

## **PART FOUR**

### **HOW DO I HELP YOU TO IMPROVE YOUR LEARNING? SPIRITUAL, AESTHETIC AND ETHICAL CONTRADICTIONS IN MY DISCIPLINE OF EDUCATION.**

#### **4.1 Narrative**

In Part Two, I explained the significance of my standards of originality of mind and critical judgement for my methodological enquiries. I then moved on to the idea of creating living educational theories.

In Part Three I focused on my standards of originality and critical judgements in exploring the logic of the question, 'How do I improve my practice?'. In this part of my enquiry I was interested in exploring the extent to which I could develop a specific logic of the specific object (myself) by standing firm, through time, in an enquiry which contained 'I' as a living contradiction. My living educational theories were focused on explanations for my own learning as I engaged with issues of methodology, logic and the politics of truth in my educational enquiry.

In moving my enquiry forward, into what I consider to be my present practice, I am focusing on my learning as I engage with the question, 'How do I help you (my students) to improve your learning?'. In my paper on *Educative Relations in a New Era* (1.2) and the paper below on *Creating a New Discipline of Educational Enquiry* (4.5) I explain my educative influence with Kevin Eames, a Ph.D. researcher. I do this in terms of my living curriculum theorising as I bring into my dialogues my learning from my own educational journey into living contradictions, the logic of education and my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values:

*“Eames moves from a position where he experiences himself as a living contradiction in attempting to communicate his understanding of dialectics from within a propositional form, to a position where he is showing his own living curriculum theorising in action in an analysis of his own learning.*

*In my research supervision I bring into my educative relationships a set of values, skills, understandings and disciplinary knowledge which constitutes part of my own curriculum vitae.*

*In the dialogues below I am valuing:*

- 1) the logics of educational knowledge in creating a new discipline of educational enquiry;*
- 2) including ‘I’ as a living contradiction in educational enquiries;*
- 3) understanding educational enquiries as living processes of self-creation and transformation which cannot be captured solely within an idea of ‘structure’ or ‘framework’;*
- 4) recognising that important human values, such as the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values which motivate and form part of educational explanations, cannot be communicated in a solely linguistic form.” (1.2 p. 81).*

In 1995, at the time Schön published his paper on the need to create an epistemology of practice, Eames (1995) submitted his Ph.D. thesis on, *How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?* In the papers (1.2 & 4.5) I explain my educative influence with Eames as he creates his own epistemology of practice from the experience of himself as a living contradiction.

My educative relation with Eames moved forward on the ground of his experience of himself as a living contraction. It also moved forward as I engaged with his learning in terms of the above four values (1.2, p. 81). I want to contrast this movement forward in Eames’ thinking to the following experiences of contradiction in my supervision of the research programmes of other researchers and colleagues.



When something comes up which is not as good as it could be I want to make sure that part of my practice is not to excuse myself without reviewing these experiences for my learning. This is part of my theorising from my ground as a living contradiction.

In my present practice I am seeking to clarify further the meanings of my living standards of originality of mind and critical judgement in my educative relations with my students. I intend to do this by focusing on contradictions in my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values.

John Elliott (1998) has focused on standards in his analysis of the work of the Ford Teaching Project. He has shown how a professional knowledge-base can be constructed through action research as teachers engage in standards-setting. I accept his recommendation that teachers engage in a form of 'creative compliance' in relation to external standards setting. He advocates that the teaching profession responds to external requirements by developing the capacity to accommodate and to creatively reinterpret the external standards as part of the professions well articulated and publicly defensible standards framework. This is what I am attempting to do here in my work as an educational researcher and university teacher as I seek legitimisation for my ideas in the Academy by 'creatively complying' with his external standards of originality of mind and critical judgement.

One of my difficulties in communicating the changing meanings of my educational standards concerns their relationship to my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values. Let me explain what I mean through my experience of contradiction in my supervisory relationships.

My attempts to contribute to the knowledge-base of education have focused on the idea that professional educators can create their own living theories in the descriptions and explanations for their own learning in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve my



practice?'. Because of my belief that enhancing the professional status of teaching will include the construction of a professional knowledge-base in which teaching can be seen to be a form of educational enquiry, I have committed much of my working life to supervising teachers' action research programmes.

Going back to Ryle's (1949) point that efficient practice precedes the theory of it, I want to point to the evidence of my practice as a professional educator from the Appendix of my Presidential Address to BERA'88 (5.4, p. 14-17). Apart from the first thesis by Vera Coghill in this list, I solely or jointly supervised these action research and 'living theory' Ph.D. Theses and Masters Dissertations. I want to draw your attention to this list of research reports because it serves to focus on my supervision of research students and my question, 'How do I help you to improve your learning?'.

The following researchers have graduated over the past five years and I draw on the contents of D'Arcy's and Eames' theses below in showing how I both deny my aesthetic values and work towards the creation of a discipline of educational enquiry. The titles and contents of the theses and dissertations of Evans, Holley, Laidlaw and Shobbrook serve to show that living theory theses have been legitimated in the Academy. This is not to make any point about the academic quality of my own research. It could say something about my pedagogy and this may be a matter of future research.

**Living Theory Theses and Dissertations on the Internet at  
<http://www.actionresearch.net>**

D'Arcy, P. (1998) *The Whole Story*..... Ph.D. Thesis. University of Bath.

Eames, K. (1995) *How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath.

Evans, M. (1996) *An action research inquiry into reflection in action as part of my role as a deputy headteacher. (See Chapter 8 - Creating my own living educational theory)* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Kingston.



Holley, E. (1997) *How do I, as a teacher researcher, contribute to the development of living educational theory through an exploration of my values in my professional practice?* M.Phil. Thesis, University of Bath.

Laidlaw, M. (1996) *How can I create my own living educational theory through accounting to you for my own educational development?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath.

Shobbrook, H. (1997) *My Living Educational Theory Grounded In My Life: How can I enable my communication through correspondence to be seen as educational and worthy of presentation in its original form.?* M.A. Dissertation, University of Bath.

I do not intend to imply that the above Theses and Dissertations show that 'I have educated these individuals'. In my view they have educated themselves. However, I do want to claim that I have had acknowledged, educative influences on the learning of particular practitioner-researchers. I want to examine the nature of my claims to know such influences on their learning. I am thinking of claims which will reveal the meanings my standards of originality and critical judgement as I seek to represent the meanings of the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical influences in my educative relations. The issue of representation is linked to my desire for recognition.

*Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of anger, shame and pride, are parts of the human personality critical to political life. According to Hegel, they are what drives the whole historical process.* (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xvii)

Let me see if I can communicate more clearly the nature of the spiritual quality of recognition I am seeking to represent in my research as I make my first return in thirty years to these (gendered) words of Martin Buber:



*The teacher who wants to help the pupil to realize his best potentialities must intend him as this particular person, both in his potentiality and in his actuality. More precisely, he must know him not as a mere sum of qualities, aspirations, and inhibitions; he must apprehend him, and affirm him as a whole. But this he can only do if he encounters him as a partner in a bipolar situation. And to give his influence unity and meaning, he must live through this situation in all its aspects not only from his own point of view but also from that of his partner. He must practice the kind of realization that I call embracing. It is essential that he should awaken the I-You relationship in the pupil, too, who should intend and affirm his educator as this particular person; and yet the educational relationship could not endure if the pupil also practiced the art of embracing by living through the shared situation from the educator's point of view. Whether the I-You relationship comes to an end or assumes the altogether different character of a friendship, it becomes clear that the specifically educational relationship is incompatible with complete mutuality. (Buber, p. 178, 1957)*

In seeking recognition in the 'I-You' relationship and in the thymotic sense of 'spiritness' (Fukuyama, 1992, p. xvi) I want to overcome a tendency to megalothymia in the sense of a search to be recognised as superior to others. I am seeking recognition by the Academy that my own contribution to knowledge of my subject education, can be publicly acknowledged as worthy of being seen, alongside the contributions of my research students, as showing originality of mind and critical judgement.

In my supervision of the above action research programmes, I have already received the quality of recognition which has helped to sustain my enquiries. I think it worth emphasising that this recognition and affirmation, in the use of my ideas by my students, was vital in helping me to resist the denial of recognition in the examiners' judgements of previous submissions in 1980 and 1982. It was also vital in helping me to sustain my enquiries in the face of the University's claim in 1987 that my activities and writings were



a challenge to the present and proper organisation of the University and not consistent with the duties the University wished me to pursue in my teaching or research. (3.2, p.98)

As I judge my research programme as a whole I understand my present living standards, of originality of mind and critical judgement, in terms of both an evaluation of my learning through my past enquiries and in terms of my intentions to live my values more fully in my practice in my future enquiries. In creating my living educational theories I am seeking to communicate the nature of the process through which my standards constitute my discipline of education in my educative relations. In Schön's (1995) terms I see that:

*"The problem of introducing and legitimizing in the university the kinds of action research associated with the new scholarship is one not only of the institution but of the scholars themselves". (p.34)*

What he means by this is that the new scholarship requires an epistemology of practice.

*"I have tried to show how the introduction of the kinds of inquiry inherent in the new scholarship are likely to encounter a double impediment: on the one hand, the power of disciplinary in-groups that have grown up around the dominant epistemology of the research universities; and on the other, the inability of those who might become new scholars to make their practice into appropriately rigorous research." (p.34)*

I am seeking to make a contribution to this new scholarship by making my 'practice into appropriately rigorous research'. I am doing this by showing how living standards of originality of mind and critical judgement constitute my discipline of education.

What makes this 'living' approach to educational standards differ from traditional, 'linguistic' standards, where meanings are defined through lexical definitions, is that the living standards are embodied in the lives of practitioners and require ostensive definition

to communicate their meanings. In using ostensive definitions I am attempting to share my meanings by pointing out, in the movement between the texts in the thesis, where the embodied meanings of my standards of originality of mind and critical judgement are emerging through time, reflection and action. I am indebted to Moira Laidlaw for the insight that the meanings of the values I use as my educational standards are themselves living and changing in the course of their emergence in practice. (Laidlaw, 1996)

I am offering an explanation for my present practice in terms of the following evaluation of my past learning and in terms of my intentions to live more fully my spiritual and aesthetic values in my educative relationships and to research this process.

#### **An evaluation of my past learning.**

**In Part Two** I analysed the implications for my professional learning, as an educational researcher, of asking, 'How do I improve this process of education here?'. These implications involved the exercise of my critical judgements in an analysis of the methodologies in my research programme. This analysis included the application to the programme of the modes of enquiry and preferred logics of the methodologies of an analytic scientist, a conceptual theorist, a conceptual humanist and a particular humanist. The implications also involved the exercise of my originality of mind in defining a distinctively 'educational' action research methodology and in creating a living educational theory to explain my professional learning as an educational researcher.

