Sequence 1 Values in Education

In this section I intend to show the reader how I carry with me my own living educational values (Whitehead, 1989) and how these have emerged through my practice over time. I offer the reader my explanations of 'living myself through others', 'living educational space' and my own living educational theory. I further explain my understanding of action research. In my abstract I make the claim that, 'This thesis addresses the vastly important influence of relationships within education and explores how these relationships impact on my practice as an educator. The text incorporates and captures these relationships through enabling these others to speak through their own voice.' In order to demonstrate this I refer to my experiences with significant others.

It is essential that I begin with what I believe to be the central core vales and standard of judgement that underpin both my own work, life and also this writing. These values have emerged from within my practice over the last nine years and are integral to my own personal vision, but are also built from my own autobiographical experiences over time. Essentially, the value of *living myself through others* is the core element of this text, which I will explore in detail later on. However, from the outset my values are about individual students that I teach improving: that is my passion. It is through the claims I make that I wish to express my own living educational theory that has emerged, and is still emerging even at the point of writing this, over my professional career as a practitioner.

I want to be able to communicate to you the values that I feel are important to me within my life. I want to also be able to explain where I feel these values have emerged from over time. This is because I feel that my living values have emerged and are emerging as a result of the experiences that I encounter and create through my life, both educational and non-educational experiences. It is through these experiences, and significantly the dialogical experiences when I attempt to understand *others,* that I move forward in my understanding of my own values. However, my values are rooted within my own autobiographical experiences: my professional self and personal self are intertwined and influence each other. I am the practitioner that I am because of who I am and the life that I have had.

My understanding of my life and its links to my practice seems to connect with Senge's (1990) sense of *Personal Mastery*:

'Personal mastery goes beyond competence and skills, though it is grounded in competence and skills. It goes beyond spiritual unfolding or opening, although it requires spiritual growth. It means approaching one's life as a creative work, living life from a creative as opposed to reactive viewpoint.' (Senge, 1990, p. 141)

For me this echoes my approach to my career: the attempt to creatively embrace the opportunities that I have and be able to use this sense of creativity to be able to improve the quality of the living educational space. Senge addressed the issues of life construction and the sense that the individual can construct their own life: that we have control over our own experiences. This is also evident in Eisner's (1993) notions of human beings creating their own experiences and the quality of these experiences depend on the way they employ their own minds (Eisner, 1993, p. 5). This is something I value and believe: that the human being has the ability to create their own life direction through the choices that they make. It is through this belief that I approach my work as a teacher and leader. It is through this sense of choice that I work on a day-to-day level with my students.

I have always approached life as looking at what I can gain from it: at what opportunities I can get from it. I have always been a very ambitious person: somebody who wants to get to the top, whatever that was. I've never been quite sure where this has come from: the son of a working class family from Blackburn. Yet, through my life I have always attempted to 'better' myself at whatever I do. Hence, on one level, the desire to gain a Ph.D. after gaining an M.A. was my attempt to improve as there was something out there that I could strive for. I think it was a natural consequence that I was able to connect to the action research approach, and in particular Whitehead's (2003) ideas, to educative improvement. An approach that started with 'How can I improve….?' seemed to directly tap into my sense of being ambitious: my life itself is simply about asking the question, 'How can I improve?' My values centre on embedding this approach into those I teach.

I am in support of Whitehead (2003) when he comments:
        'I am suggesting that the unique constellation of values, embodied in the
        practices of each s-step researcher, moves the researcher to accept a
        responsibility to account for their own practice and learning in terms of their
        values.' (Whitehead, 2003, p. 9)

This thesis is me taking the responsibility to account for my own practice and learning, for others to encounter and validate. This thesis is the account of how I have attempted to improve over the last nine years. It is my view that in the vastly important job of educating others, I have a responsibility to improve and be held to account for my decisions and choices.

In the next section I will explain my original contribution to knowledge of my relationally dynamic standard of judgement of *living myself through others*.

1.1 Living myself through others

Within this section I want to explain my original contribution to knowledge and to demonstrate how I am drawing on the work of Thayer-Bacon (1995) in terms of understanding relational epistemology and the influence of this on the development of my living educational theory. I refer to the work of Connelly & Clandinin (1999) in terms of their expression of 'stories to live by' and 'narrative landscapes' in helping me to explain my standard of judgement. I draw on this to reflect the importance of others within my own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) and to demonstrate my originality of mind in living out my standard of judgment of living myself through others. Beyond this, through my examples of the educational relationships that I have had, I want to reflect how I account for my own living educational theory. I am using Naidoo's (2005) relational sense of depending on others in order to establish self and engaging with Pring (2000) in also reflecting the importance of recognising others as people and human beings. Through engaging with Sartre (2003) I am demonstrating my ability to understand the other and acknowledge the other as a person and human being. I understand Kincheloe (2003) in terms of acknowledging the importance of experience in contributing to the debate on education and educational research.

In terms of ontology, the debate surrounding the nature of understanding education; I believe that my approach is associated with the view that there is not a truth to find but rather one that emerges through the engagement with my own practice. This may be in contrast to a more social science perspective that acknowledges the presence of an absolute truth that needs to be found through research. This approach is reflected through, for instance, my living methodology that was not planned in advance but rather emerged through time and experience. My ontological approach is rooted within relational epistemology due to the fact that I believe the 'truth' that I find will be as a result of the interactions that I have through the journey that I am undertaking.

In terms of epistemology, the debate to understanding knowledge; it is my approach, an anti-positivist approach, to acknowledge the value of living through experiences in order to fully understand them as opposed to a more traditional, positivist view of being able to research from a distance upon a subject that may be unfamiliar. This living through of experiences again reinforces my relational epistemology in terms of constructing events as they happen from the experiences that I have, through

utilising reflection. This stance draws together my ontology and epistemology, acknowledging that who I am, my ontology, is determined through what I know, my epistemology. These two things, as Thayor-Bacon (1995) recognises, are related to each other and cannot be separated.

Below are a collection of images that I have used within my thesis. These images represent the people who have been, or who are still, significant others to me within my personal and professional life. All of them have been highly significant in extending my own understanding of my practice and have been central in helping me continue to grow as a practitioner and improve.

The first two images are of staff who I led whilst a middle leader, Simon and Toni.

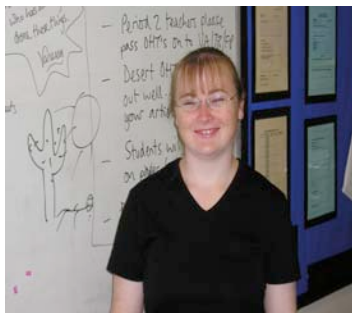
Figure 3: Image of Simon Ratcliffe, 2004

Figure 4: Image of Toni Bowden, 2004

The image below is of one of my students who I taught, Dan.

Figure 5: Image of Dan, 2005

The image below is of my wife, Karen and my daughter Sophia.

Figure 6: Image of my wife, Karen and my daughter Sophia, 2007

The image below is from my wedding day, surrounded by significant others.

Figure 7: Image from my Wedding Day, 2004, showing my family and work colleagues intertwined and merging.

The image below is taken when I was a few years old, with my parents.

Figure 8: Image of my parents with me in the background, taken in 1979.

My growing understanding of 'relational epistemology' (Thayer-Bacon, 1995) is emerging through my enquiry. I am attempting to account for my enquiry through producing a narrative account that has emerged from the relationships that I have had through my life and educational experiences. Within my thesis I am drawing on many examples of these relationships: of my relationships with the students that I have taught; the staff I have worked with and led; my relationship with my wife and co-enquirer; my relationship with my supervisor; my relationship with my family; and my relationship with myself. All of these relationships are helping to create the educator that I am and are influencing my practice. My thesis attempts to account for this.

Thayer-Bacon (1995) explains relational epistemology as:

> 'A relational epistemology views knowledge as something that is socially constructed by embedded, embodied people who are in relation with each other.' (Thayer-Bacon, 1995)

This is a notion that I embrace through my thesis attempting to demonstrate that through the relationships that I have with others, and in particular significant others, I am learning to enhance my own practice and make things better. The key for me is the importance stressed on relationships in moving forward our understanding of knowledge: it is through understanding the other and providing the conditions for dialogue that will contribute to this enhancement of the world. I am linking this to my understanding of action research in terms of my intent to allow my thesis to grow and emerge, rather than to plan in advance. Through the interactions that I have I allow these to help direct my research into differing areas that I may not necessarily know

in advance. For instance, I can refer to the example of the influence that finding out my father had lung cancer in 2005 and the way in which this has influenced my practice and the educator and person that I am. Whilst I could have known at the start of my research that I would come up against adversity and planned to acknowledge this I could not possibly have known that I would come up against this particular adversity. I use this example to demonstrate my responsiveness and the way in which I am acknowledging the importance played in my work of the relations with others and the value that I place upon these relationships.

I am arguing that I am taking the ideas of Thayer-Bacon on relational epistemology further with my exemplification of her ideas through demonstrating them within my practice, thus synthesising her ideas with living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) to demonstrate how living relational epistemology works for me and my practice through demonstrating my own original living standard of judgement of *living myself through others*. My thesis attempts to account for how I have come to believe certain things within my practice and life. Thayor-Bacon comments in relation to her epistemology:

> '…I am trying to offer one that is more open and inclusive as it attempts to be self-conscious, reflective, adjustable and adaptable as people gain further in understanding. My hope is that a theory of knowledge that begins with an understanding that theories are ideas – stories which are socially constructed and, therefore, fallible and subject to change – should be one that is less open to ideological abuse.' (Thayer-Bacon, 1995)

For me this acknowledges that living theory appreciates change and movement within education and that human beings are capable of responding to circumstances around them. I believe that through this thesis I am able to reflect the importance that narratives play within my own living educational theory and how I believe that stories can contribute to our understanding of educational research.

I further, through my thesis, want to embody my own desire to expand what we understand epistemology to mean (Thayer-Bacon, 1995) through including different elements and ways of knowing what I know. I aim to represent this and communicate this to the reader through my presentation of a multi-media text that attempts to capture the nature of the educational relationships that I have had over time that have contributed towards making me the educator that I am. By multi-media I mean through video and use of images set alongside a narrative account.

Through my embracing of relational epistemology I am attempting to bring this form of enquiry into my practice and demonstrate that I value the relationships that I have with others: I am demonstrating that I am applying the theory to practice. Within my practice, one example of this is my work in establishing an in-house teacher-research group at Bitterne Park School and the consequent relationships that this has helped to create with members of that group. This is discussed in detail in sequence 3. I can particularly refer to two teachers who have fully embraced teacher-research and with whom I draw upon my changing relationship with over time.

One example of my living relational epistemology is my understanding of my living educational standard of judgment of *living myself through others*. This educational standard is one that has emerged and that I have been attempting to understand and live out since 2003. It is very much about a *personal vision* (Senge, 1990, p. 147) that I have for the practice of education. It came to me, very much out of luck and through a moment of inspiration: the gentle rain from heaven did indeed drop upon my pensive brow. To be more precise, it came to me at about 10.53pm just as I was getting into bed. The exact date I cannot remember. However, I was writing my M.A. dissertation at the time and I remember I was feeling as though something was missing from it. There was something happening in my practice that seemed to be working and I couldn't quite put it into words. I remember trying to be clear on what it was that I was trying to do in terms of my educational practice. The phrase *living myself through others* jumped into my head, pretty much as the idea for the 'flux capacitor' jumped into Doc Brown's head as he fell off the toilet seat one day and banged his head in *Back to the Future:* we all know the impact of that episode! It seemed to sum up what my philosophy was: that I wanted to make things better for *others*; that I wanted to help *others* out. Perhaps it also encapsulated that I wanted to understand why *others* acted as they did.

For me to demonstrate and express my own standard of judgement and values I will explain to the reader my relationships with certain influential people within my time at Westwood St Thomas. I use these to explain to the reader my own standard of judgement because my standard of judgement is based on relationships that are relationally dynamic. Through these examples I will be able to articulate and clarify how and why my standard of judgement and values are what they are. I was Head of Faculty at Westwood St Thomas and I had only been in post for 12 months or so. As a result of this, I was very inexperienced and needed something to hold on to.

The standard of judgment of *living myself through others* for me is about recognising the sense of 'I am because we are' (Naidoo, 2005). Naidoo explains that an individual exists because of the existence of others. Within my own relationally dynamic standard of judgement I argue that my own existence is as a result of the relationships that I have through others and that these relationships help me to improve my practice.

