generated in the process of providing solutions to problems which have been identified on the ground in the context of application' (ibid, p. 8). Furlong and Onacea use this idea to broaden the perspective for assessing research quality in general, and put forward a fourfold framework with which to better assess the value of practice based or applied work. These are: economic (e.g. cost effective), technological (e.g. operationalisability), epistemic (e.g. contribution to knowledge), and a final factor they describe as 'capacity to act' or 'value for people' (e.g. personal growth). They suggest the framework could be used in a flexible way with some factors being more relevant to some research projects e.g. one claiming to add to public (codified) knowledge would be different to say, another claiming to make a contribution to developing practices.

This 'capacity to act', usually equated to practical wisdom, is characterised as making a 'contribution to collective and personal growth of practitioners and policy makers: changing them as people through establishing forms of collaboration and partnership, increasing their receptiveness, reflexivity, virtuousness and morality. This they call '*capacity building and value for people* in terms of the development of tacit knowledge and of the ethical, interactional and critical dimensions of practice.' (Furlong and Onacea, 2005, p.10). In supporting the claims of 'practical wisdom', the authors turn uncertainty and situatedness from being a weakness (i.e. lack of accuracy and definite knowledge) into a strength (i.e. ethical human encounters where virtue develops and is enacted). This they feel will support critique and collaboration for a better understanding of educational practice through the 'enhancement of (ethically) authentic action rather than the accumulation of (theoretical) knowledge'. They end by saying that 'because the roots of this...are in ethical concerns and in tacit, situated knowledge, it is extremely difficult to capture in the research appraisal process.' (ibid, p.14).

However, given the living theory view that such standards of judgement are implicit in how one goes about work and will usually emerge after the doing (Lyotard, 1979) there seem to be grounds for believing that properly focused collaborative reflection during a practice oriented education like the MA in Leadership Studies, could make a useful contribution to this area. This is very much about 'practice' in spaces where there is a need for *practical wisdom* e.g. where there is uncertainty and situatedness and ethical encounters where virtue is enacted; where benefits arise from a receptiveness and

responsiveness to tacit knowledge and practitioner viewpoints; where self reflection involving deliberation and choice and a critical attitude/expansion of self regulation is recognized; and finally where partnership and willingness to collaborate are valued.

Conceptualisations of validity

Obviously in such a venture, I'm going to be involved in questions of 'interpretive validity' and how we might validate what are likely to be creative practices which don't necessarily fit into the conventions of the Academy. So my mind has reached towards some ideas I first came across at the Social Construction conference I attended in 1993 when I heard Patti Lather talk about four different kinds of validity for post modern research. Here is what I wrote in June, 1993 as a file note on my visit to the conference which I mentioned earlier in Chapter 1:

'validity is less a matter of looking harder or more closely but of seeing multiple frames which are able to co-exist while at the same time appearing to be mutually incompatible...It is important to be open to counter interpretations and to look for inconsistencies as well as consistencies...and to the question of what one backgrounds and foregrounds' (Kinsella, 1993 in Chapter 1).

So I've become increasingly interested in the concept of *rhizomatic* validity that Lather referred to then. Though there are various approaches to this idea, one metaphor that I'm happy to sign up to is again from Lather who argues that to act rhizomatically, is 'to act via relay, circuit, multiple-openings, as crabgrass in the lawn of academic preconceptions ...There is no trunk, no emergence from a single root, but rather arbitrary branchings off and temporary frontiers that can only be mapped, not blueprinted ... Rhizomatics are about the move from hierarchies to networks and the complexity of problematics where any concept, when pulled, is recognised as connected to a mass of tangled ideas, uprooted, as it were, from the epistemological field.' (Lather, 1994, p 45). As le Grange and Beets continue in their paper on re-conceptualising validity in postmodern research 'Rhizomatic validity troubles the single rootedness of validities underpinned by positivist assumptions...Rhizomatic validity dissolves inferences "by making them as temporary, partial [and] invested" (Lather, 1994, p 46). Teachers/ assessors might therefore self-reflexively engage with the inferences they seek to draw...[and to] acknowledge they have an autobiography marked by the significations of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, class, and so on' (le Grange and Beets, 2005, p 117) In this context, Ronald Barnett's views that I mentioned earlier, are also relevant: for students to learn to live and contribute effectively in an age of 'supercomplexity', they need to experience not only epistemic but ontological uncertainty and dislocation – and therefore many conflicting views or 'roots' of what is or might be.