The 1977 paper on *Improving Learning in Schools - An In-Service Problem* (2.2) provided the baseline from which to understand the twenty two year growth of my educational knowledge. It omitted any engagement with the ideas of other theorists. It demonstrated little understanding of the methodological, theoretical and epistemological basis of the enquiry, 'How do I improve this process of education here? However, what



it did, in the first sentence, was to focus attention on my interest in improving educational standards. It also explicitly mentioned the importance of contradictions between teachers' intentions and their practices in understanding the processes of improving learning within schools. Its approach to professional learning was focused on the teachers' definition of their own problems and the importance of evaluation in helping the teachers' to overcome the tension of seeing conflicts between intentions and practice. The final paragraph also contained a reference to the importance I attach to 'the creative power of individual teachers to transform their own situation'. (2.2, p. 111)

The movement between the 1977 and 1982 papers demonstrated the growth in my epistemological understanding of including 'I' as a living contradiction in claims to educational knowledge. It also marked my originality in the emergence of a distinctively 'educational' methodological approach in explaining and researching the implications for a living contradiction of asking, 'How do I improve this process of education here?':

*I experience a problem because some of my educational values are negated.  
I imagine a solution to my problem.  
I act in the direction of this solution.  
I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.  
I modify my problems, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.* (2.3, p. 80)

The educational growth between the 1982 and 1985 papers also can be understood in terms of my critical response to Wilson (1983) (5.3). His criticisms stimulated me to exercise my critical judgement on my own work in defining with a greater clarity my understanding of the significance of including 'I' as a living contradiction in my dialectical view of educational knowledge. His criticisms also stimulated me to define more clearly, the unit of appraisal and the standards of judgement in my claims to educational knowledge.



*The unit of appraisal in my conception of educational theory is the individual's claim to know his or her own educational development. (2.4, p.99).*

*The personal and social standards I use to judge the academic legitimacy of my claim to knowledge are the values I use in giving my life its particular form in education. In judging my own claim to educational knowledge I use the following logical, scientific, ethical and aesthetic values. (2.4, p.101).*

The movement in my learning between the 1985 and the 1989 papers can be understood in terms of further clarifying the significance of including 'I' as a living contradiction in the creation of living educational theories :

*"..... there is a tendency to reduce the significance of 'I' as it appears on a page of text. It is so easy to see the word 'I' and think of this as simply referring to a person. The 'I' remains formal and is rarely examined for content in itself. When you view yourself on video you can see and experience your 'I' containing content in itself. By this I mean that you see yourself as a living contradiction, holding educational values whilst at the same time negating them. Is it not such a tension, caused by this contradiction, which moves us to imagine alternative ways of improving our situation? By integrating such contradictions in the presentations of our claims to know our educational practice we can construct descriptions and explanations for the educational development of individuals (King, 1987). Rather than conceive educational theory as a set of propositional relations from which we generate such descriptions and explanations I am suggesting we produce educational theory in the living form of dialogues (Larter, 1987; Jensen, 1987) which have their focus on the descriptions and explanations which practitioners are producing for their own value-laden practice. (2.5, p. 45).*

The 1985 paper developed my epistemology by integrating insights from Polanyi (1958) and Habermas (1979), as I defined the educational standards of judgement I use to test the validity of my claims to educational knowledge.

*In grounding my epistemology in Personal Knowledge I am conscious that I have taken a decision to understand the world from my own point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising his personal judgement, responsibly with universal intent. (2.4, p.100)*



*Habermas (1979) says that I must choose a comprehensible expression so that we can understand one another. I must have the intention of communicating a true proposition so that we can accept what I say and we can agree with one another with respect to a recognized normative background. Moreover, communicative action can continue undisturbed only as long as participants suppose that the validity claims they reciprocally raise are justified. (2.4, p.100.)*

The extensions in my cognitive range and concern between the 1985 and 1989 papers can be seen in my engagement with the ideas of others on values and logic in educational research. There are no references to this literature in the 1985 paper, whilst in the 1989 paper I make the points:

*My insights about the nature of educational theory have been influenced by viewing videotapes of my classroom practice. I could see that the 'I' in the question, 'How do I improve this process of education here?', existed as a living contradiction. By this I mean that 'I' contained two mutually exclusive opposites, the experience of holding educational values and the experience of their negation.*

*I searched the back issues of Educational Theory to see if I could find details of similar experiences reported by other researchers. I began to appreciate how the crucial issues of logic and values continued to reappear in the journal. From Cunningham's (1953) analysis of the 'Extensional limits of Aristotelean logic', through Mosier's (1967), 'From enquiry logic to symbolic logic', to Tostberg's (1976), 'Observations of the logic bases of educational policy', the debate about the logical basis of educational theory continues to rage in the literature.*

*A similar debate can be seen in the realm of values. We have 'The role of value theory in education', (Butler, 1954), 'Are values verifiable' (Bayles, 1960) and 'Knowledge and values' (Smith, 1976). What these articles pick out is the continuing concern of educational researchers with the fundamental problems of logic and value in the production of educational theory. (2.5, p. 44)*

Moving between the 1985 and 1989 papers also shows a more extensive cognitive range in the development of my conceptual understanding of living educational theories as I answered the questions:

*'How do we show our values in action?';  
'How do we know that what the researcher says is true? – A question of validity';  
How can we move from the individual to the universal? – A question of generalisability'  
(2.5, pp.45-47).*



The 1989 paper also marked my first explicit engagement with the politics of educational knowledge in my writings. This can be seen in the exploration of the question, *'Which power relations influence the academic legitimacy of a living educational theory? – A question of the politics of truth'* (2.5, pp. 48-51).

**In Part Three** my living standards of originality of mind and critical judgements were focused on the logical significance of including 'I' as a living contradiction in claims to educational knowledge as my enquiry moved forward with the question, 'How do I improve my practice?'

Understanding the movement between the 1989 and 1991 papers, in relation to the extension of my cognitive range and concerns, requires a return to the extracts from the booklet, *'A Dialectician's Guide for Educational Researchers'* (5.2). This booklet emerged from the tension I lived with as others, with the institutional power to legitimate their judgements, judged that I had not demonstrated an ability to conduct original investigations, to test my own ideas and those of others. I was also within a regime of truth which held that these judgements could under no circumstances be questioned.

The original synthesis which enabled me to move my enquiry on through the educational enquiry, 'How do I improve my practice?', focused on a critical acceptance and creative engagement with particular insights on the nature of dialectics from Sève (1978) and Ilyenkov (1977), amongst others. I followed Ilyenkov's essays on the history and theory of dialectical logic as his analysis moved through the ideas of Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Feuerbach and Marx. I focused on the question he didn't answer before he died, *'If any object is a living contradiction, what must the thought (statement about the object) be that expresses it?'* I concluded that I could place my own 'I', as a living contradiction, in a question of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'. I thought that, by exploring the implications of asking, researching and answering such a question, I might be able to raise the



explanation, for the dialectical development of the concrete individual, to the level of the logic of the development of the specific logic of the specific object. However, I want to avoid any claim that I was showing how, in 'general' concrete individuals were produced within the division of labour (5.2, p. 116). This is because I want to hold on to the view that the concrete freedom of each individual permits them to create their own logic of their own development.

Perhaps the originality of mind in Part Two is best described in the statement:

*"I am saying that by starting our investigations with our 'I' in the division of labour, not as the Hegelian 'I' in the sense of abstract freedom but as the embodiment of concrete freedom, then we would discover dialectical forms for the presentation of a dialectical theory of development which would include the existence of 'Is' as living contradictions and would not eliminate such contradictions within the formal structure of our linguistic representations of our practice. In this way I am suggesting that we would overcome Ilyenkov's problem of contradiction, we could take Sartre's point seriously, demonstrate how an open-ended, non-linear dialectic process can be depicted as a self-linearizing form which reveals transition structures and raise the explanation, for the dialectical development of the concrete individual, to the level of the logic of the development of the specific logic of the specific object." (5.1, p.116)*

The 1991 paper (4.2, pp. 97-98) provided the evidence of the extension of my understanding of the politics of educational knowledge as my logic of the question focused on my 'I' as a living contradiction in:

- i) Holding together the Academic Vocation and Having One's Employment Terminated.*
- ii) Holding together Originality and the Right to ask Questions with their Denial.*
- iii) Holding together the Power of Truth and the Truth of Power.*
- iv) Holding Together the Acceptance of my Research in the School's Curriculum with the above Contradictions.*

Evidence for the extension of my understanding of the politics of educational knowledge was provided in the 1998 shared publication with Hughes and Denley (3.3) on, *'How do we make sense of the process of legitimising an educational action research thesis for the*



*award of a Ph.D. Degree?: A contribution to educational theory*'. This publication also provided evidence (3.3, pp. 444/445), from Moyra Evans' Ph.D, which showed me living my values of originality of mind in supporting the creation of a student's living educational theory.

Further evidence on the quality of my critical judgement on the ideas of others is presented in Part Five. This includes two papers on research-based professionalism (5.4, 5.8) which explore the implications of my ideas for enhancing professionalism in the U.K. context in 1988 and in the context of the Irish Republic in 1999 and the Canadian province of Ontario in 1999.

In telling this story of my educational research I have one purpose in mind. That is to establish in the mind of the reader that *my* discipline of education can be legitimated in the Academy as *a* discipline of education. To fulfil this purpose I have focused on the standards of originality of mind and critical judgement I must fulfil if my thesis is to be accepted. In presenting my work I have faced the problem of offering a non-linear dialectical process of learning in the linear form of this thesis. In telling this story, with a beginning, middle and end, my broad brushstrokes will have obscured some of the details of my journey. This doesn't concern me too much as I am bound to omit some of the details from a twenty two year journey. The question which does concern me is, have I shown the reality of the relationships between the two standards of originality of mind and critical judgement and the creation and testing of my living educational theories? To help me communicate the nature of these relationships I have decided to gather together in Part Five a number of 'critical' texts. These were influential in helping me both to clarify my ideas on methodology, theory, logic and values and to understand the nature of the tensions and contradictions which moved my originality of mind to propose ways to resolve the tensions and contradictions in creating my discipline of education.



In understanding my present practice below I am asking you to suspend judgement until the Endpiece/Moving On. I have placed the 'critical' texts between the analysis of my present practice below, and my intentions in the final section on Moving On. I have done this to share something of the tensions I have lived with in this enquiry. In the interactions between my originality of mind and critical judgement I have lived with the tension of 'suspending judgement' in order for my originality of mind to 'form' the idea which moved my enquiry on. In my living educational theories, I understand my present practice in relation to both an evaluation of my past learning and my intention to live my values more fully in the future. My critical judgements reveal contradictions, my originality of mind finds resolutions. The ground of my originality is still a mystery to me. It is open for further research in the proposals which conclude this thesis. What I have done so far, is to show some of the outcomes of an educative process in which my standards of originality of mind and critical judgement have alternated and interacted. This has involved a particular faith in my capacity to live with the contradictions for some time. It has involved a faith in my capacity to resolve the contradictions through the ideas provided by my originality of mind.

**In Part Four** I now want to focus on what I see as my present practice by focusing on my contradictions of my spiritual, aesthetic, and ethical values. I am going to situate the texts which follow as representations of their failure to represent what they point towards but can never reach (Lather, 1994). I am thinking in particular about a failure to represent the meanings of the spiritual and aesthetic values which are embodied in my educative relations with my students. In this sense I am relating to failure in the positive sense that it connects with a motivation to get closer to the meanings.

