CHAPTER 1 – Introduction and Social Context

1.1 About the Researcher – Some Autobiographical Details

As the researcher engages in this narrative research project he is mindful of the myth making that he is engaged in in its original sense as defined by Kate Armstrong (2006) writing in the Guardian newspaper (p.30):

"The word 'myth' today is regarded as something that is not true. However, originally myth was not concerned with actual occurrence but with an event's deeper meaning. Myth has been well described as an early form of psychology; instead of representing external reality, it laid bare our inner world. It was not attempting to be factual and objective, but to outline a course of action that would help us to deal with our problematic lives."

This approach to research can be identified as a self "case study", new paradigm socio-ethnographic approach linked to action research living theory, narrative research and grounded theory (See chapter 3 for more detail on this methodology). In this opening chapter the researcher lays bare his inner world as he explores his past to discover how he has arrived at this point in his life embodying the values that he carries with him and how this has led to a course of action that helps him to deal with his problematic life. Who the researcher is, is central to what he does and what he does is central to this study. It is for this reason that the reader is presented with a certain amount of autobiographical information. These are the experiences that have made the researcher who he is and that have led him to conduct this research.

Figure 1a – Who is the researcher?

The researcher began life as an orphan, adopted at, or just after birth, by a loving couple whom he calls "Mum and Dad". They know nothing about his natural parents, nor does he. He finds it painful to probe too much. He was a shy boy:

His face shows no emotion

For love he needs a potion

To get the wheels in motion

As to why, he has no notion

Always standing on the sidelines, watching the action flow

Now my daughter like me, she watches which way the world will go

My boy, he's on the pitch scoring a brilliant goal

Me, I'm still on the sidelines yearning with my soul

Too shy to take centre stage

I was too shy to show my rage

Like living life inside a cage

Or a book with an empty inside page.

(Potts, 2005)

As he has grown up he has learned how to fill that empty page. People's love has given him the courage needed and this research project is part of that process.

The researcher wonders what influence this uncertainty has had on his life and values. He is immensely grateful for the secure upbringing that his adoptive parents gave him. He has developed a set of values that have enabled him to view the world in what he thinks is a balanced, humanitarian way. His experiences in life have inculcated deep-rooted values that he attempts to live by. Perhaps it is the uncertainty that has led to him valuing these living principles so highly. Values are central to this research project, both to the subject-matter and to the research methodology.

1.2 Developing A Belief in Social Justice

He attended a Primary school that was in the toughest part of town. It had a strong community ethos and the researcher learned to survive and indeed thrive in that community. After that he attended a boys Grammar school that he detested. He found many of the teachers and pupils arrogant. He was unable to shine and felt oppressed and insignificant. The one glimmer of light was his teacher of Politics and Economics, subjects that he found fascinating. This teacher inspired him to study these subjects and he found himself intrigued by this world. They were subjects that seemed to have real meaning and relevance in the modern world. His family background had given him

some insight in to these worlds. His father is a reader of the Guardian newspaper and comes from Salford. His father's upbringing between the wars with four brothers and sisters was shrouded in poverty. His father was unemployed for long periods of time and, an intelligent man, he had been politicised by the family circumstances. He recognised that the poverty could be avoided, that individuals and governments had responsibility to improve life for the poor. Stories of hardship told and re-told around the dinner table left the researcher wondering how such situations could be ameliorated. He lived with his grandmother who was from Oldham in Lancashire. She had worked in a cotton mill for twenty years and re-counted the conditions that she had worked in, embedding further a sense of social injustice.

Thus a strong belief in social justice is due to his father and mother's families. This is why the researcher is attracted to the underdog and stories about the lives of people from disadvantaged backgrounds and why he took the opportunity to visit Africa when it came.

1.3 Learning from a Visit to Africa

The researcher first visited Africa with his wife in 1980, when she befriended a Cameroonian girl whilst at University. This girl's courage was astonishing. She had left her husband and five children at home in the north of Cameroon and come to England to study for three years to gain a teaching qualification. The researcher and his wife went to visit her and her family during the summer holidays. The researcher was shocked by what he saw in Cameroon. Never before had he been confronted by the desperate poverty and filthy living

conditions that he encountered there. This had a profound influence on him and challenged his thinking about his own priorities. It disturbed his social conscience. He was suddenly aware of the desperation that so many people were faced with in trying to eke out a living. He had witnessed poverty in the United Kingdom, working for a time with a charity delivering soup to homeless people but this had not adequately prepared him for what he saw in Cameroon, which was poverty on a much greater scale. As a result of his visit to Cameroon he was, in the language of self-study action research (See section 3.2.8), experiencing a concern where his values were not being fully lived in his practice. A plan was formulated and data was gathered to consider how to address this concern. As a result, he got involved with the UK charity Action Aid, paying a monthly contribution to support a student through school. In evaluating his actions he thought that if this experience could have such a dramatic impact on his own learning then why not replicate it for others? This social impact as evidence of social improvement is part of the research framework.