I am recognising the importance of the other within my own development and understanding the life-affirming energy (Whitehead, 2005) that I can get from these relationships with others. Through this value I am recognising the sense of the other and the way in which I exist because of the recognition of others: it is through the relationships that I have that I exist in the way that I do. If I take away these relationships then the person that I am will change. I am therefore responding to the sense of boundaries that exist within these relationships. This was evidenced through my transition in roles from Westwood St Thomas to Bitterne Park: I account later on in the text in sequence 3 for how I managed this transition, but one of the key elements to this was the fact that I wasn't prepared for the impact of changing those I worked with on my own living values. This provided further evidence for me of how research is not so transferable and generalisable: how what works in one situation will not necessarily work in another.

Within my own M.A. dissertation I attempted to establish a definition of what *living through others* as an educational standard of judgement means. For me, this value has influenced the way I have worked with the significant others in my professional and personal life. I commented:

> ''Living myself through others.' As I listen to those words there is an echo of them that reverberates around my head. I have tried to come to some understanding of what these four words mean: the sum of them together, I believe, is greater than the individual words themselves. I believe that these four words are the educative value by which I have been working over the last three years. I am establishing that through my own experiences as a teacher-researcher working within the Westwood St Thomas teacher-research group, I have been able to try and come to a greater understanding of my own practice. Fundamentally, I am trying to establish that the interactions between people have the potential to improve educational practice. It is these interactions that have the power to move educators forward as they are able

to provide the circumstances required for meaningful reflection. 'Living' implies that the work is taken from something that is still in the process of developing. 'Myself' implies the nature of the autobiographical account that I wish to contribute to educational knowledge. 'Through' implies that I am interacting with others to try and aid my own professional growth and understanding of the work that I am undertaking, and consequently as a by-product, improving theirs. The 'others' is the sense of sharing and collegiality that encourages a growing of epistemology to aid professional improvement. Within the narrative framework of this dissertation, I want to explore my belief that the future I can create is embedded within the narrative past that I have come from: it is the sharing of these narratives, through working with others that will allow me to understand my present and future. I believe that through taking stock of these past narratives, my own future may well be better. I believe that this sharing is crucial as it will help me to avoid distorting the views that I may have of my own self-importance. As you read through this account, 'Living myself through others' is the value that you should try and judge the effectiveness of the writing by. Through my exploration of my part in trying to understand how a group of teacher-researchers is working I have tried to explore what I have gained from being a part of this group. My own strength and honour, I hope, will allow me to account accurately the pictures I have seen.' (Riding, 2003, p. 7-8)

Essentially I think that I have moved on from this understanding of this educative value. I think that it is more than just my experiences from the Westwood teacher-research group that has allowed me to live by this standard of judgement: I believe that it is my career and all aspects of it that I am *living through* this standard of judgement. I do firmly still believe that it is a reflection of the power of the educative narrative which allows the development of educational practice and it is using the narrative to *live through others* by allowing them a voice within my text which will allow me to understand them better. This is why I am writing this Ph.D.: to try and understand what I have learned, how I have helped others, how others have helped me and to allow others to learn from my own experiences.

This original contribution to knowledge is a non-impositional living standard of judgment. By this I mean that the incorporation of living 'through' someone is about sharing and creatively engaging, as opposed to 'taking from'. This standard of judgment is also relationally dynamic, in the sense of being based on and responsive

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to relationships with others. I also gain my own life affirming energy from this standard in order to live out my life more fully and productively for the good of humanity. From living my life through this standard of judgment I am able to contribute to improving the quality of the living educational space and also creatively engage with others in order to improve my own practice and influence the practice of others. Thus, I am able to explain the nature of my own educational influence on others through this standard of judgment.

I understand *living myself through others* further through reflecting on Pring (2000) in relation to his sense of what it means to 'be a person'. Pring explores six qualities and capacities associated with being a person. What are of most significance to my living educational values and standards of judgement are his comments in relation to education and understanding of the world:

> '…one aspect of that understanding of the world is the recognition of other people as *persons* – that is, as centres of consciousness in their own right with the capacity to think, to feel and to experience in the light of those thoughts. It is to have the capacity, too, to reflect upon oneself as a person – able to have one's own thoughts and point of view.' (Pring, 2000, p. 18)

This I feel touches my own sense of educational development and values. My educational theory is based on being able to recognise the *other* and through this being able to improve the *self* and *other* from this relationship: through this relationship, both *self* and *other* gain in the form of extending their educational knowledge base and understanding of their practice.

However, I reflect on Pring's words and wonder how many times I have denied his definition of being a person to others within my own practice? How many times have I denied my students their voice? How many times have I shouted instead of listening? How many times has one of my student's acts influenced my whole judgement? How many times have I denied staff from being as a result of my comments or my gaze? I can reflect on my own practice and consider my own living contradiction from this.

I believe that my parents lived out this value, like many parents do, through my up-bringing. They seemed to, and still do, live their lives *through* their children. Neither of my parents have many formal qualifications, yet they were able to instil a sense of success within their three children that promoted each of them to want to be the best that they could be. Essentially, my parents *lived through* me and my successes: my graduations have been theirs; my results have been theirs; my promotions have been

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theirs. They have creatively engaged with me and from this something new and productive has emerged. I think that they reflect a world in which caring more for the *other* is more important than caring for the *self.* I think they reflect what sacrifice is and understand the meaning of the word in relation to their own children. Without their sacrifices I do genuinely believe that I would not be at this laptop today writing this thesis. I think this experience has led me to be able to actively empathise with others as I have seen it in action: my parents' ability to whole-heartedly put me first in anything has demonstrated to me a level of human emotion and compassion that makes the world, and in particular my world, a better place. In many respects, my parents are a living example of how informal appreciative inquiry can work. Each day I see examples of where this doesn't happen: where parents don't seem to care about their children and where relationships go wrong with families and where Schools are then asked to pick up the pieces.

Sartre explores this sense of *self* and *other* within *Being and Nothingness* (2003) and of particular interest is the way he reflects on the importance of allowing the *other* the opportunity to express themselves. He comments:

> 'In short, if the Other is to be a probable object and not a dream of an object, then his object-ness must of necessity refer not to an original solitude beyond my reach, but to a fundamental connection in which the Other is manifested in some way other than through the knowledge which I have of him.' (Sartre, 2003, p. 277)

This rings true of the way my parents approached their children: allowing them to live rather than be held up as an image maintained idealistically in their heads. My living standard of judgement, *living myself through others*, requires a creative engagement for something new, such as a living educational theory, to emerge. I hope throughout this text I am able to reflect to you, the reader, the sense of the *other* within it: that you are able to engage with the *others* that exist within it as I attempt to give them their voice through a multi-media approach, rather than me simply relying on my own knowledge of them and delivering this to you through my own description. What I want to communicate is the fundamental connections that I believe I have made, and am making through the quality of the relationships that I have. I want to communicate how I believe I use these to make things better.

The search for further qualification of the value of *living through others* is something that my relationship with Mark Potts, Deputy Headteacher at Westwood St Thomas School and member of the Westwood teacher-research group enabled me to do.

Mark was an incredibly passionate man and held real qualities of concern for fellow human beings. He set up outstanding links with a school in South Africa in order to improve the quality of their lives. When speaking to him it is his warmth and care that really shines through.

I offer one example of a dialogue I exchanged with him via email on the 26th February 2004, as I attempted to further refine my own educational value of *living myself through others*. This dialogue demonstrates my *living through* Mark: Mark is engaging with my idea of *living myself through others*, and reflects on this creatively for his own new understandings of this to emerge within his own language. This is another example of my attempts to empower the *other* through giving them their own voice within this text. Mark commented:

> 'Simon
>
> I knew it would come. I have been thinking about this idea of yours. I am thinking about it in relation to my dissertation on 'presencing' and mindfulness etc.. I am interpreting it as in my words - How I am influenced by others and how I graft the traits/personality/characteristics of others on to my own living presence?
> Is this how you see it?
> How did you first come up with the phrase?
>
> Mark'

I reply:

> 'Dear Mark
>
> Good day off in the snow?
>
> Great to hear this. I have attached an extract from my PhD were I am talking about the moment and also how I am now moving on with my understanding. My latest addition to my understanding is arguing that this is a 'working class' value instilled into me by my parents as a result of their experiences and values. Does this connect to your past? Would be interested to hear your thoughts.

strength and honour

simon'

He replies:

'Simon

Thanks for this. It is interesting. I have to think how it relates to my thoughts on 'presencing' and mindfulness for my dissertation. It is an interesting value and I am certainly close to you on the idea of day to day interactions influencing our practice and that of others. The notion of others trusting us is interesting. I am also discovering the importance of trusting myself and my own judgement as well. I think this is more secure as I understand my own value base more. Claxton led me to consider how to become a more effective intuitor and part of this is, I think, trusting your intuitive judgements. I am less sure about the claim that it is a working class value. I hesitate here because I remember my own learning as part of my Social Science first degree. I just remember that the whole notion of class is a minefield when approached from a politicial and sociological perspective. Defining working class is difficult. To talk about working class, as opposed to middle class values, is even more difficult.

Mark'

And:

'More thoughts

What about living others through myself? I wonder whether this gets nearer to my idea of "grafting the traits/ personality of others on to my own living presence". I am thinking about how others influence me here. Understanding this can help me to understand how I can influence others through my 'presencing'. By considering "Living Myself Through Others" and "Living Others Through Myself" there is more of a notion of interaction and interdependence, a recognition that the influence is both ways. Is this a value that you can identify with?

Mark'

I reply:

'Dear Mark

Great to hear your dialogues with yourself and your internal struggle with pinning down ideas....I know it well. I like your ideas but the 'living others through myself' implies to me that the 'I' is at the centre of the living and that others are influencing the 'I' - the 'I' is almost like a buddhist self(?) that allows others to inhabit it for a time to develop before moving on: in terms of an analogy, it's like the 'I' is a flower filled with nectar and the 'others' are the bees that drink from it?

Whilst I like this, living myself through others implies for me more of an active role for the 'I' - the self. It's almost like the 'self' going in search of the 'other' in order to help it live: the flower goes searching for the nectar to fill it before the bee can drink. Perhaps though, living others through myself is the natural progression for this: it is the next step. Once the self has found the other, it is then there to be drunk from? Perhaps this is something about how you are at a different stage of your career than I am: as deputy head your role is different to mine as HOF?

Really enjoying this dialogue

strength and honour

simon'

For me this dialogue is one of the ways that I am able to connect with another member of the teacher-research community, but also one of the ways in which I can connect with another member of my School community as we both strive to deepen our understanding of the nature of education and learning. It is the sense of two practitioners extending and qualifying their understanding of values in order to improve their practice which is so evident. I wonder at this point whether or not I will be able to build this kind of relationship with the staff that I lead within my new School and role at Bitterne Park School? I sense that when I am working with Mark and have these dialogues that I feel fully valued and I sense that he is fully present within them.

He is able to make me feel like this despite his role relationship to mine. This is something that I want to hold close as I move on. For me, the dialogue represents two practitioners exploring the nature of their practice and dismissing the role boundaries that exist within their work relationships. For me this is one of the powers of teacher-research communities within schools.

Furthermore, I would argue that this exchange of emails about my educational values is one example of the way in which I am holding up my claims to account within the teacher-research community. Whitehead (2003) argues:

> '…the nature of 'first person' or 'I' enquiries provide ontological connection to the epistemological standards. In other words it is a form of research that requires of the researcher a willingness to hold himself or herself to account in terms of values.' (Whitehead, 2003, p. 8)

For me this encapsulates the sense of this thesis. I am firmly placing myself at the centre of the research and recognising that I carry with me the values and ideas that I hold. The research I am conducting is answering the questions I have set out whilst recognising that I am a person as well who is participating within the research: I am not at a distance looking at the issues. As a researcher using first-person I am making clear my own values and accounting for my practice within these values.

Further to this, my willingness to hold myself, values and experiences to account with the teacher-research group that emerged at Westwood St Thomas' School itself, as a form of validation, is also important. This is important in the sense that I am validating my work through other teacher-researchers, who are also willing to share their views and values.