In researching my question 'How can I help you to improve your learning?', I am searching for ways of representing the meanings of these values. I am thinking



particularly of my educative relations in which I am expressing these values as I seek to support the development of my students' originality of mind and critical judgement.

I have included a paper on my question, *'How do I know that I have influenced your learning for good? A question of representing my educative relationships with research students (4.3)*. This paper serves to focus attention on the meanings of the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values which form the contradictions I experience in my educative relations.

*"The final part of my claim to know that I have influenced your learning for good is in relation to what I will call my ontological authenticity. At sometime in the course of your enquiries, you have explained your learning in terms of your values, actions and understandings. You have expressed your values in relation to the meanings of your existence. We have talked about the importance of our different spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values, as well as our political economic, emotional and cognitive values. I associate our educative relationships with the processes of learning to live our values more fully, with developing our understandings and with creating our own living educational theories. In working to influence your learning for good, I am thinking of our learning, individually and together as 'we' express more fully the values of compassionate understanding, loving affirmation, freedom, justice and democracy in our lives and workplaces." ( 4.3, p.3)*

In developing dialogical forms of representation for my claims to know my educative influence in the papers below, I will focus on my existence as a living contradiction as I violate both my students and my own spiritual and aesthetic values in my educative relations.

Three of the papers below (4.2, 4.4 & 4.5), focus on the emergence of the meanings of my originality of mind and critical judgement from within my educative dialogues with my students. I take Bohm's point (3.2, pp. 95-96) about the need for a constantly creative culture in which being and meaning are taking creative steps. In answering my question, 'How can I help you to improve your learning?', I am seeking to reveal the



meanings of the spiritual and aesthetic values I use to discipline my educational enquiries through my standards of originality of mind and critical judgement.

As in Part Three, where my dialectical analysis focused on my existence as a living contradiction, I want to stress that the meanings of these standards are emerging from my practice as an educator. I am thinking of practice in Ilyenkov's terms:

*"Practice, the process of activity on sense objects that altered things in accordance with a concept, in accordance with plans matured in the womb of subjective thought, began to be considered here as just as important a level in the development of thought and understanding, as the subjective-mental act of reasoning (according to the rules) expressed in speech.*

*Hegel thus directly introduced practice into logic, and made a fundamental advance in the understanding of thought and in the science of thought.*

*Since thought outwardly expressed itself, not only in the form of speech but also in real actions and in people's deeds, it could be judged much better 'by its fruits' than by the notions that it created about itself. Thought therefore, that was realised in men's actual actions also proved to be the true criterion of the correctness of those subjective-mental acts that were outwardly expressed only in words, in speeches, and in books." (Ilyenkov, 1977, p. 209-210)*

I now want to focus on the specific practices in which the experiences of contradictions are moving my educational enquiries forward. I am thinking of the experiences in which I contradicted my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values in my educative relations.

The first paper below shows my collaboration with a Ph. D. researcher, Jackie Delong (4.2). We analyse how I violated my spiritual commitment to the I-You relationship we both value. I did this as I insisted, in a validation exercise, that the validation group focused solely on her 'text'. In the section of this paper on retaining integrity in I-You relations and in the paper which follows on *'How do I know that I have influenced you for good?'*, I affirm my commitment to I-You relations. Yet:



*".. in the validation meeting of the 27 Feb, 1997, I can be seen on a video-tape of the session, explaining to the group that we would focus on the text and that the aim was not to focus on the writer of the report but on what was actually written.*

*However, in the introduction to the report Jackie Delong had explained the importance of relationships in her enquiry. In establishing the 'ground rules' for the validation exercise as focusing on the narrative of her educational development as 'text', I totally denied the implications of her own insistence on the importance of relationships. Another example in which I experience myself as a living contradiction!". (4.2, p.4)*

As Jackie says:

*"While feeling unprepared for the process of the validation group meeting, except for the fact that I had heard Jack make a passing comment some months earlier that this was not to be some bloody love-in, I was surprised by my reaction to it. I was frustrated by being unable to engage in the dialogue of asking questions for clarification and felt totally divorced from the proceedings which were attending to my thoughts and learnings. Let me get this straight: MY thoughts, MY learnings, MY words but I'm not there! Only the text exists.*

*I felt "beat up and confused". Here am I – Miss calm, cool, collected, always in control – watching myself from the outside and feeling totally helpless and disempowered. Excuse me, but didn't I say right at the beginning of the paper that the relationships were of paramount importance in my practice and in the process of reporting? I guess I wasn't clear enough!" ( 4.3, p.5)*

My understandings of my aesthetic standards are developing from my experience of their denial with Pat D'Arcy, another Ph.D. researcher (D'Arcy, 1998). D'Arcy would bring me her research reports and I would give what she termed my 'Yes-But' response. My intention was to help to move her enquiry on. Yet, in my 'Yes-But' responses to her work I violated her need for aesthetically appreciative and engaged responses to her writings.

Drawing on the work of Rosenblatt (1985, p. 297), D'Arcy describes the ways in which the term **aesthetic** can apply to different *stages* in the reading process. She makes the



following points about these stages in terms of stance, transaction, evocation and response. She says that the *stance* which the reader chooses to adopt from the moment she starts to read the story, can be aesthetic, in the sense that the reader is prepared to be responsive to: 'the qualitative overtones of the ideas, images, situations and characters'. The *transaction* which the reader makes with the text becomes aesthetic, in the sense that it is 'what the reader is living through during the reading event'. In D'Arcy's view the *evocation* - what the reader 'makes' of the story inside her head, during the act of reading, is also aesthetic in the sense that it becomes another story rising out of the transaction that is taking place.

D'Arcy believes that the *response* which the reader can then choose to make, with reference to the virtual text that he or she has created during the act of reading, will also be aesthetic in the sense that it recollects the thoughts, feelings and impressions that were activated in the reader's mind as her eyes took in the words on the page. The important point about an appreciative response if it is to be aesthetic rather than merely analytic, is that the responder can now look carefully at the original text, bearing their own engaged virtual text in mind and RELATING it to what the writer has written.

D'Arcy really wanted me to pay careful attention to HER text, in relation to how I had engaged with it. It was this engagement with and appreciation of HER version, that she was missing.

In the paper below on *"The importance of loving care and compassionate understanding in conversations which sometimes become infused with irritation, frustration and anger."* (4.4) I make the following points as I seek to understand how my 'Yes-But' response denied both of our aesthetic values in failing to evoke my virtual text from D'Arcy's stories:



*I think Pat is right at the end of her latest letter to me to say that she is still waiting to see if I have learnt anything from her. If she had seen me chairing two validation groups at Kingston University.... I think she would have seen a failure on my part to have learnt the lesson about the importance of engaged and appreciative responses. Yet, I did recognise this as a problem, a year earlier, in a joint presentation with Jackie Delong to AERA in 1997, (Delong & Whitehead 1997). I say this to emphasise that not all action research accounts are 'victory narratives'. Some of my own involve some 'painful' learning, especially when they are grounded in the experience of having helped to create some pain and distress, not to mention despondency and rage in others. Feel Pat's irritation in ALWAYS, ALWAYS ALWAYS from you! In her letter below. (4.4, p.2).*

In the paper on *Knowing Ourselves as Teacher-Educators* (4.6) I recognise, once again, my existence as a living contradiction as I fail to sustain my value of collaboration in my educative relationships with a former student (Moyra Evans) and professional colleagues (Pam Lomax and Zoe Parker):

*In retrospect, it can be seen that Jack was not on the inside of the 'connected' form of relationship that had allowed the others to expose some of their vulnerabilities while respecting each other's unspoken wish for silence in relation to others. (4.6, pp.14/15)*

The vulnerabilities are focused on experiences of being bullied between the three women. My ethical contradictions are focused on my desire to publicly discuss the issues and the ethical commitment I gave that we would not publish anything from the conversations, on which there was not agreement that I could.

The desire for the recognition of my ethical values in my educational research may also be understood in the way Fukuyama (1992) uses the term 'Thymos':

*"The existence of a moral dimension in the human personality that constantly evaluates both the self and others does not, however, mean that there will be any agreement on the substantive content of morality. In a world of thymotic moral selves, they will be constantly disagreeing and arguing and growing angry with one another over a host of questions, large and small. Hence thymos is, even in its most humble manifestations, the starting point for human conflict." (pp. 181-182).*



I have succeeded in sustaining a more 'connected' form of relationship in my analysis of my educative relationship with Kevin Eames in the paper on creating a new discipline of educational enquiry (4.5). In the dialogical form of this analysis, which is also included in the latest 1999 paper (1.2), I represent my educative influence from within the writings and voice of the research student. In this paper I also show how I discipline my teaching, as educational enquiry, through valuing the expression of Eames' (1995) originality of mind and critical judgement in the development of his understanding of the nature of dialectics. One of the points I have already made about Eames' work, which bears repeating, is that as Schön (1995) was writing about creating a new epistemology for the new scholarship, Eames (1995) constructed an epistemology of practice.

I am presenting the following papers (4.2, 4.4, 4.6) to show the present state of my representation of my spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values through the experience of their negation in my educative relations. Paper (4.5) shows how my enquiry, 'How do I help you to improve your learning?' is being disciplined by my standards of originality of mind and critical judgement in my educative relations.

The papers which follow are:

4.2 (1997) Educative Relations with Jackie Delong: A collaborative enquiry into a Ph.D. researcher and supervisor relationship. A paper presented at AERA, March 1997, in Chicago, U.S.A. (with Delong, J.).

4.3 (1998) How do I know that I have influenced you for good? *Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the AERA Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, SIG.*



4.4 (1998) "The importance of loving care and compassionate understanding in conversations which sometimes become infused with irritation, frustration and anger.": *Conversations & Correspondences with Pat D'Arcy*. Paper to the International Teacher-Researcher Conference, La Jolla, April 1997.

4.5 (1999) Creating a new discipline of educational enquiry in the context of the politics and economics of educational knowledge. Paper presented at the BERA symposium at AERA Montreal, April 1999. Kingston Hill Research Papers, 1999. Kingston; Kingston University.

4.6 (1999) Knowing ourselves as teacher educators: joint self-study through electronic mail. *Educational Action Research*, (With Lomax, P., Evans, M., & Parker, Z)



## **4.2**

**Whitehead, J. & Delong, J. (1997) Educative Relations with Jackie Delong: A collaborative enquiry into a Ph.D. researcher and supervisor relationship.**

**A paper presented at AERA, March 1997, in Chicago, U.S.A.**



A collaborative enquiry into a Ph.D. researcher and supervisor relationship.

Jackie Delong, Superintendent of Schools, Brant County, Ontario, Canada.

Jack Whitehead, School of Education, University of Bath.

A paper presented at AERA, March 1997, in Chicago, U.S.A.

