Appendix 1 Transcript

The following is a transcript from talk with Japanese Visitors to Westwood St Thomas School, 10 March 2004. The meeting took place at school in the afternoon. I had not met any of the visitors before. A Researcher who I had worked with had asked me to speak to the group and talk about my experiences of Continuous Professional Development within school and particularly the M.A. programme that I was part of. I had not formally planned what I would say: I simply began talking. The words were recorded on a tape recorder and then transcribed by me.

'Welcome

We have introduced ourselves and I am Simon Riding Head of English at Westwood. In September, I am going to Southampton, to a new school, which is about 20 miles away. This is my first school and I have been a teacher for five and a half years.

I am very pleased to say that I have been a teacher-researcher and it is because I have been a teacher-researcher that I am the teacher I am today.

I would like to talk through a brief history of the teacher-research group we established here at Westwood. It began four years ago and the beginnings of it were because of Stuart Jones. He had an idea to bring teacher-research here

Because he felt it would be an opportunity for staff to look at their own practice and improve what we are doing. We had quite low exam results and it wasn't as it should be. Stuart had done some research himself to get his MA and doing that he had come across the idea of action research. In discussion with the University of Bath, A researcher and Jack, and through those discussions he decided to set up an in-house MA.

In Britain, the traditional view of INSET or training is you do a one-day course. You go somewhere else, London perhaps, and spend a day there in a hotel. But nothing happens. You talk about students we don't have, who are passionate and smiling … but we have students who don't want to learn. We saw INSET as a day out of school. That's of no value. What we wanted to do was to be able to deliver something in-house, in the school. We are using the

expertise of the University, their links with the international context but also use what we know, our own school, our own students. Put these into a 'pot' and see what we come out with in the end.

The first MA module was focusing on teaching and learning. It was really only in the second module that we brought in action research. It was really like opening peoples' eyes. In such a model there is something you want to improve. The simplicity of an action research model; you go through a methodology and you ask yourself if you have succeeded or not. That is simply good teaching and learning process. Now part of that was using the knowledge people had who went to those meetings, who wanted to understand, wanted to get involved.

Our meeting was once a week. Twelve members of staff who wouldn't normally talk to one another talking about how you can improve your practice in school. What can I do better? You think of the theoretical side from the University, 'Well actually this is what theory says about this…' Mix all these together and you come up with lots of ideas and you can then go away and try to improve. What was important, was that every member of staff who went to those meetings accepted they could do their job better and I think that is one of the hardest things for teachers to admit… that we can do it 'better'. The difficulty is convincing people who have been teaching many, many years that they are willing to do this, they can always improve. You will come across barriers, particularly in the British system where people are scared about someone watching them doing their job because they feel insecure … and that they can make it better for their students.

So, we set up this group four years ago to see what we could do - normally two modules every year. We have had people coming into the group, going out of the group but on the whole most people are coming towards the end of their MA like myself, coming onto PhDs. They are in-house as well. The other main benefit is that has been free, just funding from the government, which has meant you can get an MA for nothing

You give in terms of time though. It has all been linked to what we are actually doing in the classroom. The usual way for teachers to do their research is to go away and do something completely alien to them. I teach

English every day in the classroom and I want to do my job better so it is linked to what you are doing in the class every day, so it doesn't become a burden.

If we move onto the importance of the group, as a school we are starting to see that each of the research projects have filtered into the whole school improvement. Now, looking at the different enquiries, we are starting to ask How can we make use of these, we are starting to use the skills that people have more. People have got good research skills; those who have actually thought it through know how to do action research. And that is useful in terms of improving what is going on in classrooms. That's the massive thing – it's making a culture in the school of openness. To bring on board mentoring, a willingness to work with others, breaking down barriers between subjects, across the English Department, the Humanities Department, the Science Department can freely talk with the Geography Department and History teachers in that particular research group. So I am constantly talking about this – it breaks down barriers within the school and that's the key I think the fact that it has been regular as well units are usually for eight weeks at a time and then you tend to have a break where you can go away and collect all your data and then you have another unit a couple of moths later think meetings weekly, once a week same place, same time and so you just get into a pattern. Then it is all voluntary. There is a real need, a real desire for people to work together.