It seemed to the researcher then that there was an obligation on the more fortunate to provide help for those in less fortunate circumstances. As an educator it seemed that funding a child's education was a way of providing an opportunity for that child and their family to access greater opportunities in life. In his view education was the key to improvement. This view was gained from critiquing the work of authors such as Freire (1970) in Pedagogy of the Oppressed where he talks of education as empowerment, Simon (1991) on the power of education to transform the social order and documents such as

The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All which states that one of the reasons for meeting basic learning needs is to empower the individual. This notion of education as a means of empowerment is a view that he continues to hold and is one of the key values that he carries with him in his work to develop the partnership between his own school, Sarum Academy, formerly Salisbury High School, and Nqabakazulu School.

This view is supported by the Centre for Supporting Comprehensive Education (CSCS) based at the University of Leicester. In their document "*Values at the Heart of Learning*, *A Framework for Debate*" (2005), they state their ideal as *"High quality education for all"* and one of the values underpinning this they state as,

"Positive action to overcome huge and unfair differences in student experience, including provision for those deprived of material, emotional and intellectual support as a result of their home circumstances or impoverished environment." p.1 (CSCS, 2005)

From his visit to Africa the researcher had learned that the differences in student experience between the UK and Africa are both huge and unfair. He became committed to doing something to address this.

1.4 An Opportunity to Live Out His Values More Fully

Another value underpinning the CSCS ideal is stated as:

"Commitment to co-operation and collaboration between institutions to secure best practice, innovation and access for all learners." p.1(CSCS, 2005)

The researcher sought opportunities to develop this commitment from his school. An opportunity to visit South Africa came with a successful application for a Teachers International Professional Development (T.I.P.D.) study trip with 14 other Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers paid for by the British Council.

During this first visit to South Africa in February 2000 several Schools in the Durban area were visited and representatives from the education ministry were spoken with. The situation witnessed during this visit to South Africa again made a lasting impression on the researcher. Here was a country looking ahead with great optimism after the ravages of apartheid. There was more optimism than had been seen in Cameroon. Yet the impact of apartheid was still so readily apparent. Moving a few hundred metres down the road took one from a high security fenced off detached residence with pleasant gardens to a high-density shanty town where people lived under cardboard and corrugated iron surrounded by mud. Such living conditions were leading to huge and unfair differences in student experience. The stark inequality left the researcher stunned and motivated to take action to improve matters for the black urban poor.

A recognition of the significance of social injustice is why the songs of Bruce Springsteen about the lives of underdogs resonate. It is the humanity of the songs that touches the researcher. This is demonstrated in the song; Matamoros Banks. The song tells the story of a man, one of many, who

drowns trying to cross illegally in to the USA from Mexico. What is poignant about this song is that the writer brings this man to life. In this way he forces the listener to accept his qualities as a human being. It makes the listener think of how things can be improved for this man and others like him, perhaps this is our essential humanity. These are the words of the song Matamoros Banks:

Figure 1b

Audio Track 1 – **Double Click on the song title below to play with Windows Media Player**

12 Matamoros Banks.wma

For two days the river keeps you down

Then you rise to the light without a sound

Past the playgrounds and empty switching yards

The turtles eat the skin from your eyes, so they lay open to the stars

Your clothes give way to the current and river stone

Till every trace of who you ever were is gone

And the things of the earth they make their claim

That the things of heaven may do the same

Goodbye, my darling, for your love I give God thanks.

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros banks.

Over rivers of stone and ancient ocean beds

I walk on twine and tyre tread

My pockets full of dust, my mouth filled with cool stone

The pale moon opens the earth to its bones

I long, my darling, for your kiss, for your sweet love I give God thanks

The touch of your loving fingertips

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros banks.

Your sweet memory comes on the evenin' wind

I sleep and dream of holding you in my arms again

The lights of Brownsville, across the river shine

A shout rings out and into the silty red river I dive

I long, my darling, for your kiss, for your sweet love I give God thanks

A touch of your loving fingertips

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros banks.

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros

Meet me on the Matamoros banks.