As this thesis develops and grows it is part of my living theory (Whitehead, 1993). This emerges as I increase my learning over time in order to qualify and alter my values based on the knowledge I have at the time. This thesis is a snap-shot in time of my living theory that is emerging. This for me implies the importance of a practitioner being willing to account for their values as they are something that will emerge over time as they interact with their changing environment. I am reminded of Whitehead's (1993) comments in relation to 'living' theory within his own educational research, commenting:

> 'By a 'living' theory I mean that the explanations generated by the theory to explain the educational development of individuals contain an evaluation of past practice and evidence of present practice which includes the 'I's'

intention (a human goal) to produce something valued which is not yet in existence.' (Whitehead, 1993, p. 80)

This reflects the dialogue between me and Mark as we continue to explore our educational development. The notion of living theory is something that I can engage with, particularly in terms of my understanding of *living myself through others*, where I define *living* as something that is in process. Essentially, this thesis is an example of living educational theory as it attempts to explain my own educational development through past reflection and future projection.

I would argue that this type of dialogue as illustrated in the email above with Mark is an example of the life affirming force and energy (Whitehead, 2005) that is present within teacher-research. This reflects Evans' (1995) thoughts in her thesis, where she comments:

> 'I believe that through the support of action research methodology, particularly, the support of the community of action researchers and the dialogue these communities promote, teachers can become effective researchers of their practice and contribute to both educational research methodology and epistemology, not in the form of 'critical theory' but in the sense of 'living educational theory'.' (Evans, 1995)

Again, as I exchange dialogue with Mark I am aware of the support and challenge we are providing for each other as we wrestle with our understandings of our values and practice. Through these dialogues, we are developing the epistemology and also contributing to a living methodology that is responding to the nature of the relationship that we have. We are seeking to promote our epistemologies as they emerge from within our practice.

Kincheloe (2003) further reflects this notion in his vision of teacher-research and reflects Whitehead's (1993) comments of the need for experiential learning and reflection within education, commenting:

> 'In such a new democratised culture teacher scholars begin to understand the power implications of technical standards. In this context they appreciate the benefits of research, especially as they relate to understanding the forces shaping education that fall outside their immediate experience and perception. As these insights are constructed, teachers begin to understand what they know from experience. With this in mind they gain heightened awareness of how they can contribute to the research on education. Indeed,

they realize that they have access to understandings that go far beyond what the expert researchers have produced.' (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 18)

It is my claim that the greater extents to which I can live the value of *living through others* within my everyday life, the greater contribution I can make and help others to make to the improvement of educational practice as I recognise and support the view that teacher-researchers embody a wealth of untapped knowledge within them. I can refer to my work with Simon, Toni and Mark, as indicated above, to reflect and support this view. Without my acknowledging of them as individual people, and without recognising their sense of self, I do not feel that I would have built such a productive professional and personal relationship with each of them. It is through these relationships that I have gained access to the development of teachers and leadership practice, which I explore with this thesis. I also believe that I have been able to learn from these relationships and been able to take something from them, as well as enabling them to *live* out their own values.

I can further reflect on Whitehead's (1999) comments in relation to his own practice:

'…I moved to consider my influence on others. Thus, in the third enquiry, 'How do I help you to improve your learning?', the standards are expressed in terms of an extension of my discipline of education into my educative relations as a supervisor of Ph.D. practitioner-researchers.' (Whitehead, 1999, p. 10)

For me the essence of Whitehead's comments here reflect my own living standard of judgment of *living through others*. In order to help others to improve their learning it is necessary to extend and develop the ability of both parties to be able to *live through* the experiences that the other has and understands. Both parties are actively involved and learn from the process. I wonder to what extent I can improve Jack's learning as he begins to appreciate and understand my own living educational theory and embodied values as he supervises this Ph.D.? Later in this thesis, I will deal more closely with my loving and emerging relationship with Jack

Living myself through education I am drawn to consider exactly what is education? What does it mean? Education for me is about change, improvement, creativity. It's about dialogue and democracy. It's about letting the disempowered speak. It's about support and challenge. It's about individual students. It's about real students in real Schools. It's about the work I've done with Daniel, a Year 12 student.

Figure 9: Image of Dan, 2005

Daniel was a Year 12 Media student that I have taught. His image is above. I am taking the image. I was immediately surprised by the quality of the work that he produced: he was a clear grade 'A' student within this subject. However, beyond this I felt that I could connect with him. He was a very mature student but I sensed his passion for the subject that I so much love. I could understand where he was coming from and the comments he made were so reflective of the way I read texts. I wanted to support and help him as much as possible. Partially, I feel, because I felt guilty about leaving his group at the end of Year 12 to move to my new school, but also because I believe he had a great deal of potential.

Through his Year 12 I worked with Dan closely to help ready him for his exams: he lacked a great deal of confidence in his ability. I asked Daniel to reflect on his experiences of my teaching because I wanted to know why it was that he was succeeding within my own lessons. He commented through email:

'Mr. Riding

Mr. Riding is probably the most highly regarded teacher (at least by the pupils) at Westwood St Thomas. In my opinion he is certainly one of the best, if not, the best. There are many reasons why I think this:
One reason that I and many others really enjoy being taught by Mr. Riding is that he incorporates humour into his lessons. He tells jokes (sometimes funny) and also allows pupils to join in on the jokes and this allows for a very relaxed atmosphere. The important thing though, is that the jokes are never allowed to take over the lesson

and Mr. Riding is very good at moving the class back to being work orientated. I have always felt with Mr. Riding that one reason we get on so well with him is that he shows his own personality in lessons. He doesn't seem to have a separate 'act' or attitude that he displays in class, which seems to be common amongst teachers. I feel that I can talk to sir as easily about issues completely irrelevant to media studies or English as I can about them. All of these factors together contribute to the fact that we always, or certainly usually, get all the work done and also enjoy the lessons. I think this reflects that Mr. Riding really values that you have to enjoy what you are learning in order to do your best. He certainly achieves this in my opinion.

Another great thing about Mr. Riding's lessons is that he always has a basic lesson plan, but is willing to let class discussion and focus go off on tangents relevant to the subject. His teaching is very much based around discussion, debate and teacher/pupil interaction rather than just text books. This is just a far more interesting way of learning and makes it more enjoyable for all involved. He relies on us to extend our own learning. He teaches us the facts, but does not indoctrinate us. He expects us to be able to use the information he gives us to form a viewpoint or opinion.

Mr. Riding is very good at talking to us as pupils; he never talks down to us and always treats us as equal. He treats us with respect and is given it back in return. This is true right through the school and is one reason why so many pupils relate to him. I have had an experience where I was feeling unhappy about the standard of teaching in a certain area. I chose to talk to him as opposed to my actual tutor. He then went about solving the problem by organising meetings with me and any pupils with concerns in order to hear our views. He then went to the teachers involved to express, anonymously, the concerns put forward. He then spent his own time after school and at lunchtimes helping me and others work on what we felt we had lacked from our other teachers. This is a good example of the sort of teacher Mr. Riding is, and clearly demonstrates what makes him such a highly regarded tutor. The way in which he conducted the meetings was very much appreciated and showed him to be, to me, a very capable leader as well as teacher.

When in lessons I always feel that Mr. Riding cares about what he is teaching me, and I can tell that he wants to do everything he can to get us a good grade and learn to enjoy the subject. I always feel that I am included in group discussions or debates. If a debate does occur and people in the class are expressing different views sometimes Mr. Riding will sit out and allow us to debate without interruption, this again is good as it encourages us to speak and gives us confidence. If I have any criticism at all then it would be that one or two of the quieter people in class sometimes appear to lose interest during these discussions. If a pupil does not have high self-esteem or the

confidence to contribute they may feel excluded from the interactive method of teaching. Personally when in lessons I feel valued, included, and comfortable and motivated to learn.

I think Mr. Riding is driven on by a genuine passion for teaching. He has spoken before of his enjoyment at university and I think he really wants us to get the best possible grades, to be able to go to university, and fulfill our full potential. His enthusiasm is constant and in turn we are driven on by it. I don't ever doubt that Mr. Riding wants the best for his pupils, and that is why he will go to lengths to ensure that we are getting the best possible teaching in all areas.

I think how much Mr. Riding is appreciated as a teacher is reflected in how disappointed everyone is that he's leaving. However, personally it comes as no surprise that he has landed a job as a deputy head. And much as I do wish he would be able to see me through the second year of my A-Levels, I'm glad he's got a better job. He deserves it, he'll have no problem. Why he couldn't just be deputy head at Westwood however, I don't know.' (Daniel, July 2004)

As I read through this text I could understand the comments being made: I was struck by the maturity and the clarity with which Daniel is able to speak about me and my values: I really felt that I was living my values out and that they were being understood and valued by this student. He makes claims for others and I am aware that I also teach his brother and I believe his claims. The growing sense of departure as I move towards leaving Westwood brings with it an even more growing sense of impending loss. At times, perhaps as teachers we move on so readily and easily without always considering the potentially massive impact that we can have on those that we teach. To us, it's a job. To the student, it's their life chances and future. To hear a student saying these things constantly reminds me of why I do the job that I do and why I *love* it so much. For me, it is a true *love* in the sense of spreading my own sense of humanity and understanding that goes with it.

Perhaps it seems appropriate at this point to pick up on Dan's comments about my love of University. I hadn't thought about this much until reading Dan's comments: perhaps, on reflection I do talk about my own time at University within the classroom as a way of trying to inspire the love of learning that I have. However, my own University experiences were split into three quite distinct phases. I completed my first degree, combined honors in English and Media at the University of Plymouth. This was a three year course that was able to inspire me on many levels: my creativity yet also my own love of English as a subject. It was during this time that I gained a real

interest in critical theory and its relation to the world. I also was able to develop my love of writing and my Media interests. At the end of the three year course I came out fully intending to carry on with studies, wanting to study English at a higher level. I briefly enrolled on an M.A. course at University of Exeter studying Critical Studies. This fell through as I wasn't really committed and personally, I wasn't in the frame of mind to engage in this type of work at this stage of my life. At the time I was also working in a bar and generally enjoying life a little too much to really be able to gain anything from further studies. This to me was like a gap year, which I hadn't realized at the time.

I left the bar and the South in February 1997 to move back to Blackburn in order to take up a job in a Bank. Within two weeks I realized that Banking wasn't for me: sitting at a desk doing a mind-numbingly boring job wasn't what I wanted after the years I dedicated to my studies so I made the decision to apply to do a PGCE. I had thought about this in my final year of my under-graduate course and had applied and been on an interview to University of Exeter. However, I didn't get a place and at the time I really wasn't certain I wanted to be a teacher. 12 months on though and I was now convinced. I applied and got an interview at Bath Spa University College to do a Secondary English PGCE. I had to complete a week in a Primary School so did this at a local school in Blackburn and loved it. It was at that moment that I realized I would love the job: being around learning all day seemed great to me.

I graduated from Bath Spa, my second stint at University, in 1998 and got my position at Westwood St Thomas. It was during my time at Westwood St Thomas that I established my links with the University of Bath, my third stint at University.

From Daniel's comments it seems that my own educational values are being drawn out: my sense of enjoyment of education; my sense of democratic approaches to education; my sense of wanting to get the best from education for people; my sense of raising expectations; my sense of valuing the student voice. These are the things that I want to promote within my teaching and it seems as though Daniel is able to access these.

In the next section I want to clarify my methodology and how I have approached the research within this thesis.

1.2 Methodology

'Without the freedom to innovate beyond the range of models provided by traditional social science research or action research, the practitioners in our group may have been less effective than they ultimately were in serving the growth of professional thought, subsequent professional actions or the resolution of professional conflicts through their research.' (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p. 166-167)

Within this section I am embracing Dadds & Hart (2001) claims to support methodological inventiveness within practitioner research. I refer to my own living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) in order to explain and clarify my meanings. I embrace action research as a way of accounting for my educational influence. For further clarification of these key aspects of this thesis, please refer to the separate chapters on each.

My own methodology is linked in many ways to my framing of the thesis title. My methodology emerges through the living experiences that I have. My methodology is the processes that I am going through in order to try and understand and answer the research questions established within this thesis. My methodology is relational and aims to collect data through understanding the individuals that have contributed to my growing understanding of myself.