What else might I need to consider to assure myself and others that I've subjected my findings to appropriate and adequate criteria of validity? Jack Whitehead has always emphasized the importance of Habermas' four criteria of social validity (1976, pp 2-3) in evaluating and improving the quality of living educational theories. So how might my work measure up in the light of these four standards?

- questions of *comprehensibility* of the writing
- the *evidence* used to justify assertions
- the *explicitness of the values* constituting the normative background of writings
- *authenticity* in showing a commitment to living the values explicitly espoused.

At this stage of reading the document to this point, I hope you'll agree that my work is meeting the first, third, and fourth criteria satisfactorily. Your assessment of the second

will need to wait until you've seen all the evidence supporting my claims which I offer over the next four chapters. But as Barbara Czarniawska (1998, p 15) implies in the Weick quote below – I hope you are finding this a 'good story' so far!

"If accuracy is nice but not necessary in sense making, then what is necessary? The answer is, something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable, something that embodies past experience and expectations, something which resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but can also be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to contrast. In short, what is necessary in sense making is a good story'. (Weick, 1979, pp 60-61)

I'd like to end this section and chapter with some words on influence and originality from Said. Using a letter from the poet Valery to his friend Mallarme, he says that: 'We say that an author is original when we cannot trace the hidden transformations that others underwent in his mind; we mean to say that the dependence on what he does on what others have done is excessively complex and irregular. There are works in the likeness of others, and works that are the reverse of others, but there are also works of which the relation with earlier productions is so intricate that we become confused and attribute them to the direct intervention of the gods.' (Said, 1997, p.15). He calls this 'derived achievement' in contrast to perhaps the more usual process of 'the weight of one writer coming down in the work of another'. In this thesis I engage with the ideas and writings of many other authors and while my use of 'their' ideas may sometimes be rather superficial, or on the other hand, risky and ill-advised, I hope that you will also find ideas in my work whose originality might approach the benchmark of a derived achievement.

As a first step towards persuading you of this I end with a second video clip - *presencing developmental possibilities part 2* - exploring further the idea of 'presencing developmental possibilities'. This comes towards the end of our discussion when we are reviewing the ground we've covered. Jack is talking about Lather's notions of rhizomatic and ironic validity (Lather, 1993) and pointing out that however we describe the educational relationship, 'it's not "it"... but we can get closer to authentic and valid representation". I interject with 'and also we stay *playful*...could be this...could be that...but it's good enough for the moment'. Jack continues 'out of the playfulness



11. *presencing developmental possibilities part 2*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6PiA7txcuk>

you've articulated something spontaneously...that I felt was a highly original, distinguishing characteristic of an educational relationship'. I point out that this is something I hadn't realised before, and now can see that all my work on the logs is in fact 'pointing' students towards these possibilities - *it's in the logs!* The discussion continues and Jack confirms that 'I felt your energy...it has been life affirming'. We continue talking about the many ways in which I'm able to express my creative engagement and quality of reflection, concluding that this is not 'work' but my way of being. Jack's outburst of laughter and vigorous arm rubbing provides the backdrop for his warming conclusion: 'I don't often come out of these conversations feeling like this: that's really great...you've really got it!

This takes me back again to Polanyi and his notion of validity as being concerned with 'fruitfulness' - by which he meant the possibility of one's 'conclusions' at any one time, not being final but susceptible to further improved 'approximations' to a hidden reality. Hence his idea of a 'hierarchy of ontology' i.e. that it's possible for there to be further 'achievements' - 'each a rich nexus of meaningful relations, involving an interplay of "knower and known," that constitute an emergent comprehensive entity.' (Takaki, 2010, p 36). As Takaki goes on, his colleague Phil Mullins, 'who emphasizes the continuity of ontology and meaning in understanding Polanyi's notion of a comprehensive entity, writes: "Knowing and being are woven inextricably together...the ontological status of entities is not tied largely to existence and tangibility, but to an entity's intelligibility and its prospect for greater intelligibility."' (Mullins in Takaki, 2010, p 36). Thus the emergence of achievements establishes an (ongoing) ontological hierarchy'. So perhaps I *have* 'really got it'...but perhaps there are still prospects for 'greater intelligibility'!

* * *

In this chapter I've offered a range of ideas and evidence concerning how I think about my living theory approach to the action research I've been carrying out over the past decade, and which I've used to explore, analyse, and organize my ideas and findings on a coaching pedagogy of presencing on a distance learning programme. However I've not yet finished with methodology, and my natural 'inventiveness' will continue to generate further ideas in the next three chapters as I look at and interpret what I've 'found' (or co-created) in my educational practice, providing evidence for the claims which I will finally pull together in Chapter 7.