(Springsteen, 2005 – Devils and Dust – Disc 2, Track 5)

"I'll talk about stories. What I did on this record is tell very specific narrative stories. These are all songs about people whose souls are in danger, or at risk, through where they are in the world, or through what the world is bringing to them" (Springsteen, 2005 – Dvd Devils and Dust)

Springsteen's humanity resonates with the researcher and there are clear parallels with the situations witnessed in Africa where the souls of the people in the black townships of South Africa are at risk. They are facing danger from poverty and AIDS. When the researcher met and talked to the students at Nqabakazulu School for the first time about their own lives, he was confronted by their souls. Look closely at the image of the student captured in this photograph as the researcher recounts his experience.

Figure 1c – The gaze of a student

"In the gaze of this South African student I saw the joy and optimism of youth. I saw the humanity of the gaze as he shows his love for me with whom he is communicating. When I spoke with him and others like him about his hopes and dreams for the future they were full of ambition, yet they were also well aware that their ambition will not be realised because of the tragic realities of their lives. They are living in communities that are decimated by AIDS and by

poverty. Their time and energy is taken by providing enough food for their families to eat". (Potts 2000).

There was something in this picture and other ones like it and in the stories that the researcher heard that touched his inner being and urged him to act.

"The people that are interesting are the people that have something eating at them and they're not exactly sure what that thing is. The characters on this record are all trying to find their way through that, through those questions. And some do it somewhat successfully and some come to tragic ends." (Springsteen, 2005)

This could be a description of the poverty and AIDS that are eating away at the inhabitants of Kwamashu township in Durban, South Africa, as in many other parts of Africa. The members of the community try to find their way through the challenges of life and many come to a tragic end. Some do not. It is the researcher's wish to give some of them hope. It could also be a description of those of us in the more fortunate position of being able to help this community. Through this research project the researcher seeks with others to work through what is *"eating at me"*, or put in another way as McNiff (2006) expresses it, the researcher seeks to live out his values more fully in his professional life.

The author hopes you can see from the writing above that one of the key foci for the researcher in his life is how he connects with other human beings.

There are times when one can only despair at the inhumanity of people to fellow people, but faith in humanity is restored by a human voice or a human act.

What semblance of humanity can we take from the conflict between the Moslem world and western society and the terrible human tragedies that have resulted from that conflict? The events of September 11th 2001 and the aftermath of those events are the subject of Bruce Springsteen's album, "The Rising" (2002). Through the song "Worlds Apart" (Track 7) about the love between an American and a Moslem from the Middle East, he helps the researcher to see the possibility of humanity even in these tragic events:

"We'll find it in this kiss.
In your skin upon my skin, in the beating of our hearts
May the living let us in, before the dead tear us apart".

The two may be worlds apart but it is their humanity, "the kiss, skin upon skin, beating hearts", that binds them. The researcher's humanity is based on a belief in the worth of humanity in all its shapes and forms. This helps to focus his attention on the needs of learners and supports his commitment to bring people together across class, race and religious boundaries. This commitment is shared with the CSCS who state one of their underpinning values to support their ideal of *"High quality education for all"* as:

"Commitment to positive action to break down barriers of class, race and religion by bringing together learners of different class, race and religion in purposeful activities" (CSCS, 2005)

Thus the values of social justice and humanity are fundamental to this PhD project which proposes an agenda of social change, placing it firmly in the improve paradigm approach linked to a research framework goal of a "social manifesto" (Coombs, 2005) rather than a prove paradigm based on a hypothesis. This rationale is explained more thoroughly in the literature review and methodology chapters, chapters 2 and 3.

1.5 Spiritual Development

Whitehead (2003) refers to the importance of spiritual values in education and the researcher recognises the spiritual dimension to his work. The actions in developing the link with Nqabakazulu School, as recounted in this research project, allow the spirit to emerge as the researcher connects with other human beings to create a oneness and develop interconnectedness. In order to help to identify the root of this spirituality the researcher provides here a brief narrative of his spiritual development.

Brought up in a Christian family, he read the bible when a teenager. What stays with him from his upbringing is a sense of humanity, a sense of the oneness and interconnectedness of human beings. *"Treat others as you would have them treat you"* (Luke, 6:31) stands out for the researcher as a

phrase that encapsulates this humanity. It is this value that he seeks to live out more fully in his life as a professional educator.