In terms of the evolution of what's next? It is trying in the school to use the skills that we have got and that have been a part of three or four years now take more responsibility for the group, A successful group like this one will eventually start to worry less about the University side. And take more responsibility for running itself. If we are building good researchers they can eventually take more responsibility for themselves. Now that is not replacing the academics in the University, they have a different role. Once we have got a certain level of skills in the group it is letting that group run itself. … the University. Whereas when we first started four years' ago it was almost like a begging child and eventually the child in the group has grown up and we are now in a position what we do still need though is still the support of the University to help It does take time … it has taken us four years. And to take more responsibility. Individuals can deliver sessions, improving practice.

We have got many present about action research and explain action research to and that's the kind of model we arrived at not deliberately and we think that is the way forward for us. It is to allow the group to do more of the teaching itself. Using the skills that we have established there.

In terms of the support that we have had from the University, there has been email contact, usually with Jack and A researcher and contact during emails so we email very often and we draft and they give responses back and we have one on one meetings in terms of the group and we have also accessed summer school units members of staff have build their units through summer schools, at the University so again that has helped to supplement the MA qualifications. The next steps? It is trying to strike a balance between new members and also being able to stir more established members of the group on the same level. There is a group that has grown up together for four years across a series of units. The key thing is to bring new blood. That's the most difficult bit – it's convincing staff to it's like staff management. It is always very uncomfortable to come into a group where people know each other very well. And you don't know anything that they know. A lot of thought needs to be given to how you integrate new people into your group and I think a lot of the new staff in year three were a bit confused because we were happily talking about action research and so on and they didn't understand this. We need to give more thought about how we integrate new people in how you after for different needs, the needs of established people so taking account of that is really important.

Mentoring is a massive step. We are playing ourselves, as a real mentoring school now because four years ago before this group was set up there was no real mentoring in this school. Any mentoring that went on wasn't really any good at all. That's why we have mentoring of new staff academics from the University mentoring us there is a great deal of networks within the school where we are supporting each other, such as Mark Potts, I am having email discussions with him about I am writing a PhD and we are currently having an argument through emails so that is fantastic and the other great thing is that he is my deputy head. And we have this argument going on about what things mean and so it kind of breaks down barriers The boss in the meetings will say You will do as I say and you will agree with me but here we all argue

with one another which is fantastic. Because we are getting better at staff mentoring each other and of students so there is more mentoring going on now of staff who have improved their grade, improved their learning. There is a tutoring system set up where students get the chance to be mentored. And training going on for mentors too so it is really recognizing that mentors need training and that has all rally come about as a result of the MA group. I think just going back to that point of different levels of people in the school working together, it was fantastic because the old head that we had came to a number of meetings and he would sit next to a member of staff in their second year of teaching and we have got a video of this and you wouldn't recognize that this is a head talking to a second year member of staff. It just breaks down all the barriers there is no worrying about Oh What can I say ..? It's such an open discussion and that's what helps to release a lot of emotions and yet to have that openness. I think that is brilliant!

It is the external recognition. We have a running brief called the Investors in People who look at the strengths of an organization to involve its workers in its organization. What we were recognized for is that we do have the in-house MA group set up and those who are involved in it say how empowered they are and how happy they are because it gives them because it gives them recognition for what they are doing that nationally what we are doing is OK. Now having a number of teacher researcher groups in the county and there is a model. In the past I think there was a difficulty because it costs money to enroll at Universities and what we have now got and we have had for three years is the funding Now the big funding is now the funding has stopped .. what happens when the funding runs out? How is the next generation of teachers going to be paid to go to groups to do their MAs?