My methodology is both complex and simple: it is easy to explain and very difficult. It is emerging alongside my practice and is responsive to the needs of my practice. My methodology accounts for my lived practice and aims to help me account for the minor miracles of my own practice, as Eisner (1988) comments:

'We are beginning to ask ourselves how we can see and describe the minor miracles of stunning teaching instead of prescribing how teachers should go about their work.' (Eisner, 1988, p. 19)

My methodology also reflects Winter's (1998) suggestion that within action research inquiries the focus changes and responds over time to the circumstances that the researcher finds him or herself in. My methodology seems to exist beyond me: it seems to morph and become what I need it to become. I think of it as a helpful friend that sits alongside me and guides me through this maze, helping me to make some kind of sense of what I experience. Through my methodology I am accounting for the choices that I have made and how these choices have influenced the work that I

have produced (Reason, 2005). Through this account I am making public my own living educational theory.

Action research

I am utilising first, second and third person action research (Reason & McArdle, 2007). This approach is my attempt to understand my own practice and then to improve what I am doing. I am utilising this approach because I want to improve the quality of the educational relationships that I hold and that I believe through understanding and improving my practice that I can improve these relationships and the living educational space we inhabit. Alongside this, I strongly believe in my own living value of *living myself through others*. This value is something that I want to be able to live out more within my own practice.

My methodology is partly based on Jack Whitehead's self-study form (Whitehead, 1989). I embrace the cyclical nature of this form of study as for me it supports my views that learning and leadership is never finished but is always seeking the next way to improve learning. My experiences tell me that things are never finished and that there is always something more to do. My drive to improve the quality to learning means that I am never satisfied or happy with the status quo but rather need to see how I can keep 'tweaking' things to improve them. My rewards are gained from the process I continually go through placed against the successes that I achieve along the way: the work with an individual student; the improvement of results; the improvement in practice of a member of staff.

   I. I experience a concern because I feel my values are negated – for me it is the basis of this thesis of trying to make things better. However, beyond this, it is about utilising the six questions that I have established to help guide me through making things better.

  II. I imagine a solution – for me, the solution is about being in a place or world where it is a better place to be. Specifically though, I have 'mini'-imagined solutions to the different aspects of my research, for instance: I imagine a teaching profession that is once again able to support teacher-research by providing free access for teachers to higher study that is conducted on school sites within learning hubs; it is about being able to contribute to the academy my account of my learning that is presented in a creative and inspiring way for others.

III. I act to find a solution – for me this is about the steps I am taking in order to achieve that outcomes that I imagine, of for instance: establishing a teacher-research group within my School as previously mentioned; of reflecting on my own practice in order to improve it.

IV. I evaluate the outcome – for me this is about how I know whether something has been successful or not, for instance: utilising the dialogues with staff and students in order to reflect on the impact of my work.

V. I modify my actions – for me this is about responding to how others see me and responding to what I learn, for instance: recognising at the end of the first unit that we delivered on the in-house M.A. programme that I established that it wasn't as effective as it could have been through the evaluations that I conducted and then consequently changing this in order to respond to the needs of others.

VI. I experience a concern – for me this is returning to the cycle once again, recognising that the process simply goes on, for instance: taking the in-house M.A. group and attempting to expand it into Southampton L.A. strategy for teacher improvement; of beginning the process of transition again through moving from Assistant Headteacher to Deputy Headteacher. (Whitehead, 1989)

Living Educational Theory

I am further embracing living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) as I move through my thesis. I embrace this in order to acknowledge the importance that I place on experience within my learning and living. My own thesis charts the living nature of my practice as it changes through the experiences that I have and the reflections that I make. For instance, within my experiences I can reflect on the part that significant others have played within my own development. I can acknowledge that as a middle leader, I was able to draw on the strength of a significant other within my work place and this was able to help drive me on and move forward. I can then reflect that as I moved into senior leadership, I lacked this significant other in the work place, probably due to the nature of the position and as a result of this my practice suffered. I needed to find another significant other and I can account for how this became my wife, a co-enquirer.

I must also acknowledge that I am taking the stance that I am not constructing a methodology associated with a social science perspective. I agree with Reason (2005) in his assertions that traditional social science findings from research are of

little use to practitioners. I have not planned my thesis in advance of creating it. My methodology is centred on the fact that the 'I' is being placed firmly at the centre of the enquiry and that I intend to centre the work of this thesis around my own autobiographical episodes, whilst valuing and acknowledging the valuable contribution those around me can make to my own growing epistemological development. This reflects Bullough, Jr and Pinnegar (2001) when they comment:

> 'When biography and history are joined, when the issue confronted by the self is shown to have relationship to and bearing on the context and ethos of a time, then self study moves to research.' (Bullough, Jr & Pinnegar, 2001, p. 15)

It is my argument that the narrative I am constructing here through my own autobiographical experiences is directly related and influential upon the nature of teacher and leader that I am. A further discussion of the importance of the autobiographical choices I have made is in appendix 9. My methodology is promoting and valuing self-study as a valid form of educational research that should be a part of the academy. I am arguing that this methodology is a valid form of academic research that enables me, as a practitioner, to account for my learning over time.

Methodological Inventiveness

Further to this, I can explain that my methodology is an 'emerging methodology' that is growing, changing and re-forming as the enquiry develops and extends. I acknowledge the call by Lumby, Foskett and Fidler (2005, p. 135) to evolve the methodologies that currently exist within education in order to explore issues of leadership within schools. I agree for the need to support changing methodologies that aim to further our understanding of values and epistemologies. This is due to the fact that my own sense of epistemological growth is emerging through this enquiry and as I *live through* others within my work. I believe I am showing a qualitative approach to education research that values, through my emerging methodology, the living embodied knowledge that I hold as an educator. My own understanding of my practice changes as I experience different things within my life and career. This means that I cannot know these things beforehand. My own educational values are being laid bare for the reader to engage with. However, I believe that I am accounting for the changing nature of these values as my educational role and life moves forward.

I believe that it is because I am a teacher-researcher that I am able to construct a narrative account and story that brings to life the experiences that I have had through

creating a multi-dimensional account of my experiences. I am in a position as a researcher of doing what I am researching about: my work is conducted within a first-person account. Whilst I acknowledge that this may have limitations in terms of the distance I have from my subject, I believe that this is negated as I am producing living knowledge about issues that I am engaging with and living through. Through my first person account I am able to utilise reflection in a methodical way that allows me access to working through the issues that I face within my day-to-day experiences. This I believe provides an honest and genuine account of an educator as I move into school leadership. I am in support of Lomax (1998) in her claims to make educational research educative, commenting:

> '….the relation between researcher and researched is dialogical, that the research aims to develop 'voice' among the silenced, that the onus of research should be on the practitioner, that the author's values should be part of the report, and that validity and reliability should be a mutual process rather than a research procedure.' (Lomax, 1998, p. 11)

Further to this I would argue that I am constructing new knowledge about the situation that I am writing about. Through my methodology of writing from a first-person perspective I am attempting to support the view that I am driving improvement in education through being a user of the educational knowledge that I produce, which is reflected within the Thomas & Pring (2004, p. 42) argument where they argue that it is crucial for users of educational knowledge to be involved in its production. My methodology values my practitioner account and supports the notion that practitioner accounts are a valid form of research.

It is important to acknowledge the role played by the interactive nature of this text and the ways in which I encompass the many ways of knowing (Reason, 2005) evident within action research. Within this text you will recognise the vital importance that I am attributing to the use of visual images and video clips to support and evidence the claims that I am making. For me, this intends to send the reader the message that I value the visual alongside the written word. I am responding to Eisner's (1993) claims that:

> 'Experience, however, is private. For experience to become public, we must find some means to represent it. Culture makes available to the developing human an array of forms of representation through which the transformation of consciousness into its public equivalent is created.' (Eisner, 1993, p. 7)

This text is my transforming for the reader of my own experience into a form that I feel represents and communicates it. I am in a unique position to be able to capture this kind of visual text of my own practice as I account for my claims because this is an action research thesis. The images included aim to carry with them the weight of meaning that words alone could not capture on the page. Eisner (1988) further comments:

> 'To try to comprehend the ways in which people function and the meanings the events in their lives have for them and to neglect either seeing or portraying those events and meanings is to distort and limit what can be known about them.' (Eisner, 1988, p. 17)

For me, this is a strength of this text. Allied to this is the sense that I want this text to be able to fully tell the story that I want it to and I only feel this could happen through being able to visually support my ideas. For me this links the notion of creativity, meaning and the communication of ideas which I feel is so important within teacher-research.

The sense of 'methodological inventiveness' as reflected through Dadds and Hart (2001) is central to this text through the reflection of the fact that I am establishing my own methodology as it emerges through this thesis. It is my view that I am exercising my own methodological inventiveness through this text and through this process of study. This reflects Dadds and Hart when they comment:

> '…for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus.' (Dadds & Hart, 2001, p.166)

I would argue that through this text, the style of my own research is as fundamentally important as the content of the material produced: the style is attempting to recognise the diversity of research methodology that can exist within educative research. This thesis reveals my own personality and character. It is my own account of my life and learning. How I say what I say is as important to me as what I have to say itself.

This is further reflected within Thomas & Pring (2004) who comment:

> 'The use of the word 'intuition' by Einstein in the context of scientific endeavour is an interesting one. Clearly he is not denying the significance of evidence. Rather, he seems to be promoting a kind of spatchcock use of evidence – a playing with almost any piece of seemingly relevant information – by scientists in their everyday work.' (Thomas & Pring, 2004, p.3)

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This sense of playing with evidence is a reflection of my methodological inventiveness: a sense that the teacher-researcher can play with the materials that they have in order to create the text that emerges before them. For me, this is how things are made better: by challenging the status quo and perceived way of doing things in order to improve things. The inclusion in this thesis of images, video-clips and songs reflect my intuition in order to communicate my living theory to the reader.

I am creating a living methodology that seeks to help me research into my practice, understanding how it is at present and how it can be improved. When I begin my research, and throughout it, I am not looking for the pre-existing truth, but rather to respond to what emerges through the project. The reality I create is my own reality and through my creative account I aim to make the text as credible as I can, through communicating my insights to the reader in appropriate forms.

My approach to this thesis is to take an action research approach, trying essentially to understand myself as teacher, leader and learner before trying to consider the range of my influence over others through my time as a teacher. My action research approach is linked to my own educational standards of judgement. By this, I mean my desire to make things better is at the forefront of my practice. Alongside this, my desire to live through others allows me to engage with others and value their contributions. Kincheloe (2003) comments:

> 'The first step in such a process, as you might guess, is to understand the relationship between researchers and what they are researching. Where do we start such a process? I would argue that an awareness of self and the forces which shape the self is a prerequisite for the formulation of more effective methods of research. Knowledge of self allows researchers to understand how social forces and research conventions shape their definitions of knowledge, of inquiry, of effective educational practice. Knowledge of the self allows them consciousness to choose between research traditions which depersonalize the process of knowing in hopes of gaining certainty, pure objective knowledge, and research and orientations which assert that since the mind of the observer is always involved, it should be utilized as a valuable tool.' (Kincheloe, 2003, p.51)

I am looking to take an anti-Enlightenment stance in approach to my thesis from the perspective that educational reality is not constructed or founded upon pure scientific knowledge, but is rather formed as a product of the dialogical and relational potential of teacher-research. I am drawing on Coulter's (1999) sense of valuing the potential

within teacher-research that an understanding of the dialogical forms of knowledge creation can have. My relationship with my co-enquirer, my wife, is one example of this dialogical and relational understanding in practice. For me it is this approach which has the potential to unlock the closely guarded secrets of education as it empowers those at the heart of it to take up the challenge of understanding it further and making it better, through understanding the self.

I am acknowledging Carr & Kemmis (1986) in understanding the power of action research to be focused on 'improving' and 'involving' throughout the research. I am a believer that throughout this thesis I have been able to involve a wide and growing circle of people within it. Over time the range of those affected by my research has developed and grown. Fundamentally, it has centred on my own sense of improving my own practice and as a consequence, improving the practice, or conditions of practice, for others. I am clear though that through my methodology I was not able to fully understand how this story would end and so I was not able to be able to plan from the start where I or this research would end up. I had no idea that I would be able to influence, by the end of this period of my life, the C.P.D. provision and strategy within Southampton L.A. (Local Authority). This is again reference to my living educational theory approach to action research that I have taken.

Beyond this I am looking to fully incorporate a narrative approach to my thesis that allows me to be able to breathe life into my work and give it the life affirming energy (Whitehead, 2005) that it deserves. I want the creative narrative style to reflect the personality that I am. I want to be able to *live through* the narrative and allow others the opportunity to be able to access me through it. I want to breathe life into the text so that the reader can fully engage within it and gain their own sense of life affirming energy from it.