The researcher also recalls Friedrich Hegel's (1807) spirituality, having written a thesis on Hegel as part of his political theory course at University. Hegel's notion of spirit as the highest form of existence and of it being the result of a dialectical tension between body and mind was intriguing. He saw philosophical thinking as the highest form of the human spirit. The researcher would now argue that actions that are consistent with one's own values are where the human spirit unfolds, not in the thinking behind the actions, although the thinking is a necessary step towards the actions. It is the actions that reveal the values, not the thinking. Nevertheless Hegel's writing led the researcher to consider the notion of spirituality and to see it as not necessarily only a feature of organised religion but as something which one can develop for oneself, through oneself. It seems to the researcher that this innate spirituality is what we connect with when we act in ways that are more consistent with our own values. This innate spirituality is what emerges when one acts in a humanitarian way.

The researcher has also experienced the spirituality of Hinduism on the island of Bali. Whilst travelling in 1990 he fell ill on the island. He was touched by his landlady's offerings to the Hindu Gods to make him better. Contemplation of the religiosity of the people of Bali, evident in the colourful offerings to the Gods everywhere on the island, the well kept temples, the frequent

processions and religious ceremonies, led him to a feeling of spiritual empathy with the people in this Hindu enclave of Indonesia.

And then there was the splendid palace of the Sultans in Yogyakarta and the temple of Borabudur, witnesses to the Moslem faith of the people of mainland Indonesia. Moving north he experienced the quiet Buddhism of Thailand and Laos, meeting monks and visiting the various enigmatic temples.

This was a spiritual journey for him and his wife. It shaped his own spirituality, free from organised religion. It widened his spiritual perspective. Spirituality became something that he carried with him at all times and in all places. It became a sort of agglomeration of values that he seeks to live out and in his most spiritual moments he gets close to living those values out. Thus this PhD research project can be seen as part of a spiritual journey as the researcher seeks to live out his values more fully through the international partnership between Salisbury High School and Nqabakazulu School in Kwamashu township, Durban, South Africa.

1.6 Choosing the Research Project

In July 2005 the researcher completed his Masters degree dissertation. For four years he had been writing about how he was developing his own professional practice. This was a creative and liberating process. He had grown in confidence and trusted his colleagues more and had learned to look at his relationship with people around him in a new light.

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The researcher wished to continue developing his own professional practice and continue creating his own living educational theory (Whitehead, 2006), but how? Some ideas included:

- How can I develop a learning culture in my own School?

- How can I implement a learning model that will make students at Salisbury High School better learners?

- How can I improve my skills as a coach in two different contexts, one working alongside teaching colleagues to improve teaching skills, the other as a junior soccer coach?

Thanks to Jack Whitehead, who had been the researcher's tutor for his Masters Units and dissertation, he decided to return to a theme from a previous study, namely the link with Nqabakazulu School in the black township of Kwamashu in Durban, South Africa.

Having thought it through he concluded that this was the most important way that he could influence others and demonstrate how he can live out his professional values more fully. It was as if he was moving from focussing on his role as an educator in his own School to become a more international professional educator. This step seemed right. It would enable him to reach more people in more communities. It is a theme that is very much in tune with his values.

The researcher recognised the contradiction that existed between his desire to live out the value of Ubuntu (humanity) and the philosophy of individualism that is prevalent in the society that he inhabits. It is his wish to resolve this contradiction by influencing the social formations that he operates within to become more in tune with the value of Ubuntu (See chapter 2 – section 2.3.2). Hence, his desire to involve members of the community in which he lives and works in the development of the partnership with Nqabakazulu School. This research project narrates the development of that partnership. It analyses and evaluates the impact of the partnership activities on the participants and considers the wider implications for education and for government policy.

1.7 Chapter Summary and Rationale for the Project

In this chapter the researcher has presented autobiographical details which serve to provide a context as to how and why he seeks through his actions to make a difference to some of the lives of families in a black township in South Africa and in so doing develop a pedagogy for citizenship. These notes help to explain why he, as a busy Deputy Head in an 11 to 18 mixed comprehensive school, decides to devote a significant amount of time and energy to actions that promote this aim. In evaluating his actions as outlined in this narrative in the forthcoming chapters the researcher asks the reader to use his values of humanity and social justice as stated here, as standards of judgement, as well as evaluating the contribution that he is making to the academy through the development of a pedagogy for citizenship .

The narrative the researcher tells is the story of the link between Salisbury High School and Nqabakazulu School. Through this research project he attempts to make sense of the experience and to explore the deeper meaning of what he and others are doing and its implications for citizenship education. In the sense that he seeks here to outline a course of action to help deal with our problematic lives, he can be said, in Armstrong's words with which this chapter began, to be *"myth making".* In the sense that he seeks through his actions to bring us closer together as human beings, he is acting in the spirit of Ubuntu (See section 2.3.2). Thus he can be said to be myth making in the spirit of Ubuntu.