What we now find is that work by the group is referring to other people's work within the group. Mark's MA dissertation is drawing on my work so we are no longer lining up just textbooks from University shelves. The knowledge we have created – it gives a real validity to it. This is my dissertation so when you read it you get references to website, to A researcher's website, to Jack's website it is referring to other teacher researchers' work and we are saying that as teachers have left the school to promotions and to move to other jobs, the knowledge of this group is like spreading the word. Spreading stories about what it is like and this is starting to get other people involved. There is

a colleague of mine in another local school, who has got interest because they have never had the opportunity to get involved because they don't have a teacher researcher group.

This networking, the working with other schools, this bringing other people on board, you can see it growing. In terms of education, four years is nothing! Imagine that in fifty years time these kinds of groups will have sprung up and there will be an expectation for producing research. If I teach English in my classroom it is pretty much the same for Jo Bloggs teaching English down the road in his classroom. The beauty of the websites set up, A researcher\ jack's websites is that I can access work that is going on in Canada, work that is going on all over the world because now I can read the reports that are put on the web. You almost get to know these people, although I have never met them. They become names that you get to know like Jacqueline Delong I have seen her name so many times on the website that I know her, so we can refer to each other and what you are doing in your classrooms is the same as I am doing in my classroom The more we can build in these networks the better I think it will be. So many staff want to get involved but they just don't know how to we never anticipated that this work here would still be going on four years' later. A year and that would be it but because there was such an amount of momentum to keep it going You realize what people want. It has probably been the single most important thing that I have been involved in and for the school in the last few years…' (Riding, 10th March 2004)

Appendix 2 Teacher Narrative

The following is a narrative written by Toni. This narrative was written in 2001. I asked my department at the time to write a brief narrative account of an episode that they felt was something they wanted help in dealing with. We then shared and discussed the narratives as a team looking to find solutions and ways of moving practice forward. I further used this narrative in my work with Advanced Skills Teachers in 2004 in order to demonstrate the type of honesty and trust I was looking to establish in my work with them. One response from one of the A.S.T.s was:

> 'I can't believe the way that she sums up everything that I come into contact with when working with staff…she captures exactly what they are thinking…every N.Q.T. should have to read this…'(Comments from A.S.T., March 2004)

Toni wrote:

> 'The teacher had always found this group to be a challenge. There had only been a handful of lessons where the teacher had felt any feeling of success on hearing the bell. Oh the bell, it seemed to be highly ironic that something so trill and a sound so intrusive could be viewed as a joyous signal of relief. It often seemed to the teacher that they had been holding their breath for fifty minutes and the bell was the green light for that luscious exhale. The teacher often felt exasperated, every new approach foiled, every new 'positive start', diminished to a whimper of 'You can go now…' as the last student made their exit.
>
> The bell to signal the end of break was like the tolling of a terrible summons for the teacher, as the sound of too many 'e' numbers bounded up the stairs, the teacher beamed insanely as the persistently entwined male students literally pulled, pushed and finally fell into the classroom. The teacher, who cunningly used the OHP as a place of safety and centre of control, had already raised the defence barriers, and she tentatively raised her pen in an effort to take the register. Welcomes and smiles were barely issued when the necessity for a resounding, 'SILENCE!' fell on deaf ears. And so the lesson would commence, with the invisible teacher darting from one scene of chaos to the next. The major achievement at the end of the lesson was the fact that the teacher had resisted the claustrophobic comfort of the stock cupboard, 'Excellent – progress!' She mused.

This was not it! This was not what she had worked so hard for. How many late nights and closeted weekends had been experienced in order to reach this state of existence? The teacher realised that something had to change, before she did (into a raving lunatic, clinging onto the threads of self-confidence). What were the main issues? She thought that this was a good starting point for progress; immediately the names and faces of the more entertaining students ran through her mind. Talking, play fighting, immaturity and off task behaviour seemed to be the main culprits in the line-up. But what was causing these issues? Other staff were also experiencing difficulties with this group, so it surely couldn't be her fault! They were a difficult group; it had been recognised; however this did not offer any solutions. Why are these students climbing on the tables? Oh they're a difficult group. Why are these students having a slanging match across the room? Oh, they're a difficult group? Why are you cowering in the cupboard? They're a difficult…I'm finding some lined paper.