In terms of validity within this thesis, I am drawing on Anderson & Herr (1999) descriptions of validity that they determine are relevant to judging practitioner accounts and demonstrating how I have addressed these:

Outcome validity - …the extent to which actions occur which lead to a resolution of the problem that led to the study.
Essentially the problem that drives this thesis and my life forward is very complex and it is very difficult to judge whether or not a 'resolution' has occurred. I do not believe that the complex nature of education, and life, can determine that a resolution

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has occurred. I believe that we can make small gains and movements forward in improving things, but I don't believe that we can claim a resolution. This is what I would refer to as the spirals of improvement through the action research approach that I have undertaken. My living educational theory approach ensures that my life is lived as enquiry (Marshall, 1999) and thus that a resolution is not achieved. However, I do believe that I have moved forward in understanding the problem(s) that I have encountered over the period of this study: I do believe that I have learned a great deal about the issues that I have addressed. What this study has thrown up is a whole host of other issues that also need addressing. I do not see how the narrative and story of this text can come to a smooth conclusion or end. The issue is not about the product at the end, but rather about the far more important process that I have gone through: this is where the learning has taken place.

Process validity - …to what extent problems are framed and solved in a manner that permits ongoing learning of the individual or system.
I would argue that this type of validity is central to this thesis. The learning process is central to the work that has taken place. Through this thesis, I have demonstrated my own learning and also how I have influenced the learning of the systems that I am part of. I have framed the issues within this thesis in such a way as to allow this learning to take place: through the placing of the 'I' at the centre of the text; through drawing on the autobiographical experiences to demonstrate the personal and professional connections in my life and so on. This, I believe, is a relevant form of validity within this text.

Democratic validity - …the extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation.
Throughout this text I have attempted to incorporate the voices of those who have been part of the research. I have incorporated their writings, their comments, their video-clips and so on, in order to allow them to speak to the reader. This is my form of empowering these people so that I am not speaking for them. This form of validity is crucial as it taps into my own value-base of recognising and valuing the other.

Catalytic validity - …the degree to which the research process reorients, focuses, and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it.
This sense of validity is evident within this text. This study attempts to understand the world in which I live and work and attempts to communicate this to the reader through its various methods of presentation of materials. Through this thesis I have

attempted to live by the question that drives me on: how can I make things better? This question is my attempt to transform the world in which I live into a better place through living out my values within my life and practice as an educator.

Dialogic validity - …the goodness of research monitored through a form of peer review.

I have fully utilised the use of a validity group to support my growing claims. This validity group takes on an emerging form: the people I work with; the students; the teacher-researchers that I came into contact with; my supervisor; my wife. These different groups have allowed me to draw on a vast range of influences upon my growing understanding of the text that I am producing. Beyond this, I have taken a wide definition of what peer review is: I have not limited this to simply those within my own profession, but rather widened this group to incorporate those I teach and come into contact with within my wider life.

Methods

With my choice of methods I am recognising the distinguishing quality of living educational theory that offers validation of ideas and data as both a personal and social process (Whitehead, 2008). Through my interpretation of my data I recognise Polanyi's (1958) claims that an individual can understand the world from his/her own perspective alongside the social validation through the use of significant others or validation groups. The methods I have chosen have enabled me to produce a disciplined narrative of my educational learning.

I have enhanced this study through my extensive use of a journal in order to reflect on the work I have been carrying out. These entries into my journal grant me access to my inner thoughts and give me the space to account for, then reflect on events and incidents at a later date. These accounts from my journal are one form of evidence that I am drawing upon that is then triangulated with other forms of evidence to enhance the validity of them. I have further attempted to incorporate into my work the use of images, both video and still images, as a way of trying to communicate my meanings and ideas to the reader.

In terms of the use of images within this thesis to communicate my explanations of the educational influence I have had it is important that the reader cautions and makes themselves aware of the issues surrounding the construction of meaning within images. I have naturally attempted to anchor meaning through my own

accompanying narrative and description that surrounds and frames the images, as I attempt to guide the reader through my own insights and meanings from them. However, as a reader you will engage in your own interpretation of this text and what I offer through it. Be comfortable enough to gain your own sense from what I offer and read the text as you wish. The photographer Kuhn (1985), in relation to her own photography and how she reads her own family photographs, comments:

> 'In order to show what it is evidence of, a photograph must always point you away from itself. Family photographs are supposed to show not so much that we were once there, as how we once were: to evoke memories which might have little or nothing to do with what is actually in the picture. The photograph is a prop, a prompt, a pre-text: it sets the scene for recollection.' (Kuhn, 1985, p. 18)

As I reflect on my own video and digital camera portraits of the work that I have completed over the last few years I too remember the memories and recollect the feelings and emotions brought about from watching the videos: the people I have worked with; the memories I have. Kuhn further comments:

> '…that the processes of making meaning and making memories are characterised by a certain fluidity. Meanings and memories may change with time, be mutually contradictory, may even be an occasion for or an expression of conflict.' (Kuhn, 1985, p. 19)

I can reflect on the images that I have produced and constructed for this text: I watch them and look at them over and over and realise how they have changed in terms of my understanding of them. My readings now are not the readings I had at the time, as I grow as an individual. My own sense of making meaning changes with the experiences that I have. It is this fluidity that helps to create the improvements within my own practice: that I am not static, but actively seeking change in order to make things better. If meanings didn't change over time then complacency and certainty would set in and take over the need to improve.

Living myself through others, a relationally dynamic value that I live my personal and professional life by, is also contributing to my own understanding of the methodological approach that I am taking through this thesis. I am arguing that my methods demonstrate this living standard of judgement. This is evident in my approaches to interviews. I have utilised semi-structured interviews, in the loosest sense, to support my growing claims as I have progressed through the fieldwork aspects of this thesis. These have captured the moments and comments around which the narrative journey has been constructed. I have been able to engage and

talk with those that I 'interview' and also those who have interviewed me. However, 'interview' sounds like the wrong word: sounds too formal. I prefer to use the word 'dialogue': those I have had a dialogue with. 'Interview' sounds impositional and as though I am forcing or pressuring those I talk with: I'm not. I'm interested in listening to what they have to say and empowering them to give their views on me and my practice. Kincheloe (2003) supports this approach commenting:

> 'Critical teacher researchers reject the positivistic notion of internal validity which is based on the assumption that a tangible, knowable reality exists and research descriptions accurately portray that reality. Our reconceptualisation of validity discards the concept of internal validity, replacing it with the notion of credibility of the researcher's portrayals of constructed realities.'
> (Kinceheloe, 2003, p. 168)

Central to my own growing understanding of the living educational theory (Whitehead, 1989) that I am creating is the continued use of a video camera and still camera to capture moments for later reflections. I believe I have provided the reader with a visual as well as a written record of my account. Okri (2002) comments:

> 'And so my hostility to the camera crystallised. I became convinced that it was a spy, certain that it was not so much a faithful recorder of what it captured as a distorter of what it gazed upon.' (Okri, 2002, p. 19)

For me, the 'spy' is positive and helpful and through this thesis I want to be able to see through my eyes as the interactive nature of the text transpires and unfolds. I want the reader to be able to 'spy' upon me and my educational theory: I want the reader to gain a pleasure from this text and be able to focus their gaze on the parts of this text that grabs them, as I have focused on the parts of my practice which have grabbed me.

Beyond this my methods have also incorporated the use of transcripts of interviews that others have completed on me and the engagement with the ideas of others.

I want to now explain my living educational theory to the reader.

1.3 Living Educational Theory

It is important that I clarify for the reader what I mean by living educational theory. My understanding of this has emerged from the work of Jack Whitehead. My methodology for this study follows a living educational theory methodology and through utilizing this, my own living educational theory has emerged. Whitehead refers to living educational theories as:

> '…explanations that individuals produce for their educational influences in learning. They are grounded in the relational dynamics of everyday life and explain the receptively responsive educational influences of individuals in their own lives. They are unique.' (Whitehead, 2008, p. 14)

This thesis contains my explanations for my learning. However, where I have made an original contribution to living educational theory is through my focus on accounting for the 'living' element of living educational theory. Through this thesis I explain the nature of the autobiographical influence on my learning. It is this that takes our knowledge and understanding of living educational theory further than it currently is.

Whitehead (2008) argues that there are distinguishing qualities relating to a living educational theory methodology that are intended to enable an individual to explain the nature of their educational influence:

1. 'I' as a living contradiction;
2. the use of action reflection cycles;
3. the use of procedures of personal and social validation;
4. the inclusion of a life-affirming energy;
5. the use of values.

I have creatively engaged with these qualities in order to explain my own educational influence.

'I' as a living contradiction

In order to explain my own educational influence I have focused on the importance of accounting for my own autobiographical experiences and the impact of these within my professional life. Through these accounts, I demonstrate the nature of the living contradiction that I am, not only professionally but personally. Some examples will be found in Sequence 3 where I account for my frustration at being an inexperienced senior manager, struggling to live out his values productively and purposefully.

The use of action reflection cycles

Within this thesis I have utilized these cycles in order to account for the nature of my educational influence and also as a way of improving my practice. I understand action reflection cycles as:

> 'I recognize that I am working to improve what I am doing because of the values I use to give meaning and purpose to my life. I think we may be similar in that when we believe our values are not being lived as fully as they could be, we feel concerned and our imaginations begin to offer possibilities for improving practice. When the conditions permit, I choose one possibility to act on. I act and evaluate the effectiveness of my actions and understandings in relation to the values I use to judge improvements in my practice. If I am still not living my values as fully as I believe to be possible I modify my concerns, actions and evaluations.' (Whitehead, 2008, p. 11)

The action reflection cycles are both holistic in terms of relating to the whole thesis and also within the thesis there are smaller, specific cycles referring to particular incidents. Within the whole thesis, the framing of my question at the start, the actions taken throughout the thesis accounting for and justifying what I have done, and the conclusions at the end all work as a long-term action reflection cycle. Within the thesis, the smaller action reflection cycles are evident in the following examples: the introduction of a media course at Westwood St Thomas; the introduction of a teacher-research group at Bitterne Park; the working with an NQT at Bitterne Park; my understanding of the role of being an Assistant Headteacher.

The use of procedures of personal and social validation

I understand personal validation from the perspective of Polanyi's (1958) claims that an individual can claim to understand the world from their own point of view (Whitehead, 2008, p. 11). Within this thesis I have exercised my own understanding of the events that have occurred and accounted for these within the descriptions that I have made.

I understand social validation from the perspective of holding my ideas and accounts up for public validation as a way of strengthening the quality of my accounts and understanding of my influence. Within this thesis I have utilized significant others and validation groups in order to clarify and validate the nature of the claims that I have made. For instance, I have referred to my relationships with significant others and how I have shared ideas and materials with them. Beyond this, I have utilized the teacher-research group at Bitterne Park as a validation group.

The inclusion of a life-affirming energy

I understand life affirming energy to mean the energy that drives the individual on through the passionate engagement with their lives. For me, my own life affirming energy is derived from my relationally dynamic original living standard of judgment of *living myself through others*. This standard of judgment as lived out within my own practice enables me to focus on improving the quality of the living educational space. Through this thesis I clarify the meaning of this and demonstrate it within my own practice.

The use of values

I understand values to mean:

> '….the human goals which we use to give our lives their particular form….reasons for action…' (Whitehead, 1993, p. 71)

Within this thesis I account through Sequence 1 for my own values: my own goals and reasons for action. I base this understanding on my reflection on my own autobiographical experiences arguing that my personal and professional experiences are linked. I also argue that my reasons for action are based on my desire to want to live out more fully my own original living standard of judgment of *living myself through others*.

Does my articulation of my own living educational theory mean that I am rejecting other theories? Throughout this thesis I draw on the theories and ideas of others in order to inform my own understanding of my own living educational theory. I engage with the ideas of others with a creative intent to learn from and add to these ideas. Through engaging with theory I am able to reflect and understand my own practice and to then be able to articulate the nature of my own educational influence. I see theory as a creative spark from which I contribute my own originality.

However, current theory limits me. What I mean by this is that current theory does not have the language or ideas to enable me to fully explain and account for the nature of my own educational influence and therefore I account for my own living educational theory to do this, communicating my meanings and ideas through my own language and concepts.

I want to now clarify my understanding of action research and how I am utilising this through this thesis.

1.4 Action Research

My primary aim is to contribute to improving the quality of life that exists in the world. I narrow this broad statement down to improving the quality of life for those that I come into contact with in my professional life in education.