## Context

Jackie Delong registered as a Ph.D. researcher at the University of Bath in September 1996 to carry out an action research enquiry into her professional life as a Superintendent of Schools in Brant County, Ontario. The discussant has a copy of the first research report produced by Jackie in February 1997. This paper was submitted to a Validation Group at the Act, Reflect, Revise Conference held in Brant County 27/28 Feb. 1997. The purpose of the Group is to offer constructive comments on the report as part of the process of testing the validity of the researcher's claims to know her own educational development and of helping to take the enquiry forward. We will focus our collaboration on the events surrounding the Validation Group within which we both experienced ourselves as living contradictions.

The process of constructing the paper includes Jack's comments on his views of his work as a Supervisor before the group met, his learning from the shock of recognising himself as a living contradiction in the way he set the ground rules for the validation meeting. Jackie's emotional and intellectual responses to the experiences in the validation meeting and finally a collaboration on how to take Jackie's enquiry forward (and maybe even Jack 's learning forward!).

Jack produced the following comments two days before the group met.

How do I make sense of my influence as a supervisor of a Ph.D. researcher and her action research programme?

The sense I make of my influence is itself influenced by my history of supervising research degrees. I want to share my understanding by referring to the educational values I imagine I bring into my supervision and by referring to the evidence, from Jackie Delong's first research report submitted to her validation group on 27th February 1997, which I think demonstrates some of my influences in supervision.

### 1) Placing 'I' at the centre of the research

In supervising action research programmes I am conscious of the tension which all my students have faced when I encourage them to place their 'I' at the centre of their research and to use the personal pronoun in their research question. The titles of the five theses below will illustrate what I mean through the inclusion of 'I' and 'My' in the enquiries:



Hayward, Paul. (1993) How do I improve my pupils' learning in design and technology. M.Phil. University of Bath.

Eames, Kevin. (1995) How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge. Ph.D. University of Bath.

Evans, Moyra. (1995) An action research enquiry into reflection in action as part of my role as a deputy headteacher. Ph.D. Kingston University.

Hughes, Jacqui. (1996) Action Planning and Assessment in Guidance Contexts: How can I understand and support these processes? Ph.D. University of Bath.

Laidlaw, Moira. (1996) How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my educational development? Ph.D. University of Bath (under examination).

The title of Jackie's first research report 'My Learnings through Action Research', demonstrates my 'insistence' that researchers whose action research I agree to supervise, acknowledge that they are studying their own learning in their social contexts as they work at improving their professional practice.

## 2) Retaining integrity in I-You Relations

The second influence can be understood in relation to Martin Buber's (1923) poetic communication of the nature of the 'I-You' relation. In my educative relationships with my students I try to embody, what Tony Ghaye (Ghaye & Wakefield, 1993) calls ontological authenticity in valuing my own integrity in a way which does not violate the integrity of my students. I try to communicate with my students in a way which they recognise that I will subordinate my own views to their particular educational needs. The nature of this influence was shown by Peggy Kok (Whitehead, 1993, p. 170), in my supervision of her Master's dissertation 'The Art of an Educational Enquirer' (Kok 1991), where I hold back from imposing my own educational values as she works at defining her own.

In relation to Jackie Delong's first research report I think the evidence is clear that she is insisting on expressing herself within an I-You relation in acknowledging the importance in her account of her learning of direct communications with the 'You' of her supervisor:

"The only other major point to look at is how I address my readers. In particular, you will remark that except for the introduction, I address "you". The "you" is Jack Whitehead. I have written this paper as a series of letters similar to the style of Ardra Cole and Gary Knowles (1995) "... we offer our correspondence as windows into our thinking and responses to our roles as writers and as examples of our ongoing dialogical reflection on our practices".

I need to do this because of my need to show the importance of the direct relationships with those I am working with. You may find this alienating because you may feel excluded from an acknowledgment of the importance of my relation with you. I need your advice on how to communicate the importance of the personal within a professional research report." (DeLong ,J.1997)

### 3) INFLUENCING THE VALIDITY OF CLAIMS TO KNOW

One of the main influences I intend to have with research students is that of enabling them to develop their confidence in the validity of their claims to know what they are doing in their professional practice. I focus on the decision recommended by Polanyi (1958) to understand the world from their own point of view as individual's claiming originality and exercising their judgement with universal intent. The important epistemological criteria are the unit of appraisal and the standards of judgement. Each researcher is encouraged to understand that the unit of appraisal is the explanation of their own professional learning. This unit is clearly shown in the account of Jackie's own learning. The standards of judgement are more complex. I have been influenced in the four criteria used by Habermas (1976) in his theory of communicative action where he talks about the importance of:

- i) the comprehensibility of the communication or account
- ii) justifying propositional claims to know in relation to evidence
- iii) explicating the normative (values) background of the account.
- iv) judging the authenticity of the account - he says that we could only judge the authenticity in terms of the individual's interaction through time to see if the individual truly believes what they claim.

There is an indication on page 18 of the report that Jackie is becoming more aware of the importance of providing evidence to justify the claims being made:

"First, this is a very good leader who doesn't like the superintendent interfering and who is very supportive of his staff. No problem with either of these. Second there is a level of trust between us that allows us to discuss a delicate topic and to work it out. Did I affect behaviour. Yes. Was the relationship maintained? Yes. Will it improve things for children. Yes. (I know, show me the evidence)".

### 4) INFLUENCING COGNITIVE RANGE AND CONCERN THROUGH THE WRITINGS OF OTHERS.



I do attempt to influence the learning of those I supervise by encouraging an engagement with the ideas of others who may have useful insights in relation to taking the enquiry forward. An example of this influence can be seen on page 8 of the report, 'Building a Collaborative Community of Learners'. In a previous draft I asked Jackie to refer to the ideas of those who had influenced her in terms of her collaborative enquiry with the Principals. The next draft contained some four lines of reference to the work of those who had influenced her. I asked for an outline of the ideas which had influenced her. The final draft (pp.8/9) contains a description of these ideas.

5) Acknowledging the Supervisor's learning - reflecting on my learning after the validation meeting 1/3/97.

In developing a research-based approach to professionalism in education I am often surprised at what I am learning in the process of supervision. Because my research students do not often come to a tutorial with the intention of 'teaching' me something, I do think it is important to acknowledge that I am learning something important from my students.

From Jackie, I am learning about the importance of seeing one's actions and enquiries in relation to a 'system' responsibility in education. As Jackie shows me her learning as she engages with the work of Andre Dolbec, Lorraine Savoie-Zajc (1995) and with the Principals in a Collaborative Action Research Project, I am learning to take more account of such understandings of 'systems' in order to more fully integrate action research approaches to professional development within the institutional contexts in which the enquiries are taking place.

I am also learning more about the importance of 'tolerating' if not fully 'accepting', 'embracing' or 'integrating' relationships between the personal and the professional. In constructing an authentic account of an individual's professional learning, I am seeing more clearly the ways in which it is important to acknowledge and integrate personal experiences which significantly influence professional practice.

For example, in the validation meeting of the 27 Feb 1997, I can be seen on a video-tape of the session, explaining to the group that we would focus on the text and that the aim was not to focus on the writer of the report but on what was actually written.

However, in the introduction to the report Jackie DeLong had explained the importance of relationships in her enquiry. In establishing the 'ground rules' for the validation exercise as focusing on the narrative of her educational development as 'text', I totally denied the implications of her own insistence on the importance of relationships. Another example in which I experience myself as a living contradiction!

6) Jackie's Intellectual and Emotional Responses

While feeling unprepared for the process of the validation group meeting, except for the fact that I had heard Jack make a passing comment some months earlier that this was not to be some bloody love-in, I was surprised by my reaction to it. I was frustrated by being unable to engage in the dialogue or ask questions of clarification and felt totally divorced from the proceedings which were attending to my thoughts and learnings. Let me get this straight: MY thoughts, MY learnings, MY words but I'm not there! Only the text exists.

I felt "beat up and confused". Here am I - Miss calm, cool, collected, always in control - watching myself from the outside and feeling totally helpless and disempowered. Excuse me, but didn't I say right at the beginning of the paper that the relationships were of paramount importance in my practice and in the process of reporting? I guess I wasn't clear enough!

To add to the tension that I was holding inside at the end of the hour, I had allowed no time to talk it out nor any other means of release. I needed to vent and the show had to go on. Also it's not good to beat up your supervisor in a public place. So I continued what is not an unusual schedule of 2 additional consecutive meetings and for the next day and a half, the running of a provincial Action Research conference and a parallel video-taping with all the expected continuous pressures.

How could I have managed this better? I could have asked more questions of Jack to clarify in my mind at least the process if not the content. I know full well that I am a holistic thinker and need to conceptualize the process so I can deal with the pieces. I could have set my mind and emotional responses more realistically if I'd better prepared myself for criticism. I could have and should have allowed time for dialogue and release of tension after the session.

I was, however, able to recognize in the validation group meeting that of the eight people there, only one understood what I did as a superintendent. That person was my boss the director who had been a superintendent and who still held a similar position. That meant that I was failure as a communicator and I thought I was good at it. In that text I had not communicated what I do to anyone who had not done it. I guess I, too, am a living contradiction.

I must say that reviewing the videotape on the 1st March was actually therapeutic and very insightful and the supervisor remained intact!

#### 7) Agreeing on ways forward

We then reviewed the video-tape of the validation meeting on the 2nd March, Jack jotted down what he perceived as the constructive responses by the participants and we agreed that Jackie will aim to strengthen her next research report in the following ways:

- 1) To draw an overview of what the job of Superintendent entails in a way which can be understood by those who have not experienced the job.



2) To set the next report within the voices of others in relation to her own.

3) To attempt to work from the connectors to the learning rather than the other way round. By connectors Jackie is referring to the values or principles which help her to see and understand what she does as a integrated whole, within which she can see the relationships between the different parts and which she uses to explain her professional learning and educational development. These connectors include:

i) developing relationships,

ii) quality of communication,

iii) a curriculum which is focused on learning outcomes, all students, integrated learning, excellence and equity, accountability and standards, collaboration,

iv) sensitivity to positional power,

v) increasing the quality of involvement - including parents/community members/students/principals/teachers/

support staff/board members/ senior administrative staff,

vi) the nature of collaboration,

vii) building a culture of reflection which includes teacher research with a focus on improving the quality of student learning,

viii) creating a context of support for risk taking,

ix) honouring teacher professionalism and acknowledging the values in what they do.

These connectors have been produced as a list.

In the next report Jackie will be showing the relationships between the connectors as she develops them as her living, professional standards of practice. She will show how her standards of practice can be understood as their meanings emerge and develop both in her professional practice and in her account of her educational development as an educator and Superintendent of Schools.

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### 4.3

**Whitehead, J. (1998) How do I know that I have influenced you for good?**

**Proceedings of the Second International Conference of the AERA Self-Study of  
Teacher Education Practices, SIG. Herstmonceux. August 1998.**

**How do I know that I have influenced your learning for good? A question of representing my educative relationships with research students.**

Paper presented at the Second International Conference of the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices Group of the American Educational Research Association, Herstmonceaux Castle, U.K., August 1998.