The teacher revisited past lesson observations and successful lesson plans. There were lots of positive points, excellent, a great place to work from, build on the successes and the challenges will present new learning opportunities. This group had a serious morale problem, they were bottom set, yes THEY **were** BOTTOM SET! The teacher was not meeting serious literacy needs in her constant efforts to say an entire sentence without the words, silence, quiet, or put him down replacing the constructive words of encouragement. Perhaps it was the tasks, perhaps they were too difficult, or maybe her expectations were just too high. It seemed puzzling to the teacher that it could be the tasks that were at fault, she was teaching Literacy Progress Units, which are designed for groups of similar ability. Perhaps it was the seating arrangement in the classroom. This was an irritating issue for the teacher, as seating plans had failed and she was on her third arrangement of tables. At times it seemed as if she was attempting any one of several World Records in her efforts to decide on a suitable solution to what she had dubbed 100 ways to design a classroom, soon to be released in the popular press.

This all led her to one awful, daunting conclusion as to what the key issue was: her! What had happened to the inspired and creative teacher, who specialised in Special Needs and low ability teaching? What had happened to that ability to turn any adverse situation into moment of comedy? Gone was

the desire to make every lesson count, to make every lesson perfect and gone was that one thing prized above all else in the hectic world of a career: motivation. But those things weren't gone, they'd just become buried underneath that baggage of all baggage: the lack of self-confidence. She realised that the constant effort to achieve all those things that had made her successful had become her metaphoric albatross. This filled a small portion of her being with a precious and much sought after quality: hope.

It was not this group that was a challenge; her ability to cope and balance all the incredible changes in her life was the real challenge. The group had amalgamated in her mind as some kind of caricature, a symbol of 'bad behaviour' and a culture of immaturity. She thought about them again, there was A researcher, quiet as a mouse and always smiling. There was John, fantastic on a one to one basis, he was always eager to impress and for his work to be valued. They all wanted attention in one bizarre way or another, they all wanted someone to take an interest in them and to say you've done something, good let's continue. However, having seventeen children all wanting attention and not being able to express themselves in a conventional way was a difficult situation. The teacher decided that there was not going to be any easy quick fix solutions with this group, they needed time and attention and she needed to reassess her method of giving them what they required.

This was going to be difficult journey, but she had already taken the hardest step, to realise that there was a lot in that group to be positive about. This wasn't going to be a 'fresh start', or a 'new approach', but something a lot simpler. The teacher was going to start to believe that what she was doing in that fifty minutes was going to make a difference, no matter how small. And most importantly of all she was going to smile.' (Bowden, 2001)

Appendix 3 E-Mail

The following is an email from Bath University received in December 2004. This email was received in response to my request to try and gain funding for the establishment of a teacher-research group within my school. The email highlights the fact that I wouldn't be able to collaborate with the University as they weren't in a position to help me to achieve my vision at that moment in time.

'Dear Simon,

I do apologise for the delay in my response to your original enquiry but I have been discussing your request with a number of colleagues here at the Department. In particular, I have been talking with [name], the Course Administrator for the MA Programme, and also [name], who coordinates the work of the TTA-funded teachers on the Programme. I have copied them into my response, so that they are aware of the situation.

You may be aware that we are currently in the final, third, year of obtaining funding from the TTA for teachers to follow units on the MA Programme. Having looked at the uptake figures for 2004-2005 with [name], the situation is that we have already used up the 100 places that we were allocated for this academic year. I am sorry to pass on this news, Simon, as I am very enthusiastic about the possibilities of working with the group of teachers you mentioned.

All is not lost, though, as we have put in an application to the TTA for a further tranche of funding for teachers for 2005-2008. Though I do not anticipate that we will know whether we have been successful or not until early in the New Year, we have been told that the application has been looked at initially and the TTA do not want any further information from us at this stage. I am hoping that that is a positive sign! If we are successful, that would mean that teachers could start being funded by the TTA to work with us on the MA from September 2005 onwards. I hope that this would be a possibility for the teachers you have in mind, Simon.