I use the tools and skills that I have been given and developed in order to make this happen.

My primary skills are in education. I believe that I need to reflect on myself as a person in order to understand myself and from this I can then positively influence others.

I believe that it is through the quality of the relationships that I have, that I will contribute to improving my own practice, influence others and consequently improve the world.

I am able to appreciate Reason & McArdle (2007) in recognising that my action research methods are promoting my self-improvement and contributing to improvements within the wider organisations that I work in.

I am using Reason & Bradbury's (2001) model of First, Second and Third person inquiry into practice. They define first-person research as:

> 'First-person action research/practice skills and methods address the ability of the researcher to foster an inquiring approach to his or her own life, to act awarely and choicefully, and to assess effects in the outside world while acting.' (Reason & McArdle, 2007, p. 8)

I address this through my original contribution of accounting for the nature of the autobiographical experiences that I have had and how the personal experiences have influenced my own professional practice.

They define second-person as:

> 'Second-person action research/practice addresses our ability to inquire face-to-face with others into issues of mutual concern – for example in the service of improving our personal and professional practice both individually and separately. Second-person inquiry starts with interpersonal dialogue and

includes the development of communities of inquiry and learning organizations.' (Reason & McArdle, 2007, p. 12)

I believe that this resonates with my own original contribution in this thesis of living educational space. I argue that through the living educational space I was able to offer the conditions for face-to-face inquiry through establishing a teacher-research group at Bitterne Park School.

The definition of third-person is:

'…[to] move beyond the relatively contained and small scale practices of first- and second-person action research to stimulate inquiry in whole organizations and in the wider society…' (Reason & McArdle, 2007, p. 15)

Through Sequence 4 I consider the potential impact of this, arguing the need for individuals to account for the nature of their influence through establishing their own living educational theories.

I live and work in a world that is very different from the first roots and establishment of action research. I have progressed through a system from the start of my teaching career that has demanded and expected that teachers reflect on and improve their practice: professional standards have existed for me from day one with externally set targets in operation. I have trained through a system that requires teachers to recognise that they have the ability to influence the learning that goes on by changing their own behaviours and practice: that if something doesn't work, it is up to the teacher to change. I have grown in this system that expects this to happen and I have not known anything different.

Lewin (1946) is credited with the beginnings of action research, albeit a very different form compared to that which I and my colleagues may be used to today. His form of action research was very structured and prescriptive and was not self-initiated from concerns over personal practice. His model was, however, cyclical in its nature. Stenhouse (1975) moved these ideas forward through advocating that teachers actually undertook research into their own practice, rather than research being undertaken by researchers. Stenhouse further developed (1983) the notions of student-led research, where students were at the heart of the research undertaken. For Stenhouse research was a way of breaking the control and power relations imposed on the teaching profession and a move towards teachers directly influencing the political agenda.

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1999) argue that there are three conceptual frameworks for teacher-research that emerged within the 1990's:

- Teacher research as social inquiry
- Teacher research as ways of knowing within communities
- Teacher research as practical inquiry.

They argue that these three frameworks are interrelated at times. Through the production of my thesis I argue that I have drawn on these three frameworks in order to account for my claims. I have worked collaboratively (teacher research as social inquiry) with others in order to improve my own practice and influence the practice of others. Through the establishment of the teacher-research group I have demonstrated the ways in which I have contributed to the improvement of practice within the schools I have worked (knowing within communities). This reinforces the argument offered by Cordingley (2004) that evidence-informed practice has the potential to improve practice because it requires the teacher becoming a learner again and thus understanding their own learners better (Cordingley, 2004, p. 80). I have undergone sustained reflection on my own practice in order to improve it, through for instance the use of a reflection journal of video image (research as practice inquiry). However, I would argue that I am contributing to this list of conceptual frameworks through offering 'teacher research as self and other awareness'. By this I mean seeing teacher research as a tool to understanding one's own practice through engaging with one's own autobiographical experiences and through using these lived experiences to understand others. My educational value of *living myself through others* is my original contribution to the conceptual frameworks of teacher research.

Through this thesis I am following Whitehead's (1989) action reflection cycle as my model of action research. This model is a spiral of self-improvement based on improving practice through:

1. I experience problems when some of my educational values are negated in my practice;
2. I imagine a solution to my problems.
3. I act in the direction of a chosen solution.
4. I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.
5. I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

I have applied this spiral to answering the broad research question that I have framed within this thesis. However, within the thesis I have demonstrated mini-spirals of self-improvement:

The above model is my approach to action research within this thesis. What it shows is a broad spiral with lots of smaller spirals emerging from the larger one.

Broad spiral:

My desire is to live out my values more fully within my practice of *living myself through others* and my recognition that through creating my own living educational theory and through establishing a living educational space that I would be able to do this. Therefore, I reflect on my autobiographical experiences and also my own professional experiences in order to understand the nature of my practice and my understanding of my concern. I carry out actions of involving others in the collection of data and evidence and of establishing a teacher-research group in order to live out my values more fully. I further reflect on my personal and professional life to understand the educator that I am. I evaluate the impact of this and recognise how I could have improved what I did in order to improve future practice.

Smaller spirals:

Within this thesis smaller spirals have emerged from the broader spiral.
- The introduction of Media Studies at Westwood as described in chapter 2.6;
- The 3 examples of how I began to re-embrace teacher-research at Bitterne Park School in chapter 3.5;
- The autobiographical reflections on being a school-refuser in chapter 2.2;
- The reflection on my relationships with significant others in chapters 1.5, 2.4 and 3.2;
- My reflections on my role as Assistant Headteacher in chapters 3.1, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.7.

I work in a way that is creative and imaginative. I work in a profession that has very limited resources and so I have to be creative. I bring this creativity and imagination to my research. I feel a connection to Eisner (1988) in his comments about methods within research:

> 'When in our teaching, our curriculum, and our research methods we emphasize the prompt classification and labelling of objects and events, we restrict our consciousness and reduce the likelihood that the qualities of which those objects and events consist will be experienced. Thus, our awareness is always limited by the tools we use. When those tools do not invite further sensory exploration, our consciousness is diminished. (Eisner, 1988, p17)

Within my research I have been reluctant to plan to the last detail my methods, rather preferring to respond as and when required to the moments that exist. For instance, I have gathered many hours of video over the period of the research capturing me doing the job that I do. This wasn't intended to 'capture' a particular event of moment, but rather to capture my practice and allow me to build a much more accurate picture of the work that I do. I feel that my data would have been greatly affected if I'd have limited myself to setting up moments of research to capture as it would not have shown me as I am everyday. This further supports Eisner's (1993) argument:

> 'For experience to become public, we must find some means to represent it.'
> (Eisner, 1993, p. 7)

Through my thesis I am going through the process of making public my experience. The ways in which I have chosen to represent my experience is through a multi-media approach which incorporates video and image alongside text. For me this allows me to capture my practice and account for my experiences.

I want to be able to account for the reason why I have embraced action research rather than any other methodological approach. I would argue that throughout my professional life as a middle leader I have been *living through* the Action Research cycle and using this as a means to improve my teaching and leadership practice. The range of modules I have covered through my M.A. have dealt with establishing an action research approach within my practice. My M.A. dissertation focused on:

'Living myself through others. How can I account for my claims and understanding of a teacher-research group at Westwood St Thomas School?'

A teaching module focused on:

'How can I manage the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy with a sample Year 9 group in preparation for the full implementation of the Strategy in the latter stages of KS3 next academic year?'

Another teaching module focused on:

'How can I improve the chances of borderline 5 A*-C students gaining 5 A*-C grades at GCSE over a short period using a variety of teaching and learning strategies?'

A Methods of Educational Enquiry focused on:

'A Case Study on the impact of a teacher-research group at Westwood St Thomas School on professional knowledge and development.'

A Management of Staff Development module focused on:

'How can I manage the development of an approach to Whole School Literacy through using Action Research as an aid to this?'

All of the above units I have completed have been firmly rooted in improving my practice. They have also been about improving my leadership skills in terms of improving the quality of the living educational space. This, I believe, is where I connect to action research: the sense of establishing how I can improve or make things better.

However, I have also written what I would class as more traditional academic essays within two of my units. These are units that do not place the 'I' at the forefront of the inquiry and in my opinion, do not contribute as successfully to educational knowledge as they do not carry the power of the personal learning journey within them for the reader: they do not account for my learning and growth nor do they focus on improvement of my own practice or the impact of my practice on my learners. They seem to be written to get an M.A. rather than for self improvement. An Introduction to Educational Management module focused on:

'How relevant are management models of leadership, decision making and teamwork in the development, planning and delivery of a summer literacy school?'

A Management of Change module focused on:

'Consider a change with which you are familiar that has occurred within your own institution within the last year. Analyse the approach, implementation and outcomes with regard to the theories and models addressed in this module.'

Both these modules dealt with applying theory that did not influence my living practice as it was happening as they were both reflections and application on a past event. Whilst I acknowledge that I was able to learn from these experiences, for me they did not engage or require me to reflect on my present practice and to influence the work that I was currently doing. In contrast, for me the simplicity of action research is reflected through McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead (1996) when they comment:

'We believe that well-conducted action research can lead

➢ to your own personal development,

➢ to better professional practice,

➢ to improvements in the institution in which you work, and

➢ to your making a contribution to the good order of society.' (McNiff, Lomax and Whitehead, 1996, p. 8)

This seems to be part of the essence of being a good leader: the sense of developing the self as a way of improving your own practice so that you can promote improvements within other people's practice and hence improving the quality of learning that takes place within your own School and beyond. This is why I feel that promoting an action research approach to leadership will help me to positively influence and *live through others* as I seek to contribute to improvements in their

practice. However, my crucial learning from this has been that the leader, both senior and middle, surely needs to begin with improving himself before he begins to try and influence others. I would argue that a process of self-learning and discovery that is firmly rooted in reflection is required of any leader is that he/she understands themselves and their own practice. My experience of action research enquiries based on 'How can I improve…?' established for me a clear understanding of my own practice as a basis for me to then use my leadership to help others improve and thus for me to live out my own living standard of judgement based on the educational value of *living through others*. This relationally dynamic standard of judgement enables me to be responsive to people and situations that arise within my personal and professional life.

But what makes my work research? Sebba (2004) draws on Dyson and Desforges (2002) and their claims to distinctly define 3 types of research capacities, including:

☐ scholarly research to build knowledge;

☐ policy makers to use research;

☐ and practitioners to produce research to inform their own practice. (Sebba, 2004, p. 39)

This fundamentally contributes to the issues surrounding practitioner research and reinforces the idea that practitioner research is not 'scholarly'. I disagree with this. My thesis, as a piece of practitioner research, is a piece of scholarly research that makes a significant contribution to education in offering a new relationally dynamic educational standard of judgement and providing the evidence of this in practice. Sebba (2004) seems to try and split scholarly and practitioner research and to see them as separate entities. Through the establishment of an in-house teacher-research group which I explain in sequence 3 I was able to demonstrate how practitioner research and academic research can work together in harmony in order to improve practice and contribute to educational knowledge.

Torrance (2004) also identifies the dichotomy between propositional, theoretical knowledge and practical knowledge; arguing that the former follows well-understood methodological processes, whereas the latter has a lack of clear methodological scrutiny (Torrance, 2004, p. 188). In a response to this my thesis demonstrates practical knowledge from a practitioner that follows a methodological process that is creative and responsive to the needs of the enquiry. We need to ensure that we don't dismiss something just because it is different and new. I would argue that it is a mistake to see the divide between 'theoretical' and 'practical' knowledge. My thesis is

both theoretical and practical at the same time, creating living educational theory alongside practical solutions to problems. The greatest benefit is when theory and practice sit alongside each other so as to move forward our educational understandings and improve the quality of learning that takes place. I want to create learners that will bring forward the next generation of advancements in knowledge and so we must ensure that we apply these principles to our own field of educational research, allowing researchers to breathe and explore the realms of possibility rather than only sticking to what we already know. One principle I apply to my daily work is very simple: *if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you always got.* If we envisage a future for education and research where researchers are distant practitioners not necessarily engaged within the day-to-day job that they are researching about; and a future where the practitioners who are engaged in the day-to-day job are discouraged from researching in order to improve what they do, then I think we will be harming the future of the profession and missing out on massive potential understandings of how to improve what we do.