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As a University researcher I see my work in terms of making distinctive and original contributions to educational knowledge and theory through the self-study of my professional learning as I ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'How can I live my values more fully in my practice?' and, 'How can I help you to improve your learning?'. The first kind of question has enabled me to place my educational research in its workplace context with an analysis of my learning which has included power, economic and political relations (Whitehead 1993). I ask the second kind of question in my educative relationships with my research students. I include within my university teaching, my supervision of research students who themselves must, in successfully completing their degrees, make significant contributions to knowledge for a Masters research degree and an original contribution to knowledge for a Ph.D. degree.

In addition to my work at the University of Bath, both in the Department of Education and the School of Management in the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARPP, 1998), I support the development of action research with students and staff at Kingston University Department of Education. This is possible because of payments for my time made from Kingston to Bath University. For the past four years the work has included six, two day programmes of tutorials, workshops and seminars, organised by Pam Lomax (Lomax & Evans, 1996), each year.

I came to Bath University in 1973 with the central aim of reconstructing educational theory so that it would have the capacity to produce valid explanations for the educative influence of teachers with their pupils. My dissatisfaction with the dominant educational theory of the time was that it was held to be constituted by the philosophy, psychology, sociology and history of education. This view, known as the 'disciplines' approach did not appear to me to have the capacity to produce a valid explanation for my educative influence with my pupils as I asked, answered and researched questions of the kind, 'How do I help you to improve your learning?'.

I can summarise the last 25 years of my research in terms of three ideas. The first is that in questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?', 'I' exists as a living contradiction in holding values and experiencing their denial at the same time in asking the question. The second is that 'I' as a living contradiction is motivated to improve what he or she is doing in action reflection cycles where the tension of the contradiction stimulates the imagination to create an action plan, actions are taken and data gathered to make a judgement on the effectiveness of the actions. The concerns, plans and actions are modified in the light of the evaluations. The third is that the descriptions and explanations for their own learning which individuals create, constitute their own living educational theories. These explanations, explain a present practice in terms of an



evaluation of past practices and understandings and in terms of an intention to create something better which is not yet in existence.

Each individual who asks me to supervise their research programme, knows that these three ideas are fundamental to my educative relationships. The fourth idea which I also believe is fundamental to these relationships is drawn from Martin Buber's 'I-You' relation. He writes about the special humility of the educator (Buber 1947) which enables the educator to subordinate his or her hierarchical view of the world, to the educational needs of the student.

So, in asking my question, 'how do I know that I have influenced your learning for good?', I am addressing myself. The 'you' I have in mind are the research students who have successfully completed their, M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees with the influence of my sole or joint supervision over the past two years. I am thinking of the successful submissions of Pat D'Arcy, Kevin Eames, Jacqui Hughes, Moira Laidlaw, Moyra Evans, Erica Holley and Hilary Shobbrook. I hope the other research students contributing to this symposium from Kingston and Bath will question the following claim to educational knowledge. I am also hopeful that everyone will examine the four ideas above to see whether they are appropriate, inappropriate or need extending in an attempt to improve the quality of my educative relationships.

The meaning of the word 'good' in my question is ambiguous. I am using it in two senses. The first is in the sense of a permanent change. Once learning has taken place in the creation of significant and original contributions to knowledge I am meaning that an irreversible change has taken place. The individual is changed for 'good'. My second meaning carries values. In this second sense I am interested in knowing that my educational influence has done some 'good' in the sense of helping to make something 'better'. I see my educative relationship in terms of helping 'you' to live life well as I work with you in an enquiry which is grounded in living your values more fully in your practice. It is also focused on helping you to make an original contribution to educational knowledge in the living theory you create to describe and explain your own learning.

So, how do I know that I have influenced your learning for good. The first reason is that you acknowledge my influence in the creation of your successful contribution to knowledge. The acknowledgements in the front of theses might sometimes be taken to be nothing more than a courtesy. In my experience of the above research students, they all tend to speak their minds, they certainly tend to speak truth to power and do not tend to write what they do not believe. Now let me see if I can justify making a claim to know that I have influenced the learning of all the above research students for good, in its second, value-laden sense.

With each research student I have focused on the importance of including their own 'I' in their enquiry and in their Dissertations and Theses. I am open to criticism here if you do not believe that the dominant regimes of truth in our Universities are doing a disservice to you and your original contributions to knowledge when they attempt to insist that research proposals, transfer papers and theses should be written in the third person.

With each student I have focused initially on moving through an action reflection cycles of the kind, I have a concern when some of my values are negated in my practice; I imagine what I can

do and construct an action plan; I act and gather data to enable me to make a judgement on my effectiveness; I evaluate the effectiveness of my actions and understandings; I modify my concerns, ideas and actions in the light of my evaluations.

I am open to criticism here if this action-reflection cycle is experienced as a 'method' which is imposed and which stifles the imagination and creativity of the researcher. I try to help researchers to avoid such an experience by stressing the importance of producing an autobiography of learning in which they explain their present practice in terms of an evaluation of past practices and an intention to create a better future which is not yet in existence. That is, I stress the importance of creating their own living educational theories which, by their nature - the contain 'I' as living contradictions, cannot be reduced to the conceptual forms and frameworks of any pre-existing theory. The main reason why living theories cannot be reduced to traditional forms of theory is that the propositional logic which is used to 'structure' such theories removes contradictions between statements. For a more detailed justification for the removal of contradictions from traditional theories see Popper (1963).

The final part of my claim to know that I have influenced your learning for good is in relation to what I will call my ontological authenticity. At sometime in the course of your enquiries, you have explained your learning in terms of your values, actions and understandings. You have expressed your values in relation to the meanings of your existence. We have talked about the importance of our different spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values, as well as our political, economic, emotional and cognitive values. I associate our educative relationships with the processes of learning to live our values more fully, with developing our understandings and with creating our own living educational theories. In working to influence your learning for good, I am thinking of our learning, individually and together as 'we' express more fully the values of compassionate understanding, loving affirmation, freedom, justice and democracy in our lives and workplaces.

What I believe I have done is to express my own life-affirming faith and spirit of delight in my existence, in my productive work in education, and in my relationship with you, while professing no theistic faith in the certainty of my own death. I think my life affirming spirit has communicated to you my enthusiasm and positive feeling of affirmation in your creative spirit, whatever its base, and in you and your work in the creation of your Dissertations and Theses. I think an important communication/communion has taken place in our educative relationships as we have engaged in the creative tension and struggle out of which you have communicated your original synthesis which has give the fundamental form to your thesis. In moving this belief into my claim to know that I have influenced your learning for good, I do not have sufficient evidence to substantiate it from your Dissertations and Theses. I think this is partly a problem with text-based communication which appears limited as a medium for communicating the meanings of the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical values which are embodied in practical forms of life. Asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'how do I know that I have influenced your learning for good?', has brought me to the limits of my present understanding. What I am committed to exploring over the next decade are the multi-media forms of representation for communicating the meanings of such values in educative relationships in a way which will help to strengthen claims to educational knowledge of the form, 'I know that I have influenced your learning for good?'. .



In case you are wondering whether or not I address traditional forms of knowledge in my supervision I do stress the importance of engaging with ideas from the appropriate professional and academic literature. So, for example, each researcher must demonstrate an extension in their cognitive range and concern over the course of the enquiry, through engaging with the ideas of others. I stress the importance of recognising the significance of power relations in the enquiry and in analysing how the social influences of governmental, economic rationalist policies influence the enquiries. However, I want to stress that my aim is to help to create a new discipline of education which is grounded in the forms of research-based professionalism shown in the Dissertations and Theses on my Action-Research and Living Theories Homepage (see below). My primary aim is not to contribute to the theories from the traditional 'disciplines' of education. I want to show that there is a discipline of education, to add to the 'disciplines' of education which can be established by all those who are creating their own living educational theories. I value the 'disciplines' of education and acknowledge their significance in taking forward my own disciplined educational enquiry and living educational theories in practical questions of the kind, 'how do I live my life well?'; 'how can I live a good and productive life?'; 'how can I improve my practice?'; 'how can I help you to improve your learning?'.

In answering my question, 'how do I know that I have influenced your learning for good?', I have focused on representing those educative relationships which I experience and understand within my responsibilities as a supervisor. In making my claims I have drawn on evidence in the public domain from the original contributions to educational knowledge made by my research students. I am hoping that in your responses you will help me to understand better how to bring more fully into the world the values, understandings and living theories which can take forward enquiries of the kind, 'How can I live a good and productive life?', in the context of a commitment to education.

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#### 4.4

**Whitehead , J. (1998) "The importance of loving care and compassionate understanding in conversations which sometimes become infused with irritation, frustration and anger.": Conversations & Correspondences with Dr. Pat D'Arcy.**

**Paper to the International Teacher-Researcher Conference, La Jolla, April 1997.**



**Presented at the International Conference of Teacher Research at La Jolla California, April, 1998.**

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**Cc: fsquire@oct.on.ca, john.loughran@education.monash.edu.au**  
**Subject: Re: LaJolla**

Hi Tom, John & Fran - Tom, you asked for a couple of pages of data to share with the group at LaJolla - here's some correspondence with Pat D'Arcy in which she berates me for the nature of my response to her writing. If it isn't too long I'd like to share it with the group to highlight some of creative potential of recognising and responding to the experience of experiencing oneself as a living contradiction in one's supervisory relationships. Jack.

"The importance of loving care and compassionate understanding in conversations which sometimes become infused with irritation, frustration and anger."

Tom has focused my attention on:

The creation and facilitation of educational conversations that respect diversity in the creation of common goods in our teaching and in our educational research communities.

I like his phrase 'respecting diversity in the creation of common goods'. Here is an extract from an e-mail sent to me by Pat D'Arcy one of our group at Bath. Pat's Ph.D. submission is entitled 'The Whole Story.....'. It is focused on the importance of making engaged and appreciative responses to pupils' stories. In my responses to her research writing, her stories, I always gave what she calls my "Yes, but..." response. I want to highlight this correspondence because it focuses on an area of my practice in which I am not communicating my respect for diversity in the creation of common goods. What I think I fail to do is to show that I value Pat's achievement, before launching into my 'Yes, but....' response. I think the way that the group at Bath has significance for understanding the importance of loving care and compassionate understanding in the creation of common goods is that our faith in each other and our work enables us to sustain our conversations in the face of our experiences of the denial of such fundamental values. I think Pat is right at the end of her latest

letter to me to say that she is still waiting to see if I have learnt anything from her. If she had seen me chairing two validation groups at Kingston University with Cathie Prest and Michael Luetchford - two research students at Kingston - I think she would have seen a failure on my part to have learnt the lesson about the importance of engaged and appreciative responses. Yet, I did recognise this as a problem, a year earlier, in a joint presentation with Jackie Delong to AERA in 1997 (Delong & Whitehead 1997). I say this to emphasise that not all action research accounts are 'victory narratives'. Some of my own involve some 'painful' learning, especially when they are grounded in the experience of having helped to create some pain and distress, not to mention despondency and rage in others. Feel Pat's irritation in 'ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS from you! in her letter below.