Moving on to the question of the teaching, the pattern that the TTA requires is for teachers to take two units in each academic year. The way that we have done that is to offer, first, one unit that is presented formally and then

offer a second unit as an Educational Enquiry, which allows the teacher to carry out some small-scale research connected to the issues raised in the first unit. I am sure that you can see that there are clear logistical issues in terms of staff travel time and staff costs of having a group of students in Southampton that the tutor visited for the twenty hours face-to-face contact over an eight week period, which is our normal pattern. I am also afraid that the suggestion you made that you yourself might be able to teach the group is also not possible, primarily on cost grounds but also because of the University's Quality Assurance hurdles that you would need to pass through before you could be approved to teach on a University Programme. This, as I am sure you will realise, is of course no reflection on your abilities, Simon.

My feeling is that a compromise arrangement is possible. This would involve the teachers taking the first unit at a distance, whereby they would receive a pack of hard copy or electronic materials, be allocated a tutor in the normal way, communicate with the tutor electronically or by post, but also have the tutor come down to have face-to-face meetings with the teachers twice or three times over the eight week period to talk with the group and with individual teachers about the content of the unit and also about assignments. The second unit could then be an Educational Enquiry, as mentioned above.

I hope you will find this suggestion of interest, Simon. Do please get back to me, or to [name] or [name], if you have any further comments. Please bear in mind that I will be away from the office on an overseas teaching engagement from tomorrow for about ten days, so I apologise in advance if there is a delay in any reply.

With best wishes,
[name]' (December 2004)

Appendix 4 E-Mail

The following collection of emails contains my correspondence with the University researcher that eventually mentored the teacher-research group that I established within my school. This correspondence demonstrates the dialogue and the depth of groundwork required to bring my plans to fruition.

'Dear researcher

Can I hare with you a few thoughts about the teacher-research group that I want to establish. What I want is something similar to what we had at Westwood. We need to be able to link it to the award of an MA. We could deliver say 6 sessions in twilight, 3-5pm. Over a period of 6-8 weeks. We focus on action research and teaching teachers how to do action research and give them a chance to share their work each week. We could use named units or generic units. We then give teachers the time to write their work and gather evidence for their assignments. I can see us running one unit per term – 3 units per year. You could deliver all the sessions or I would be happy to supplement some sessions as well.

Cost.

I need to know what this would be. I was hoping we could register staff through TTA so that staff didn't have to pay anything. Would there be any other charges involved? This would be where I would have to find sources of funding if it was needed. I would like to start ASAP. I haven't gone public to the staff yet but informally I have a lot of nods from people.

Please can you let me know what you think.

Strength and honour

Simon' (March 2005)

'Hi Simon,

I'm very happy about this proposal and I've forwarded agreement and your email to Steve Coombs so he can OK the detail and add any detail about costing beyond my travel/subsistence and refreshments on site for the group -

he keeps on stressing the TR group must be cosseted!

Best regards
A researcher' (13 March 2005)

'Hi Simon,

We got a YES from (him) as long as your school pays my expenses - travel, subsistence etc and we get good quality refreshments for the sessions (yes - that IS just what he said!) He is determined that teacher researchers get the best treatment in their school and their work is integral to school improvement…

Best regards
A researcher' (17 March 2005)

'Dear A researcher
fantastic news!!!!!!
Can you let me have an idea for the cost of the expenses per session so that I can put a bid into creative partnerships to support this? Was my outline for the programme O.K.? Would it be a named unit or a general teacher-research unit? i need to get the flyer out to staff early next week to get them signed up and committed to it. Have you got some dates? Could Tuesdays or Wednesdays be OK? Possibly starting week beginning - 18 April (an going on)
25 april
2may
9 may
6 june
13 june
lots of questions - getting really excited!
strength and honour
Simon' (19 March 2005)

'Dear Simon,

I am really excited about this teacher research venture with you too!

Brainstorming ideas at the moment - nothing decided just some ideas but we'll firm everything up later today as I know you need to advertise

How about if ... we look at my travelling down for the 'session' on one day and staying over night so I can return to school the following day - that way I can mentor face to face and help the teachers to get their work onto KEEP toolkit snapshots while it is still fresh in their minds. I am aiming to complete a first MA module with you by the end of July.