Sebba (2004) continues to argue of the importance of achieving real 'impact' from research as opposed to simply achieving 'dissemination'; she argues that you can have the latter quite easily without necessarily having the former (Sebba, 2004, p. 40). Within my thesis, the construction of an action research living educational theory thesis has required me to work through real problems that I have encountered within my practice and to test out real answers to my concerns. For example, the concern I had over improving teacher-practice in my second school which led to me establishing a teacher-research group ensured that I was having real impact on real teachers and real students; my work wasn't only disseminated to others, although I did do this at times (presentation to BECTA and LAs), but actually had direct impact. The evidence included from significant others, for instance, supports this.

I want to now explain for the reader my understanding of my original contribution to knowledge of 'living educational space'.

1.5 Living Educational Space

Within this section I want to explain and clarify my meanings of the term 'living educational space'. Within my abstract I claim that, 'I explore the on-going nature of transition between living educational spaces upon myself and how this process of change is addressed as I move through different stages of my career and life…. I argue that I am able to improve the quality of the living educational space because of the relationships and experiences that I have had, alongside the living core values that I hold….. This thesis explores how I was able to create the shared living educational space necessary to enable teacher-research to occur and flourish.' The idea of 'living educational space' is part of the original contribution to knowledge that this thesis offers.

I believe that I carry a space with and around me. This space incorporates my whole being: my life story alongside the values that I hold and my own unique living educational theory.

I believe that others carry their own living educational spaces with them.

I believe that the environment I and others inhabit has its own living educational space as well. This may be a school, for instance, which contains procedures or ideas of education.

There are times when these three elements come together, and it is at this point that some common agreement is reached in order to allow these individuals to live through this space. The marrying of these three things, with creative intent and engagement, contributes to improving the quality of education. My own living educational theory incorporates my living standard of judgment of *living myself through others*. This is my life affirming energy (Whitehead, 2008). I use this standard of judgment as a way of understanding others within this living educational space and enabling me and others to creatively engage in order to improve the quality of it.

Within Sequence 3, Chapter 3.6, I recount my experiences of introducing a teacher-research group to Bitterne Park School. The introduction of this group enabled me and the participants to explore their own living educational spaces through enquiry and to then influence the living educational space of the school.

However, I would argue that living educational space is not necessarily based on a school context. I recognize that I am living life as enquiry (Marshall, 1999) and therefore argue that I always have living educational space around me. My inclusion of autobiographical examples within this thesis, for instance, The School-Refuser Story in Chapter 2.2, demonstrates this sense of being present within living educational space. From these examples I understand and clarify my own being.

This offers the further originality of this thesis which is the moving of personal experiences into the professional domain to account for the nature of their influence. By this I mean the recognition that the nature of my autobiography influences my professional life I lead.

I believe that from reflection of the living educational space something new emerges from it as contributions to educational knowledge and improving practice. This thesis makes contributions to:

1. A new epistemology. For me a new living standard of judgment has emerged of *living myself through others.* This I believe responds to Schon's (1995) calls for the emergence of a new epistemology from action research that enables practitioners to account for the knowledge they hold.
2. A living theory methodology. The sustained use of an autobiographical methodological approach alongside the creation and accounting for my own living educational theory is contributing to a living theory methodology.
3. Improving the practice of teachers. Within this thesis I account in Sequence 3 for the impact of establishing the living educational space for teachers to engage in practitioner research in improving practice and in generating their own educational knowledge.
4. Improving the quality of educational relationships. Demonstrating that a relationally dynamic standard of judgment *of living myself through others* through my practice has contributed to improvements in the quality of my educational relationships.

Within the next section in want to begin to explain some of the educational relationships that I have had and I will refer to 'significant others' who have been part of this.

1.6 Significant Others (1)

Within this section I want to demonstrate how my growing relationship with Jack is an example of a loving educational relationship through drawing on Cho's (2005) notion of love. I also want to provide an account of my growing living educational relationship with my wife. It is further evidence of my understanding of the importance of my own learning through others and how this can be used to positively influence the living educational space that I inhabit. I again remind myself of Cho's (2005) notion of love as I engage with my wife within a loving educational relationship. Through Jack and Karen this has helped me to triangulate my own ideas. Within my abstract, 'I argue that I am able to improve the quality of the living educational space because of the relationships and experiences that I have had, alongside the living core values that I hold…. This thesis addresses the vastly important influence of relationships within education and explores how these relationships impact on my practice as an educator. The text incorporates and captures these relationships through enabling these others to speak through their own voice.'

I refer to 'significant others' as people who I have had loving relationships (Cho, 2005) with and who I have *lived through*.

Figure 10: Image of Jack Whitehead

I want to offer an insight into my growing relationship with Jack Whitehead. My relationship with Jack began during my M.A. through the University of Bath, some 5 years ago. Over this time I believe our relationship has grown, moving from a professional relationship to one of mutual respect and love. This sense of love, I believe, is firmly nested in Cho's (2005) notion of love and is something that I can embrace within the relationship that I have with Jack. Cho comments:

> 'In the love encounter, the teacher and student do not seek knowledge from or of each other, but, rather, they seek knowledge from the world with each other:' (Cho, 2005, p 94)

This reflects for me the way that I try to treat those that I teach. I treat my relationship with Jack in the same way that I would want others to treat and see me. I listen to

Jack because I believe in what he says: if I didn't respect him I wouldn't listen to him. It is in one sense a co-enquiry. Cho embraces the relationally dynamic understanding of learning and through this I am able to understand my own values and being: of seeing learning as an exchange between people together rather than a one-way process. Cho further comments in relation to this co-enquiry approach to knowledge:

'…love means the pursuit of real knowledge, knowledge that is no longer limited to particular content passed from one to the other, but rather knowledge that can only be attained by each partner seeking it in the world.' (Cho, 2005, p 94)

Jack has been fundamental in helping to bring forward my thoughts, feelings and ideas on education and he has helped me to be able to account for my own living educational theory as it has emerged through my personal and professional life. My relationship with him has provided the space for this to happen. He has been instrumental in drawing my own life affirming energy form within me and helping to centralise this within my life in order to improve what I do for the benefit of others. He has been a tower of strength and a voice of reason when my own personality has demanded me to react in other ways. I hope my students get the same from me as I have got from Jack.

Over this period of study I have had a great deal of contact with Jack. I want to draw on some examples of this contact in order to illustrate why Jack is a significant other to me. Much of our contact has been through email and I will draw on some of these. Jack wrote in response to an early draft of this thesis:

'Hi Simon - having just read your account I can see why you are really enjoying what you are creating. It's a most engaging read and carries your passion as a committed educator and practitioner-researcher. Your story also carries your creative and critical engagements with the ideas of others and you open acknowledgement of your learning with colleagues. All I think I can do is to encourage you to keep sending me more until the thesis is complete!

Because so many of your educational relationships with colleagues and students involve your educational influence through conversations, it might strengthen your thesis to draw on data of some of your educational conversations with students (like the one with Mark) in which you can show

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your influence on the learning of others in the others own voice. Let's

chat about this next week. Looking forward to seeing you.

Love Jack.' (22-04-04)

This response was both great to receive and slightly frustrating. On one hand it is really positive to hear somebody liking my writing and I get the impression that Jack is pleased. However, I was also hoping for something a little more 'critical' of my work: something that I could pin my next ideas to and respond to and take on board through my writing. As ever, I am wanting and seeking the criticism that I can use to improve from. However, I recognise that Jack also works within Cho's (2005) notion of love and his response is sent in a loving way that wants to enquire alongside me. He will not respond in such a way that tells me what I should do, but rather wants the writing to emerge from within our relationship.

Jack further wrote in relation to being sent another section of my writing:
> 'Hi Simon- a beautiful evening in Bath and I'm off out to saviour the balmy
> evening with drinks and dinner in the Garden. I've downloaded your thesis
> writing and I'm looking forward to responding. I'd like to try something
> new in my response to your writing to see if I can respond in a way that
> shows your influence in my own education as I seek to communicate my own
> learning as I live myself through others. I've already got this vague
> intuition of how I want to respond to your writings.

Love Jack.' (30-05-04)

This for me is the kind of response that I've come to understand and appreciate from Jack. Within our relationship I can sense the growing opening of insights into each other. Through this thesis I am opening myself up to him and allowing him insights into my character and being: in a sense, this is the trust that I have in him to do this. I am also growing in awareness of how Jack wants to be able to connect with the value of *living through others*: how he wants to be able to value it and appreciate it within his own practice. It is this type of creative engagement and encounter which is demonstration of *living myself through others* within a living educational space: of somebody creatively engaging with the idea of *living myself through others* and something new emerging from it within their own practice. This relationship mirrors

the types of relationships that I want with those who I come into contact with in school: the sense of co-enquiring and learning from the world we inhabit together.

Jack's willingness to learn alongside me as a co-enquirer has increased the loving relationship that I feel we have. I have learned from him how to overcome the contextual barriers that have been placed in front of me as I have been producing this thesis: I have learned how to move around barriers in a dynamic way through seeking the positive more fully from the negatives presented to me. This was never more so than during my transfer from MPhil to PhD, when my first transfer paper and presentation failed and my second one passed. Jack was able to support me in creatively responding to very challenging circumstances and it is this approach that I am beginning to apply to my professional life much more fully.

Figure 11: Image of my wife Karen and daughter Sophia, 2007.

It is very significant that through the time of writing this thesis I have been living with my fiancée, shown above, at the start of writing, who became my wife, at the end of writing, who has also been writing her Ph.D. thesis. The above image was taken at home with our daughter, Sophia, and reflects the person that I understand Karen to be. I am taking the image. Her gaze is looking at me and I am able to draw out that smile and connection. Perhaps I can consider the significance of this relationship of writer, teacher-researcher, and fiancée/husband. This is my own recognition that I am influencing and being influenced by the relationships that surround me.

We both write mainly from home within the same room, writing on our laptops not more than one metre away from each other. We read, engage and write significant

contributions to our growing understanding of our own practice. We travel in the car, and we discuss, on the way to get our shopping. We watch television, and we discuss our writing. Our lives as teacher-researchers are significant within our existence. We did not have children at the start of this research: perhaps this is our gap-filler? We each have our own *baby* emerging from within our computers, growing on a daily basis, desperate to be fed and cared for, gasping for knowledge and wisdom to be able to go into the world and live through others its existence. Then Sophia came along. For us, our work has a desire to be living: to be understood and engaged with by others. Our work is part of our lives.

My wife is the more questioning of us: she is asking, desiring as a parent. She wants her *child* to be right. She wants to be able to follow a plan. She wants to keep it simple and keep it in such a way that others can appreciate it. She wants to be able to talk about it. She is an enthusiastic parent who wants to be able to talk about her child, not in a boastful way, but with an engagement and love for it.

I am not the same. I want my *child* to have the love and compassion that I feel. I want it to be able to recognise others and *live through* their experiences. I want it to be able to value their feelings, emotions and passions. I want it to be creative and set new boundaries. I want it to be able to explore for itself its surroundings. I don't mind if it makes its own mistakes. I don't fear for it.

This describes my own notions of being in *loco parentis*. This describes the types of relationships that I want with those I come into contact with. I strive to live out these values within my own life as I help to raise our daughter. I strive to live out these values within my own professional life as I experience educational relationships and aim to bring my love and life to them in order to bring out the best in myself and others.

Further to this I can reflect on the impact that my professional and personal life have on each other. It is probably true that the two things are gelled well together; I can reflect on my wedding day and the following image that shows myself, my wife and other members of the teacher-research group there to celebrate with us along with members of our families. I feel that this reflects how our personal and professional lives are entwined, for positive reasons, and the extent to which we rely on these professional relationships as supporting mechanisms.

Figure 12: Image from my Wedding Day, 2004. The image contains both family and work colleagues.

Central to our growing educational relationship is our desire to be *worthy of each other*: both personally as well as professionally. This, I believe, is what drives us on to account for our own living educational theories and educational practice. We want to seek to define what it means to be worthy to each other and the world. From each other, we get this sense of inspiration and pleasure that allows us to drive forward. When we are with each other, we are both fully present: perhaps none more so than on our wedding day. We gain the sense of regeneration from each other, drawing on each other's strengths each day. This is what provides for us our relationally dynamic educational standard of judgement: as we grow and change, so does our growing and emerging educational theory.

Within the next section I want to explain how my work is worthy of a doctorate.