#### **Pat to Jack**

"I've called this on my 'save as' file 'Yes, but...". It's an attitude of mind that runs contrary to everything I've been trying for in my enquiry - ie. to shift from that analytic 'Yes, but...' to a response which seeks to recognise what has been achieved and to be explicit about those achievements in a way that motivates the writer to write some more and to develop her ideas and feelings further. It's the typical kind of written response that teachers make to a completed piece of work, it's the kind of response that I received from Alan S and from Stephen R after my presentation - and ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS from you!

Now it's not that I'm opposed to criticism or that I cannot see it's value. Ben wanted me to respond analytically and critically to his writing, as well as with engagement and appreciation. And to link that with Stephen's point, I freely acknowledge that explaining to a writer what aspects of the way her text was written made it difficult for you, the reader, to share the experience, can also be helpful and constructive. But not as an INITIAL response - and only after a respectful trust has been built up between writer and reader in an educational context which always links future possibilities with present achievements.

The 'Yes, but...' syndrome also tends to direct the respondent's attention very rapidly to whatever follows the 'but', acknowledging only briefly whatever it is that the 'Yes' refers to - a few sentences maybe, or a paragraph at most. My research has made me realise how much more the reader can find what is actually THERE if she is willing to engage with it, instead of shifting her attention to whatever lies beyond. And being explicit about what has actually been achieved, is just as demanding as being explicit about what is yet to be achieved. I'm not talking about the kind of uneventful 'Very nice dear' kind of response, or even 'That was smashing, terrific, tremendous'. Professionally, writing an appreciation



which seeks to comment on those aspects of a narrative which ENABLED the writer to enter into the experience, is analytically demanding - but for aesthetic, not efferent purposes. Aesthetically speaking, engagement needs to precede appreciation; without that active entering in to the story that is told, analysing the WAY it is told becomes a coldly efferent task which by-passes the MEANING - as I feel you mostly by-pass the meaning that my enquiry holds for me.

Jack 30 March 1998 "The irritation in the 'always, always, always' was more than matched by my initial fury in receiving the blasts in the CAPITALS. The crucial transcendence of the fury, for me, comes in the recognition that my primary purpose, in helping Pat to take her enquiry forward, is to help her live her values more fully in her practice. I see the good she does in responding to teachers' writings and pupils' stories. I identify with her moral sensitivity in her response. By focusing on these qualities while at the same time experiencing my fury I find humour in the contrast, in my laughter, the fury subsides and I find it possible to make a response which is received and responded to with some ease, rather than irritation."

**Jack to Pat** - drawing on Pat's letter above:

**Pat**

> I was looking forward to seeing what your response would entail, in  
> which you were keen to respond to Hilary in the same kind of way -  
sharing  
> back with her your experience of her experiences as a frustrated  
learner,  
> trying to make sense of a set of abstract criteria. But so far, this  
> response has not been forthcoming, at least not to me!

**Jack**

the paper responding to Hilary, in a way influenced by your guidelines, it should be in the post. It was sent first class, but I do know our postal staff have cut collections because of staff shortages.

**Pat**

> But that's only part of why I'm feeling fed up and disappointed and, yes,  
> confused all over again. I really don't know how you want me to change or  
> add to my thesis and I certainly don't find it hilariously funny as you  
> seem to do. I can picture your smiling face and hear your chuckle as though  
> this were the most amusing thing in the world, and it infuriates me! I wish  
> I could use italics for stress, but as I'll be sending this by e-mail I  
> know they won't appear. So you'll just have to call up my voice and then it  
> will be easy I think to hear where the intonation or the volume rises...

**Jack**

I've no thoughts about how I want you to change or add to your thesis. There is something you might enjoy doing and that is to treat yourself, in responding to another reading of your thesis, to the experience of the good quality educational response in your own guidelines. By doing this I think you may understand something I've experienced in reading your thesis as both a story of your own learning and as a story of how teachers could make a more educational response to pupils' stories than those they will make if they stick to government guidelines. I've tended to stress the importance for your readers of understanding both contributions.

**Pat to Jack - next day:**

Jack - thank you for making an immediate (and measured!) reply to my outpouring yesterday. I started it by saying that I was taking a leaf out of Hilary's book but I should have remembered her other leaf, which was never to send anything in the heat of the moment. I guess I'm more impulsive than she is, then I live to regret it later...

First of all, I do want you to know that mostly I love the way that you beam at everybody, including me; it was just that I really was feeling totally disconcerted about your suggestion that I wasn't finished yet - that if I could only get the hang of it, something really important would emerge that would somehow transform my whole thesis - and that did and does worry me, because I honestly can't perceive what that elusive 'it' is. I thought when I wrote my final chapter Does It Matter? that in expressing my values about making meaning there very directly, that would do the trick in addressing whatever it was you wanted me to address. Then when I added my thoughts on 'What kind of narrative is this and how do I want it to be read?' that would do the trick but somehow it was never enough for you to be happy to say OK, for now that's it.

**From: Pat D'Arcy <edppmda@bath.ac.uk>**

**To: edsajw@bath.ac.uk**

**Subject: your TR paper**

**26/3/98**

Jack asked me if he could quote and comment on my 'Yes but...' e-mail to him last October and I said 'Fine, as long as I can add my comments too.' Never let it be said that dialectic is a one way process!

First - I have never regretted choosing Jack as my supervisor, even though there were educational issues about which we didn't always see eye to eye such as teachers experiencing themselves professionally as 'a living contradiction' [too reminiscent for me of the doctrine of original



sin...]. But essentially I thought - and still think that we share the same values which involve a respect for all learners, whatever their age and a recognition that the dynamic of teaching never ceases to involve the dynamic of learning.

My thesis involved an enquiry into the nature of the personally meaningful responses that teachers could make to stories written by their pupils. Ironically, my problem as a student researcher was that although the responses that Jack made to my analyses of these responses [typified as 'engaged' and 'appreciative'] may have been personally meaningful to him, to me they always seemed to sidestep what I had considered to be important. I found that extremely frustrating, as though we were both working to different agendas which led to this 'Yes, but...' attitude on his part.

The fact that I could make this outburst in my e-mail to him, in one sense is a mark of the trust that I had in Jack - I could let him know how I felt rather than bottling it up or simply grumbling to a third party.

However, I do want to make two brief points about Jack's response:

First, it is 'dispassionate' - it avoids any reference to the upset and the anger I was expressing. Jack has since told me that he also felt furious when he read my outpouring but chose to suppress this by throwing the ball back into my court and asking me to make the kind of response to my work that I had been hoping to receive from him:

'There is something you might enjoy doing and that is to treat yourself... to the experience of the good quality educational response in your own guidelines.'

Secondly, he does not address in any detail the 'Yes, but...' issue which I have come to regard as an important issue for all teachers, both as it affects their power relationship with their students [could do better, you haven't got to where I want you to go] and more positively, the extent to which explicit recognition can usefully be given to what the student has already formulated.

If teaching and learning truly are inseparable, then the partnership between teachers and pupils, supervisors and supervised, should be one in which both parties reach fresh understandings and learn something new from their joint endeavours. I have yet to discover whether Jack [as well as me] has learnt anything as an educator of which he was not already aware, as a result of our liaison over the past five years. I would love to think that it has been mutually beneficial!

## 4.5

**Whitehead, J. (1999) Creating a new discipline of educational enquiry in the context of the politics and economics of educational knowledge.**

**Paper presented at the BERA symposium at AERA Montreal, April 1999.**



## **Creating a new discipline of educational enquiry in the context of the politics and economics of educational knowledge.**

***Jack Whitehead, University of Bath, UK***

Paper Presented at the BERA symposium at AERA, Montreal, April 1999.

In making my contribution within this symposium on 'Creating Educative Community through Educational Research', I am seeking, in the here and now, to strengthen my community relations with my co-presenters from Kingston University, Zoe Parker, Pam Lomax and Moyra Evans. I am also extending an invitation to you to help to take my enquiry forward and to strengthen my contributions to educational knowledge and theory. I also want to stress the importance for my enquiry of another educative community of professional educators associated with the Department of Education of the University of Bath who are supporting each other's self-studies as they ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. (You will find details of this group and their work on the Action Research webpage, <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>).

In this symposium I want to establish my credibility with you as a professional educator. I also want to outline how a new discipline of educational enquiry can be created in the context of the politics and economics of educational knowledge. I see the significance of this new discipline in terms of its ability to include both the living educational theories created by professional educators and the theoretical frameworks created by researchers from other disciplines of education such as philosophy, economics and politics. Through my research I am seeking to understand how and why I influence the educational development of others in the way I do. As an educational researcher I want my self-studies of my life as a professional educator to contribute to the educational knowledge base of my subject, education. I know this may sound strange to those of you who see yourselves primarily as educational researchers whose contributions to educational knowledge are made in different ways. However, I am going to consider the possibility that the self-studies of professional educators may be making original contributions to educational knowledge and theory in a way, which can acknowledge the value of such differences and draw on insights created by them.

In doing this I want to avoid some of the problems associated with the proliferation of new paradigms of educational research. Donmoyer (1996) has described some of these problems in terms of 'Balkanisation' where groups belonging to particular 'paradigms' are no longer in dialogue with each other or seeking to understand each others' perspectives. I want to avoid such problems by inviting you, as educational researchers and/or professional educators to respond to the following account of my self-study as I asked, answered and researched questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', in the context of my supervision of teacher-researchers in their research programmes. In other words I am inviting you to criticise a description and explanation of my own educational development in my professional learning as I engage in a self-study of my own life as a professional educator. I am hopeful that this process will appeal to researchers of all kinds who are engaged in understanding education and who believe that their research may have something significant to say to those who, like me, are engaged professionally in education and teaching. Let me say something about the context in which I work.

What I think distinguishes my work as a professional educator from other professionals such as architects, lawyers or doctors is that I work with the intention of helping learners to create themselves in a process of improvisatory self-realisation (Winter 1998). Stressing the improvisatory nature of education draws attention to the impossibility of pre-specifying all the rules which give an individual's life in education its unique form. As individuals give a form to their lives there is an art in synthesising their unique constellations of values, skills and understandings into an explanation for their own learning. I am thinking of the art of the dialectician described by Socrates in which individuals hold together, in a process of question and answer, their capacities for analysis with their capacities for synthesis.

My sense of vocation in relation to education has remained with me over the past 30 years and I now want to share something of my professional learning as I have asked, answered and researched questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', 'How do I help you to improve your learning?' in the economic and political context of my workplace. In the enquiry below I will be focusing on my educative relationship with Kevin Eames in the process of enabling him, as his university supervisor, to make his own original contribution to educational knowledge. I am also aware of bringing into my 'I-You' relationships, my learning and my loving spirit which I see reflected in Martin Buber's spiritual and poetic work *I and Thou* and in his ideas on the relation in education (Buber, 1947).

In the process of writing this paper I hope to demonstrate what I am meaning by a new discipline of educational enquiry. What I have in mind is a discipline, whose rules are the embodied values, such as 'loving spirit', 'freedom', 'responsibility' and 'justice', which the individual uses to give purpose and to make meaning of their life in education. In other words, this new discipline of educational enquiry is constituted not solely by linguistically defined rules and the conceptual theories and frameworks of the traditional disciplines of education. It is constituted by the values which are embodied in what is being done by professional educators and their students in particular contexts.