I'm thinking of 'structured' sessions for these new teacher researchers so course work is effectively assessed as an on-going process and they have a representation of their ideas (which they can amend as wished) over the several weeks we work together - ie not leaving writing up to the end but using Bath Spa's more flexible assessment arrangements.

I am first drafting a new MA module you might like to pilot with me - it is VERY draft at present but I'll attaching it so you can get a 'feel' for it. We have a school-based mentoring module, TT500M and a module for induction tutors TT502DL but I've a feeling TT500MAR might be best. We can tailor the action research foci to individuals' needs and wishes.

My suggestion is a mentoring focus ie as research mentors with your group acting as mentors for one another and you'd be 'living yourself through others' as you see their emerging knowledge coming through.

Looking forward to hearing from you so we can firm up plans our today

A researcher' (20 March 2005)

'Dear A researcher
would be happy to vary the methods of delivery and in some ways would help keep staff interest. Could I deliver as an associate tutor some stuff? At some point I think it's important that a real-life tutor works with the group – experience from early days at Westwood group was that this is what really got people involved as people come with the pre-conceived idea of university academics as 'gods' with the right answers - staff only later realise that the

'answers' they seek are actually within themselves! Could we then mix and match - some face-2-face from you - some video conference (I'll have to check that we have facilities, but I think we do) and some from me mentoring the group? The mix and match could be a real strength as it gives the group a greater sense of independence from the start.

strength and honour

Simon' (March 2005)

'Hi Simon,

The MA mentoring modules are designed to be distance learning so varying the input will work fine – I totally agree about working face to face especially till the group is getting well underway together. We can supplement this with video mentoring and e-mentoring as you'd wish.

You don't strictly need to - but I would love you to apply for the part time affiliated tutor post at Bath Spa

This is shaping up well - I really like the idea of 'mixing and matching'.

Best regards,

A researcher' (31 March 2005)

'Dear A researcher

hope you are well!

Am feeling very inspired by all this am now up to 11 staff wanting to get involved just from this school at present. Will keep it just this school for first unit and could possibly open it up to Southampton local schools for next units. Am meeting the group early next week to give more details about the course etc. and finalise arrangements. Lots to do!!! Lots of new teachers involved and wanting to carry on learning which is really good - really enthusiastic about it all

strength and honour

simon' (21 April 2005)

Appendix 5 E-Mail

The following collection of email correspondence is with Creative Partnerships, the main funding provider behind the project. It was through this negotiation that I was able to secure the external funding to allow the teacher-research group to exist.

'Dear ………….

I hope the information I have sent is ok. I now have approx. 25 staff from Bitterne Park interested in this. We are meeting on weds briefly to go through final details.

The first session with bath is on 11th May. Bath has confirmed that all is ok at their end. I have on the programme an introductory session on weds 4th May where I thought it would be useful for creative partnerships to have an input in this to talk through the partnerships idea and to go through what it is staff can get from this. Staff won't have a clear idea of their projects but will have given some thought to it. I suggest we run a 1 hour session on this. If you can't make it, you could send info through as I will meet with the group anyway.

Please let me know what you think

Simon riding (25 April 2005)

'Hi Simon

That sounds absolutely fine; it's really exiting to be involved in your idea. I will give you a ring this week to confirm times etc...

Thanks ………' (25 April 2005)

'Hi Simon,

Since your MoU is for presentation and I suspect will become a model for other schools - if you agree – I thought you might like to see the mock up

(he) made for another project . I like the ideas and graphics,

I also wonder if we should, perhaps, look at running two groups so everyone feels they get sufficient personal attention at Bitterne Park. I am sure if we think creatively we can create a CPD centre for BSUC!

Just so full of admiration for your getting such a large group together!