As an educational practitioner-researcher who seeks to live out his values more fully in his professional life, one of the aims of this project is to make an original contribution to educational knowledge and theory which will inspire others to do the same. Building on the African notion of Ubuntu the researcher seeks to bring humanity closer together through the establishment and development of a partnership between Salisbury High School and Nqabakazulu School. Mindful of his own whiteness, where he sees injustice he wants to act to right that injustice. Putting values at the heart of education, in this original autobiographical self-study account, the researcher reflects on how he has influenced the education of his colleagues and his students as well as his own education, as he and others work with some students and their families in the black township of Kwamashu in Durban, South Africa to raise awareness of injustice and begin to address it. Another reason for conducting this research is to see what transferable pedagogical protocols for citizenship education emerge from the analysis of the partnership and whether there are any points of advice for government in promoting and sustaining international educational partnerships as a form of Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Thus the thesis seeks a synthesis between the citizenship education introduced to the national curriculum in 1999 and the subsequent push for international educational partnerships between schools.

A Purposes, Strategy, Outcomes, Review (PSOR) chart (Coombs 2003, Harri-Augstein & Thomas, 1991) provides a summary of the scope of the research including the aims, the methodology, the expected outcomes and the techniques for review.

Figure 1d – PSOR Chart

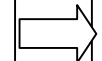| *Action Researcher:*	Mark Potts	*Project Title:*	*Getting the Ubuntu Going*
Organisation:	Salisbury High School	*Date elicited:*	February 2009

P-S-O-R - Organisational Chart for Eliciting Qualitative Data

Purposes

As an educator the researcher wants to make a difference to people's lives. Building on the African notion of Ubuntu and friendship, he seeks to bring humanity closer together through the establishment and development of a partnership between his own school and a South African school. Putting values at the heart of education, in this original autobiographical self-study account, he reflects on how he has influenced the education of his colleagues and his students as well as his own education as he and others work with some students and their families in the township of Kwamashu in Durban, South Africa. Thus he is proposing an agenda of social change and is working clearly within the improve paradigm linked to a research framework goal of a social manifesto (Coombs 2005).

Strategy
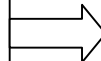
Start with an account of the researcher's development as a professional educator and of the values that drive him to provide the context for an account of the development of a relationship with the school and community in Kwamashu. Review the literature on citizenship and values in education. Adopt a participant action research approach to show how his and others' actions are enhancing the curriculum and the quality of education in both communities. Use video, photographs and commentary to show the influence on the lives of the people in these communities. By designing and exemplifying a method for transforming video data in to valid evidence, the researcher elicits findings from his video evidence. This is triangulated with reflective diary evidence and focus group discussion evidence. Use the findings to draw conclusions and to make recommendations.

Review of all the qualitative evidence gained from the research methods used. Identification of critical arguments and main theoretical research themes through the qualitative analysis procedures using ATLAS and manual methods. From these validated findings critically evaluate the research questions and consider re-focussing the project in the light of findings. Review actions taken and consequences of actions using stated values as standards of judgement leading to consideration of future actions required to achieve research goals.

Review

Outcomes

The epistemological significance can be understood in terms of bringing relationally dynamic standards of judgement, that are appropriate for assessing the quality of practice-based research, into the Academy. Three original contributions to the field are envisaged:

- The development of a conversational learning paradigm from which to analyse action research video data evidence.
- The development of a range of pedagogical protocols for citizenship education that can be derived from school international partnerships.
- An examination of the notion of 'Living Citizenship' and exemplification of it in practice through engagement in the activities of an international educational partnership.
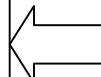
In addition, the researcher wants this work to stand as a unique evidence base for the teaching profession to draw upon in the following ways:

- As a piece of teacher research that exemplifies the autobiographical self-study approach.
- As an example to other professional educators who wish to establish, develop and then sustain a partnership with a school in a developing country.
- As an account that illustrates the rich potential for learning that school partnerships can provide.

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As a result of this PSOR analysis the researcher was able to tentatively

suggest an overarching research question concerning the role of international

educational partnerships in bringing about change and in delivering

citizenship education. This subsequently developed in to the title as the

methodology based on a living educational theory approach to action

research was considered (See section 3.2.8.2) from which the notion of 'living

citizenship' was developed (See section 3.2.9).

In the next chapter the researcher undertakes a review of the literature

concerning international educational partnerships and values in education and

examines more fully the values of humanity (Ubuntu), social justice and equal

opportunities that underpin the international partnership. The literature on

citizenship education is also explored and there is speculation as to how an

international partnership might enrich the delivery of citizenship education and

lead to students and teachers living out their values more fully.