The development of my understanding of this new discipline has been influenced by communities of professional educators. They have helped me to articulate my present understanding so that I can say that the new discipline is grounded in the creation, by professional educators, of autobiographies of their learning. The unique forms of the autobiographies are created by the particular constellation of values, skills and understandings which are synthesised by individuals through time and practice in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'.

In asking such questions I often experience myself as a living contradiction in the sense that 'I' hold together both the experience of holding certain values and the experience of their denial. The unique forms of autobiographies of 'living contradictions' are characterised by both inner and outer dialogues. Dialogues with oneself ('intra') and with others ('inter'). The logical form of the dialogues can be characterised as 'dialectical' where intra-subjective reflections and inter-subjective reflections can be understood in terms of asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'how do I improve my practice?'. The way in which this new discipline of educational enquiry can contribute to educational knowledge and theory is through the descriptions and explanations which individual learners produce for their own educational development.

I have termed such theories 'living theories' (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998; Hamilton & Pinnegar, 1998) in that they understand and explain a present practice in terms of both an evaluation of a past practice and an intention to create something better which is not yet in existence. It is because they contain an intention to project oneself into creating a future which is not yet in existence that I have called the theories, 'living theories'. The creation of such living theories can be focused on the individual teacher with a particular pupil, a class, a department, a school, a board, a university, a provincial government, a state system and/or an international community.

I think it is important to fully acknowledge the way in which the creative and productive lives of other educators and researchers have helped to form my own. I could not have articulated my beliefs above without the contributions of others. Because a full acknowledgement would involve even greater detail than the pages of text below I must be satisfied, given my time constraints here, to mention briefly some of their contributions.

Zoe Parker's (1999) ideas on the 'autobiographies of learning' which begin her paper to this symposium seem to me to be at the beating heart of the new discipline of educational enquiry: What Parker means by the phrase 'auto/biography of learning', is the story she can tell, from the inside, little and particular, of her life as a learner. As she says:

"I am learning to be a professional educator; to be a researcher and learner; to be a better person. The construction of an educative form of auto/biography embodies my enquiry as I turn my thoughts and feelings into text. My research is into how I can best tell the story of myself as a learner. As I construct the narrative of my enquiry, I discover myself more fully. The most hidden and secret values, which drive, inspire and inform me, begin to reveal themselves as the text grows and changes. As I construct

the text, I shape my identity and sense of self and call back into consciousness memories of my history of being in the world.” (Parker. p.1 1999).

Peter Mellett (1994) has also charted his autobiography of learning over four years through a series of action research questions of the kind, ‘How can I improve the quality of my life?’. He describes the evolution of his understanding of dialogical encounter and explains how his enhanced understanding enables him to express and understand himself.

Moyra Evan’s work is most significant for the creation of a new discipline of educational enquiry because she researches what she is doing as a school vice-principal with ‘system’ responsibilities for staff development. She researches her influences through her use of ‘story’ (Evans, 1998) and through the ‘emotional support’ the members of a school-based action research group give towards each other. The collaborative research between Moyra Evans and Pam Lomax (Lomax, Evans and Parker, 1997) is also significant in the creation of a new discipline because of the way they have developed and researched a partnership between Denbigh School and Kingston University to support the development of an action research approach to school-improvement and the professional development of teachers in the context of the politics and the economics of educational knowledge.

I will be referring to Pam Lomax’s (Lomax, 1999, Lomax & Whitehead, 1998) contribution to my own educational development in the section below when I consider my educative influence with Kevin Eames.

To members of my educative community in Bath, which includes Kevin, I owe insights into the significance of bringing spiritual values (Cunningham, 1999), such as ‘loving spirit’, more fully into my explanations of my educational influence. To Moira Laidlaw (1996) I owe the insight that the values I use, to give meaning and purpose to my life as a professional educator, are themselves living and changing in the course of their emergence in practice. These values are the ‘living standards’ of judgement which I use to be accountable to myself and others in testing the validity of my explanations for my own learning. For over a decade Jean McNiff’s action research and writings have provided inspiration for countless action researchers in the U.K. and in numerous international contexts. In her latest work on Action Research, A Methodology of Care (McNiff 1999) Jean writes:

“We take care in our own way of being, knowing that we must embrace our connectedness with each other and the rest of creation, knowing that it is our responsibility as educators to respond with thoughtfulness and compassion.” (McNiff, p.51, 1999)

I wish to hold myself accountable in my educative relations as a professional educator to a discipline of education which is grounded in such values.

Let me see if I can show you what a new discipline of educational enquiry means to me in my educative relationship with Kevin Eames. I want to focus on my educative influence with Kevin as he created his own discipline of educational enquiry within a dialogical and dialectical synthesis of his own unique constellation of values in asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, ‘How do I improve what I am doing?’. I also want to focus your attention on my own learning as I am seeking to address the questions: How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know? (Eisner, 1997).

In attempting to answer these questions I am seeking an appropriate way of representing my educational influences and my claims to know these influences in my work as a professional educator. In offering you the text below I am displaying my learning since my last address to AERA (Whitehead 1998) by showing how I am seeking to explain my educative influence through the ‘voice’ of those I am influencing. This point is important to me because I do not want to analyse the work of others in a way which explains my influence in a way which ‘violates’ their sense of their own integrity in their ‘voice’ and text.

I recognise that whilst I might sometimes do this in my educative influence with others (D’Arcy 1998, Delong & Whitehead, 1998) I want to fulfil my responsibilities as a professional educator in a way which does not violate the integrity of the other learner.



### **Explaining my educative relations with Kevin Eames**

Kevin Eames is Head of the English Department at Wootton Bassett School in Wiltshire, England. His Ph.D. Thesis on 'How do I, as a teacher and an educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?' is accessible on the web (Eames 1995). In the edited extracts from this thesis below I participated in the dialogical and dialectical form of his description and explanation of his professional learning as he engaged with the experience of existing as a living contradiction within an educative community. I participated in his experience of existing as a living contradiction when, during a presentation on dialectics, he recognises that he is denying his understanding of dialectics in his propositional form of communication.

In seeking to present evidence of my educative influence I recognise that I am doing something unusual for a university researcher. I am making a claim to have influenced the educational development of another professional educator in the process of my supervision of his research programme. I am offering my claim to have influenced Kevin's learning largely through Kevin's analysis from his Ph.D thesis. In doing this I am seeking to emphasise that the evidence for my claim to have influenced the education of another can be seen within the other's 'voice'. This seems an important educational point to make. Because education, for me, is essentially a process of self-creation, I cannot claim to have educated anyone with the exception of my self. Yet I do believe that I influence the education of those I work with. However, because of my belief that education is essentially a process of self-creation I must show my influence from within the process of another's self-creation.

I am offering the extracts below in the loving spirit of Buber's I-You relation where he writes of the special humility of the educator:

"If this educator should ever believe that for the sake of education he has to practice selection and arrangement, then he will be guided by another criterion than that of inclination, however legitimate this may be in its own sphere; he will be guided by the recognition of values which is in his glance as an educator. But even then his selection remains suspended, under constant correction by the special humility of the educator for whom the life and particular being of all his pupils is the decisive factor to which his "hierarchic" recognition is subordinated." (Buber, p.122, 1947)

I want to emphasise that the dialogues below actually took place within an educative community. It should not be forgotten that the dialogues below are extracts from a wider conversation with others and that my influence with Kevin as being expressed together with the influence of others. The educative influence I have in mind developed from Kevin's experience of himself as a living contradiction. This 'moment' was dramatic as Kevin describes below his experience of recognising that he was failing to communicate his dialectical understanding from within the propositional form of his address. In the conversation which followed Kevin developed his understanding that propositional forms of theory can be held within a dialogical and dialectical discipline of educational enquiry.

The reason I have chosen to present the particular extract below from all the material available to me is because I think it shows me influencing the learning of another in moving towards an understanding of the ways in which the dialogical and propositional logics of education can be held together in an educational enquiry. In previous publications I have focused on the value of academic freedom (Whitehead 1993) and in future publications I hope to address the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical qualities of the values of 'loving spirit', 'justice', 'care and compassion using multi-media communications in image-based research (Prosser 1998). The focus of my present analysis is my valuing of:

- 1) the logics of educational knowledge;
- 2) the importance of contradiction in educational enquiries;
- 3) the importance of understanding educational enquiry as a living process of transformation which cannot be captured solely within an idea of 'structure' or 'framework';
- 4) the significance of recognising that important human values, which motivate and form part of educational explanations, cannot be communicated in a solely linguistic form.

I believe that my explanation of my educational influence with Kevin, in the sense of being able to answer a question of 'how' I am influencing Kevin in the way I do, involves Kevin's reflexive abilities as he

appreciates and engages with my meanings. In his commentaries below, Kevin shows the influence of my meanings on his own. My explanation involves both an 'intention' in terms of the above values which is not pre-specified - the values emerge in the course of the conversation - and the 'active engagement' by Kevin in seeking to understand the significance of my meanings in his enquiry. To highlight the points in Kevin's enquiry, where I think you will feel, see and understand my influence, in terms of the above four values, I have put a star \* and a number in brackets which refers to the above values.

### *Claiming to know my educative influence with Kevin Eames*

On 17.12.91 and 19.12.91 Kevin took part in three conversations which changed his ideas on how he regarded educational knowledge, and on how he saw it as a dialectical form of professional knowledge. The first conversation took place on the afternoon of 17.12.91 with ten people in a research group at Bath University. Kevin had been invited to talk about his research into professional knowledge. He started his presentation with the following quotation, to locate his account of the logic of educational knowledge in relation to the work of the philosopher of education, Paul Hirst (Hirst & Peters, 1970).

In Hirst's view, educational theory is 'concerned with determining rationally defensible principles for educational practice'. He argues that 'the adequate formulation and defence of these principles (rests) not simply on appeal to the disciplines, but on a complex pragmatic process that uses its own appropriate practical discourse'. Thus, he places 'the practitioner's view' as central, and applauds the recent 'focus on the actual practices of education, and the discourses practitioners use'.

However, although he senses that the logic of educational theory is bound up with 'the practitioner's view', and 'the actual practices of education', he confesses himself 'uncertain' as to 'how best we might give an account of the logic of such discourse and its principles'.

After this, Kevin gave a fifteen minute summary of his work on dialectical logic and listed the following questions:

- \* *Is there evidence of dialogue?*
- \* *Is there evidence of contradiction?*
- \* *Is there negation of the negations?*
- \* *Is there a role for practice?*

And that's as far as he got. Here are the reasons he gave for abandoning the presentation at that point.