A researcher' (25 April 2005)

'Hi Simon

I just wanted to say I think the MA session was fantastic. A researcher is very good at what she does, I will be in touch with further ideas I have had

Thanks …..' (Creative Partnerships, 16 May 2005)

 'Dear A researcher

Just got note from creative partnerships - they want to support us more and have just sent through a report commenting:

'It seems that there could be possibilities for helping you to develop as a centre for teacher research, innovation and good practice in Southampton, and I would hope to gain support from the LEA on this. '

This is really good - my plan to take teacher-research into Southampton LEA has just been strengthened - not only that, but the links with bath spa could mean that bath spa becomes the HE link in Southampton, if it was agreeable. Creative partnerships have some weight in Southampton and this could be very useful.

strength and honour

Simon' (June 2005)

'Hi Simon

Fantastic session again - how do you do it??? I have never worked with such a large and well motivated – and talented group - must be you!

How would you feel about creating the Bitterne section with all our various snapshots, spidergrams, PLTAs and commentaries including your Day in the Life of ... to post up on TR.net as we've discussed??

I am aware I asked if you could help me run the site and if you would like to run this part it would terrific

Also - we need to think about getting a research journal underway ...
Cheers and huge thanks - for making me feel so welcome at Bitterne.

A researcher' (22 June 2005)

Appendix 6 Interview Transcript

The following is a transcript of interview of me conducted by the University researcher during the first module of the M.A. programme. The interview was videoed and then transcribed by the researcher and sent to me.

'Transcript Simon Riding 12 October 2005

The successes have been the level of engagement of staff. That's the key issue. If you provide the opportunity and take away the barriers not to do it that is when you get people involved. For us it is engaging with HE as an organisation – for us it engages that extra element which was the learning at staff level. That's very often something that gets taken for granted or doesn't fully get developed. It is also about providing professional development that is on site and is relevant. That is about taking the individual forward developed via the whole school initiative – it is actually emerging improvement from the bottom up rather than taking it from the top down

How different is it from the initiation of the Westwood group?

There is a significant difference – the role I have has suddenly jumped from being a part of the group to initiating the group, which is a very different role to fall into itself. This group is more practical – we are getting down to things, rather than the Westwood group, which had a more theoretical, analytical discussion base. This one is more about actually getting down and doing things here. The key difference partly reflects the school. I think. It's partly about introducing this because we are a high achievement effective school and I wouldn't take time away from the job staff are doing every day. That would be a concern. Obviously our priority is the kids not the staff. I think that's where the difference is – we don't really have the time to sit around and theorise – whereas the Westwood have because they had different aspirations.

Do you think the funding that has come from Creative Partnerships has in any way influenced how the group has developed?

There's always that side when you have got external funding – you are trying g to keep them happy and you are trying to manage their input into it. , It's always part of the agenda. to work with them and you are trying to bring their input into what Is going on – that is always a difficult thing to do – however, at the Westwood group we had initiated BPRS scholarships but that's more individual based. People had individual control whereas as in this profession al development is being controlled by an external source that wants accountability for what the group is doing.

If you were at the conference on Saturday what would you want to bring out as the main points that you think are of relevance to your presentation?

The key issue is that we need to return to some form of individualised funding so that teachers are not held accountable to external organisations such as Creative partnerships but have got their own control over their own professional development. Secondly I think it is putting o the agenda the fact that teacher research is about improvement and that out of this group there are initiatives developing that are driving forwards school improvement itself. Thirdly there's the fact that people turn up at all is demonstrating that there is a level of engagement from staff. There's a need for it being tapped into here.

Do you think it's likely you will have other schools allied to staff development here?

Yes. The key next step for us is taking this to the whole of the local authority I have already had tentative discussions with Southampton. We have schools in Southampton where they want to get involved with this. They want something to be provided within the local authority that caters for research, further study, and teacher research – whatever you want to call it. There is a need for it. The next step for us is to be able to bring other people in from outside – we have started to do that already buy bringing an employee of creative partnerships enrolled with u, in partnership with us however, the primary focus for me is to move this group forward for teachers as researchers.

Do you think it is phase dependent – does this have to be a secondary group?