1.7 The criteria

Within this section I intend to show how I value the freedom of expression of the researcher in order to enhance the quality and value of practitioner research that is emerging through the Academy. I draw on Furlong and Oancea (2005) in their calls for recognising the potential diversity within research that could exist, and Lomax (1998) in her calls to extend the ways that we judge research. I support Kincheloe (2003) in his valuing of the Emancipatory potential of research, and consider Foucault (1977) in his exploration of knowledge and power within social formations.

From the outset of this thesis I have been clear in my intention to write the account that I felt best reflected the experiences and learning that has taken place over the preceding years. I agree with Reason (2005) in his comments:

> 'If we start from the idea that creating knowledge is a practical affair, we will start not, as in traditional academic research, from an interesting theoretical questions, but from what concerns us in practice, from the presenting issues in our lives.' (Reason, 2005, p. 3)

I was clear that I wanted to be truthful and honest within my own mind of what has influenced me to be the educator that I am: I was starting from practical concerns within my own personal and professional life and these became the guiding research stories that were able to frame this thesis. However, I am aware that I cannot account for everything and in that respect, I have been selective in the narrative I have told.

As a secondary aspect to this I have been aware of the need to meet the criteria offered by the University of Bath so that this work can be assessed and placed within the Academy. Two of the criteria that I am working to are:

□ making an original and significant contribution to knowledge;

□ giving evidence of originality of mind and critical judgement in a particular subject.

I am in support of Furlong and Oancea (2005) with respect to their calls for acknowledging the recognition of diverse forms of evidence to respond to the changing nature of educational research production. I want to create an account of my own practitioner's autobiographical educational narrative that I want to be creative, imaginative, truthful and engaging. I want to be able to account for my learning in a creative way that allows a reader to judge my account with a freedom of judgement that is based on learning, education and practice. I want to be able to contribute to Coulter's (1999) claims for the need to:

'…move from focusing on the generation of knowledge necessary for scholarly dialogue to examining the dialogue itself.' (Coulter, 1999, p. 5)

Throughout this thesis I intend to be able to show that I am satisfying the criteria required for a Ph.D. study of *originality of mind* and *critical judgement*. Perhaps as a starting point for this section of my thesis it is important for me to explain what my own epistemology is and what I believe is educational knowledge in respect of my own growing understanding through my role as a teacher-researcher and leader.

Kincheloe (2003) recognises the link between what we understand educative knowledge to be and Habermas' three forms of knowledge: the Technical interest; the Practical interest; and the Emancipatory interest. It is through these forms of defined knowledge that I can recognise my own understanding of what I constitute to be my own living educational theory. I cannot fully recognise the sense of Habermas' *Technical Interest* with teacher-research: whilst I can sense the importance of teacher-research providing the tools to support the improvement of teachers within their work, I cannot see the sense in the value of being able to reproduce events or data to support research. This sense is reflected in Whitehead's (2003) comments regarding whether it is necessary or possible to be able to reproduce events or research. Research for me is far more subjective and personalised in that it is essentially there to support the individual and their practice as an influential educator. Others may well be able to take something from the research, but essentially the research is a personal learning journey and account. It is not there as a reproducible theory of education that can be generalised. I am aware of how much educational research is based on this Technical Interest model. I am aware of my own research work for NCSL that has required me to produce research in this Technical Interest style in order to gain funding.

For instance, I read an account that reflects on Assessment for Learning in Schools that concludes it impacts positively on attainment. I wonder what am I to take from this, other than it might benefit my students in some way and that I need to creatively engage with this in order to make it relevant to my school. It is my engagement with it that makes it relevant, rather than the material itself. My argument is that this thesis I am writing accounts for my own learning journey: my conclusions may be useful to others, but it is essentially my own learning journey. In this, this text is to be judged against whether or not it accounts for my learning journey.

The *Practical Interest* I feel is useful in the sense that it helps to provide the metaphors that teacher-researchers can use to support their explanations of the work that they carry out: it helps to provide a meta-language to communicate with others within the teacher-research community and to help put ideas across in an understandable and communicable form. I can reflect on the importance to me of incorporating the essence of the story of *Henry V* into my Management of Staff Development M.A. assignment and also of incorporating *The Great Gatsby* into my M.A. dissertation as a way of helping me to communicate the stories that I wanted to tell. These references allowed me to be able to draw on autobiographical references that were important to me in my life and help me to communicate with the reader the feelings and emotions that I had through making these connections and contextual references.

Essentially though it is the *Emancipatory Interest* which supports the work of teacher-researchers through supporting knowledge production that allows the teacher-researcher the freedom to work without restraint or restriction within their chosen areas to improve their practice. It is this form of knowledge which links knowledge with knowledge-use: linking knowledge with improvements in practice within the classroom. For me it is this type of knowledge that has the potential to liberate teachers within their classrooms and to promote knowledge that is valued as it is produced by those who have a direct stake in the uses of the knowledge produced.

Whitehead (2003) argues well the need for a greater understanding and acceptance within the Academy of teacher-research accounts. He comments:

> 'Where there is still much work to be done is in developing the shared understandings of the values-based standards of judgement used by examiners of s-step accounts.' (Whitehead, 2003, p. 6)

By this I understand Whitehead to mean that there is a need to further clarify the examination of s-step accounts, in order to proliferate the understandings of living standards of judgements, that are the ways in which individuals account for and explain the nature of their learning and educational influence over themselves and others. My hope is that the readers of this text will be able to appreciate my values and reflect on Whitehead's comments above. However, in order to read and appreciate this text the reader may wish to draw on Bakhtin's theory of the carnival in terms of its ability to:

> '…disclose(s) the potentiality of an entirely different world, or another order, another way of life.' (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 48)

I am proposing a world where teacher-researchers and academic-researchers can work together in order to produce the tools that will enable education and life to move forward in a productive way. Sequence 3 of this thesis accounts for how I did this. I understand that both practitioners and researchers have the same ends in sight: to make things better for others through improving the quality of the educational space inhabited. As Coulter (1999) acknowledges:

> 'Dialogic truth is not pronounced by philosopher kings, but constructed by ordinary people.' (Coulter, 1999, p. 9)

In my view, we are all ordinary people trying to make things better. My understanding of teacher-researchers and their ability to be knowledge producers within education drives forward my epistemology. I support Kincheloe (2003) when he comments:

> 'Promoting teachers as researchers is a fundamental way of cleaning up the damage of technical standards. De-skilling of teachers and dumbing-down of the curriculum take place when teachers are seen as receivers not producers of knowledge. A vibrant professional culture depends on a group of practitioners who have the freedom to continuously reinvent themselves via their research and knowledge production.' (Kincheloe, 2003, p. 19)

This sense of 'vibrant', 'freedom', and 'reinvention' is central here. How liberating those words are! Essentially this has been my own experience of teacher-research. Being part of a teacher-research community at Westwood St Thomas has established for me the importance of allowing teachers the chance to take control of the improvement of their practice: change that is driven from within individuals has more chance of making a greater, lasting impact on practice. Change that is externally enforced leaves the door of refusal open. I can reflect on my own previous teacher-research projects that I have undertaken on for instance, having to implement the KS3 *National Literacy Strategy* within my own school and using an action research cycle to help me introduce this externally imposed national initiative within my local context. I can reflect on the sense of creativity as commented by Coulter and Wiens (2002) who attempt to link the sense of knowledge production of teacher-researchers alongside university academics and consider how the two can gain from the relationship between the two groups of people. Returning to Kincheloe's 'vibrant', 'freedom' and 'reinvention' reflects the need to constantly re-evaluate the nature of educational knowledge: to constantly ask the question, 'How can I/We improve….?' That is why that question is the key starting point for any teacher-researcher enquiry as it draws implicitly on vibrancy, freedom and

reinvention within its answer. Within this thesis, I want to be judged against the same criteria: Is it vibrant? Is it free? Is it reinventing?

I can reflect on the notions of 'power' and 'knowledge' from Foucault (1977) and relate these to the debate over what we should constitute as educational knowledge:

> 'Perhaps, too, we should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunctions, its demands and its interests. Perhaps we should abandon the belief that power makes mad and that, by the same token, the renunciation of power is one of the conditions of knowledge. We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations. These 'power-knowledge relations' are to be analysed, therefore, not on the basis of a subject of knowledge who is or is not free in relation to the power system, but, on the contrary, the subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of these fundamental implications of power-knowledge and their historical transformations. In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge.' (Foucault, 1977, p. 27-28)

Foucault's sense of trying to understand the processes of discipline which are at work in relation to the control of people within society is worthy of note within education: one of those processes which he sees as dispersing power through society. For me, it is central for educators to be able to understand the power that they possess and to be able to create and transform the work that they do as practitioners so that the messages that they deliver are appropriate rather than being political to serve the single needs of the ruling political regimes at the time. For too long, education has been at the beckoning call of whichever political party has been in power, changing direction based on political ideology rather than the needs of the learners.

In relation to the Ph.D. thesis I am writing, I can draw upon Whitehead's (2003) comments:

> 'Any research account of an educational practice must make sense to the reader if it is to be judged as a contribution to educational knowledge. What I mean by making sense is that the account has a logic in that the reader can comprehend the form that the reasoning is taking.' (Whitehead, 2003, p. 16)

Form is important within this text: form opens up within this text and emerges. As I write this text, and re-write it, the form morphs into something else. The form begins to breathe and live itself and come to life. The form this text takes, as a multi-media text incorporating image and video, is further evidence of my originality of mind.

My critical judgements are being demonstrated through my interactions with my own emerging educational theory, through my engagement with the ideas of others and through my growing understanding of what is educational to me. It is through my engagement and reflective considerations of my own practice that I am seeking to improve the work that I do.

> 'The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalising judgement. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish. It establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them. That is why, in all the mechanisms of discipline, the examination is highly ritualised. In it are combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force and the establishment of truth. At the heart of the procedures of discipline, it manifests the subjection of those who are perceived as objects and the objectification of those who are subjected. The superimposition of the power relations and knowledge relations assumes in the examination all its visible brilliance.' (Foucault, 1977, p. 184-185)

Within the next section I want to explain to the reader how I have considered ethics within my thesis.

1.8 Ethics

All interviews and interactions within this text have gained informed consent (Cohen et al., 2000) from participants. However, beyond this I am arguing that the ethics that I have employed have emerged through the inquiry as a result of the interactions and decisions that I have taken. They have reflected the educational values that I have proposed at the start of the inquiry and essentially, through my attempt to *live through* those that I have communicated with, I have allowed this to be the determining factor in decisions made. I am suggesting that this is another form of my own originality of mind and critical engagement as my approach has emerged through the inquiry and through my critical engagement and I have developed a greater understanding of how I want to work. I am acknowledging that through my critical engagement I have been able to make this informed decision and this has allowed my originality of mind to develop. I further feel that this is a reflection of my growing sense of professionalism and judgement as a teacher-researcher, to be able to make these informed decisions regarding ethics within my thesis.

Cohen et al. (2000) draw on Hopkins (1985) in determining a set of ethical principles for action researchers to follow during their research:

Observe protocol – within this I have gained permission from the two schools at the centre of the research that I was working in.

Involve participants – I have incorporated the voices of others into the text to help me to construct the narrative.

Negotiate with those affected – where staff have not wanted me to use their input I have respected this; where consent has been given I have used their work. In some examples staff have requested that their names not be used and I have respected their requests.

Report progress – I have shared the work I have done with those involved through making it available on the web and through discussion with those involved in it. These forms of validation have helped to refine my own understandings of the data that I have collected.

Obtain explicit authorizations – those I have incorporated within the work have given their full authorization.

Negotiate descriptions of people's work – where I have written about others I have included their responses within the work.

Negotiate accounts of others' points of view – where others have requested changes I have incorporated these into my account.

Obtain explicit authorization before using quotations – through presenting a multi-media text I have obtained permissions before gathering data in a multi-media form.

Negotiate reports for various levels of release – where I have shared and released this work I have taken account of who the audience is.

Accept responsibility for maintaining confidentiality – where individuals have wanted to remain anonymous I have adhered to this request.

Retain the right to report your work – I have considered this through the publishing to the web this account.

Make your principles of procedure binding and known – as this account has emerged over a period of time I have informed individuals at the point that they were drawn on to add to the account. Obviously, over time as the account has emerged, some of the principles have changed and I have made people aware of these emerging procedures that I have used.

Within the next sequence I want to move from my own educational values and to reflect on my own life-story as I continue to explain my own living educational theory.