Not essentially no – however, I think there is commonality that we are all secondary – we will have common themes. I think bringing in primary colleagues in I personally don't think would be as beneficial for us – although we have a common agenda. I think the level of discussion we have is very much about teaching in our school, in our specific phase. There is a need for primary teacher research however I don't think amalgamating the two would be best.

How much impact have you seen from the work of this group which started last May on the strategies and realities for improvement in your own school?

I think that the key issue is this. The staff. The simple answer is do we see anything solid on the ground? No however what we are seeing is that staff within the group are picking up themes that they are dealing with in everyday work. So, for example one member of the team is doing work with second year teachers in coaching programme and she has taken that forward now, using this as a vehicle to find out more about the coaching and mentoring process and she is reflecting on the work she is doing with teachers. So essentially it gives staff another way of reflecting on things they do every day but as yet can I say there is any direct link between our school's improvement and this group – as yet, no because it is still early days.

If you were going to give somebody else advice about setting up a group say the CPD coordinator in a secondary school what might you say to them?

Come to me and I will only charge you £1000!'

Appendix 7 Critique of a piece of research

'Collaborative Practice: the basis of good educational work' (James, 2007) appeared in *Management in Education The Journal of Professional Practice, 21(4).* The article was written by an academic researcher from the University of Bath. The aim of the article was to:

> '…describe the three elements of collaborative practice drawing on empirical illustrations and develop a model which depicts collaborative practice.'
> (James, 2007, p. 33)

The researcher draws on previous research conducted in order to inform the article, commenting:

> 'We researched into the nature of primary schools in Wales in disadvantaged settings.' (James, 2007, p. 32)

The three elements of collaborative practice referred to are 'collaboration' or 'joint working', 'reflective practice' and 'the primary task'. James goes on to draw on established theory in order to explain these terms used and then sums up in one paragraph how the term applied to the schools researched.

The outcome of the article is to propose a model of collaborative practice using 'collaboration', 'reflective practice' and 'the primary task' as the basis for the model.

It is this type of writing and research about schools that causes me concerns for a number of reasons.

The article chooses not to allow a voice to anyone else other than the named researcher. There is no reference or voice from anyone actually being researched or anyone who has contributed to the researcher's understanding of the ideas being presented. This strikes me as the professional researcher wanting to be in the position of 'giving' the knowledge created to the world: suggesting that the professional researcher account is the one that has weight and adds authority to the work. The article does not identify whether or not the 'silent voices' were invited to contribute.

A further concern that I have with this example of research is that the work is through my understanding of Sebba (2004) where the work is clearly being disseminated through the journal but I wonder what actual impact the research is having.

Fundamentally the research has been conducted into what constitutes 'good educational work' and is simply identifying what practice already exists within the schools looked at. The research does not offer any new insights into school effectiveness or improvement but simply describes what is already being done. Therefore, the ideas are being disseminated but there is no impact from the role of the researcher on the researched: the researcher has not offered the schools any ideas but simply reports what they are doing.

One fundamental omission from this work is the identification of the impact of this work on the students. There is a strong argument that school leadership is about influencing and improving the life-chances of students: this article does not mention students at any point. If we are going to describe the 'basis of good educational work' I would have expected there to be some focus on the students as that is what education is all about.

This is one example of where I believe the current work on education research is not contributing to the improvement debate within education. As a practitioner I read this article and I feel that it contributes little to my understanding of the work I do. As a practitioner-researcher I read this and I wonder what the aim of this research is: it seems to purely describe a position that already exists thus contributing little to educational knowledge.

Within my own research I was published in Management in Education Journal with my article on, 'How can I manage the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy?' (Riding, 2003b) This article was significant because I realised that I was writing and accounting for my life and learning within the same format and style as James (2007) above. Within my own article I incorporated something of myself: I framed my work around Henry V and drew on that metaphor to explain my work; I accounted for my own practice and indicated how my research was impacting on my practice. However, I denied others their voice in the account and I was not sufficiently focused on how my research had actually impacted upon students and their learning. From this reflection I was able to move towards the style and presentation of research that I have adopted within this thesis, attempting to address the issues above.