As I was giving the presentation, the conviction that there was something wrong grew on me. I became increasingly aware that what I was saying missed the richness of the evidence I had been looking at ..... The OHTs (like the ones immediately above) were abstract, dessicated, lifeless - the opposite (\*2) of what I felt (and had stated explicitly in the earlier chapters) that a dialectical process should be. So I stopped. I said:

The meaning of what I'm trying to sketch out cannot be contained within the propositional form of some guy standing in front of a machine and putting pictures on to a piece of paper. I suppose I was using a propositional form, but I feel that it's a most inadequate account of it so far.

He then sat down and joined in the discussion which followed. The discussion was taped, and Kevin uses the dialogue with his commentary below to describe the ways in which he believes his understanding was changing.

The conversation includes Pat D'Arcy - Kevin's English Advisor, Mary Tasker - University Lecturer in Education, Peter Mellett - an M.A. Student and me. The following extracts and commentaries are edited selections from Kevin's Ph.D. Thesis. To avoid confusion **I want to stress that all the commentaries which follow the transcripts of each of the three conversations are written by Kevin.**

### *Conversation I*

“After the opening presentation, Pat began the conversation, by picking up a point I had made about the appropriateness of the dialectical form - as I understood it then - to be considered as a professional form of knowledge for teachers.

*Pat:* From what Kevin was saying, it seems to me that he was saying it is the most appropriate form - not just, how can this form be used alongside many other forms... His intention, as I understand it, is to say that a dialectical form of working towards new perceptions is perhaps the most appropriate.

*Kevin:* Spot on, but I think the next question from that is, 'Why is that an appropriate form for teachers to use?' And, I suppose, 'What does it look like?' is a subsidiary question, because it doesn't matter a damn what it looks like; it's what it does.

*Jack:* I'm not sure. It's the 'it' I have a problem with - 'What is it?' - the dialectical form - it - has been developing through the centuries, and we've just seen the death of the Marxist dialectic, which was the major step forward after the Hegelian dialectic, and what Marx did, for Hegel, was to put the last criterion in, which was practice. What Marx did was to say that Hegel's dialectic was much too abstract, and it needed to be concretised, to be focused on practice (\*1). Now, what you've done is taken a list of criteria, and applied them, almost in a traditional Marxist model, so I do think it matters what form we are now giving to that dialectic.

*Peter:* The form does matter... I'm interested in the process that constitutes a dialectical form.

**Comments.....**Jack's intervention was significant. I realise now that he was indicating to me the error in how I was thinking about dialectics. I was reifying 'it', so that it remained a concept 'out there', rather than a form expressed through the process in which I was engaged (\*2). As a result, I had been 'applying' my view of 'it' in a mechanistic way to my own practice, and had failed to communicate the meaning of dialectics as I had experienced it.

**Extract Two.** Mary then took up and developed the notion of dialectics as a system or structure:

*Mary:* 'Dialectic' has this connotation of 'system'.

*Jack:* If you think of dialectic as a process of change, then you can resist the imposition of a system or a structure... (\*3) We have the chance, through asking questions of the kind, 'How can I improve what I am doing?' ... (with) the individual taking some responsibility for what they are doing, we might have the possibility of creating a different kind of dialectic, which has the power to transform practice (\*3). But it's cloudy, as you say. It's not well-formed yet.....

*Mary:* ...What both of you are doing, is questioning yourselves. You're doing what Socrates said everyone must do all the time... Surely we're all agreed with that? I have to say that the building up into a system seems to be reifying, putting out there into some abstract domain, what we all do, those of us who are reflective and self-critical, as part of our professional job.

*Kevin:* This reification is something I've been conscious of in trying to define for myself what dialectics is. I think we need to look almost beyond the definition in itself, to think about, 'Why bother? How do we use it?' Now, there's something in there about the relative status of kinds of knowledges... Teachers' knowledge is of lower status than, say, university (academics') knowledge - particularly in the eyes of people who teach in universities... I've got things from the Bassett Research Group, where people say... 'What goes on in my classroom isn't going to be of interest to them, is it?' 'I/them' - this kind of terminology suggests the kind of difference -

*Pat:* It's a question of purpose and audience.... If teachers are setting out to inform other teachers as the main reason for conducting their investigation, ...we have to differentiate between audiences - other teachers or university boards who will award accreditation.

*Jack:* What about power, though, Pat? Where's the status? ...The knowledge-base is not grounded upon the practice of the teacher, but it's still very much a form of knowledge within universities. And the medical



*profession and the legal profession built up their case lore into very high status knowledge, whereas I don't think that we have that.*

**Comments.....** I failed to respond to the full significance of the comments made by Jack, as well as by Mary.

...Jack took up my point about the relative status of different kinds of knowledges, and described the absence of the teacher's perspective in present thinking on educational knowledge. I must address the issue of status - and the power that accompanies status.....

(Another) issue was raised also by Jack, when he suggested to Mary that we should see dialectics as a 'process of change', rather than as 'a system or a structure'. The point he was making is fundamental to my present view of educational knowledge (\* 3) - although I didn't recognise it at the time, because we were all still at various stages, I think, of groping towards something that we perceived dimly - a form of knowledge which has 'the power to transform practice' - but which we were unable to formulate concisely. As Jack said, it was still 'cloudy. It's not well formed, yet.' ..... I must try to define the form of educational knowledge which I hold in my present view - to make it less 'cloudy'. In doing so, I will try to bring into an organic whole my present concepts of dialectics, of process, and of practice (\* 1, 2 & 3).

## **CONVERSATION II**

This conversation took place later the same afternoon (17.12.91). Those present were Pat D'Arcy, Moira Laidlaw, Peter Mellett, and Jack Whitehead - participants from the previous group who wanted to continue the earlier conversation. During the second conversation, we returned to earlier themes, and developed them further. I want to illustrate what I learnt by commenting on extracts, showing my growing understanding and outlining any issues which I will have to address.

In the following extract we returned to, and developed further, the issues from Conversation I - the relationship between dialectical and propositional forms of knowledge, and our attempts to define more clearly what a dialectical form of educational knowledge might look like.

**Jack:** *All the theories that are produced by traditional forms of research are propositional (\*1). They are always given in the form of statements, which have got a truth content to them. People like Karl Popper, who attacked dialectics, on the grounds of contradiction, say that any theory which contains contradiction, is entirely useless as a theory.*

**Pat:** *Are they denying the relativity of truth? Is there some sense of the absoluteness of truth, there?*

**Jack:** *No, you build up a system of justifiable beliefs about something, so it's not a question of absolute truth. What you've got at the moment is based upon falsifiability. So you've built up that system of justifiable belief, so...the beliefs are actually presented in the form in which you'd talk about your theory. Now, Kevin's point about the 'it' - when he said, 'How do I present it, other than propositional?' - because he said 'it' -*

**Moira:** *And he also said, 'Present.'*

**Jack:** *He also said, 'Present' - it's then Peter's point. Unless you can actually show from the inside what you are actually doing, you are constrained by the propositional form. Whereas there is an alternative (\*1).*

**Pat:** *(Yes, but) I think it is unhelpful to polarise propositional and dialectical. They are both necessary, in different ways, depending on the context.....*

**Kevin:** *...There's a sort of dialectical process going on there. My growing understanding is expressed in a propositional form - or is it? It's footprints. I can look back, and see those reified footprints (\*1), those things, those 'its', and this is where I've come to. ... I'm about halfway through that MacIntyre book, and that sense that he's putting forward, of dialectical development of craft knowledge within a community. I got to that bit last night.*

**Jack:** *Yes. But unless you put it in those terms that Peter was saying, which will actually transform the nature of your text - you've pushed us, within this. First of all there was this aridity, in a way, because you*

*grasped the dialectics within a traditional form (\*1). You moved us partially through that in your dialogues with Pat, and Georgina Hendy, and the (others) - yes? And then, today, I think that insight of Peter's on the tape - when Peter brought us up short, Mary interjected, and Chris and Gill took it up - I think you've got, participating within a dialogue of question and answer ..... The crucial thing for me is the dialectical form (\*1) . Hasn't a transformation occurred between the statements Kevin put on the overhead transparency at the beginning of that last session - now, there is something else which he needs, which will transform (\*3) the way in which he presents his notion of the form of the dialectic, because ... the quality of the questions and responses being engaged in now - the very points that Pat was raising about a certain kind of openness - where you responded to Peter at the beginning - 'Yes, I see it in a new way' - because of what Peter was saying about experiencing things from the inside, whereas what you were doing in our session before was defining 'it' from the outside. I think you've got, within the form of this conversation, the very criteria you will need to show what you mean by a dialectical form (\*1).*

**Comments.** I think there are three elements I'd like to note in this extract. First, there is the relationship between propositional and dialectical knowledge. Pat began by arguing that an element of propositional knowledge is essential, even within a dialectical form, such as an action/reflection cycle ('the planning, the doing, and then the reflecting on how those two are related to each other'). She saw both forms of knowledge as being valuable, in their 'different ways'. I made an attempt to formulate my own view of the relationship between the two forms of knowledge, which drew on what Pat had said, for I felt then, and I still feel, that propositional knowledge is important within a dialectical form.

I was, at the time, struggling with the uncomfortable feeling that, after what I had learnt from my experiences that afternoon, I had wasted my time in writing the previous chapters of my inquiry because, as Jack said, I had 'grasped the dialectics within a traditional form', and there was the 'aridity' which had been demonstrated that afternoon, when I sensed the inadequacy of my presentation, and when the teachers present had felt 'discouraged' and 'alienated' by it. Accordingly, I tried to construct a metaphor which would, I hoped, make a synthesis between dialectical and propositional forms by explaining how the chapters I had written previously, though they expressed my understanding of dialectics, as demonstrated in my own teaching, and in dialogues with other educators, in a traditionally academic, propositional form, were of use since they enabled me to reach the position I was in at that time. At this present time of writing, however, I find the metaphor unsatisfactory, since it brings to my mind an image of solitary footprints across a desert, and, as I now realise from the experience of these conversations, a dialectical form of educational knowledge cannot take place without other people - without a social context. Ironically, while at the time I was searching for a metaphor to describe the synthesis of dialectical and propositional knowledge which I had experienced, I was within the very process of dialogue which would bring my previous propositionally-expressed knowledge to its dialectical fruition (\*1).

The second element I'd like to comment on, here, is the way in which the discussion, for the first time, began to explore the nature of the dialectical knowledge that our community was working within. Such a form involved valuing questions to be followed up with an open mind (\*1), without necessarily knowing where you're going to end up. You can't 'decide beforehand'. There needs to be an 'openness' to other people, which leads to changed understanding. It's process-based, and organic, and it's the process which is educative. The process is also supportive, without an individual desiring to exercise his or her own power. It's in this extract, too, that I first mentioned Alasdair MacIntyre's 'Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry', which I was in the course of reading, on Jack's recommendation. This book had started to focus for me ideas about the characteristics of a dialogical community, and it will be of importance in a later chapter. However, it's an example, here, of the way in which my dialectical understanding was influenced by a text expressed in a conventional, propositional form. - which illustrates Pat's point earlier in these comments. In fact, these conversations, taken as a whole, not only describe the characteristics of a dialogical community, but are an example of how such a community works.

The operation of a dialogical community raises the third element I'd like to note in this extract. If the conversations as a whole illustrate the characteristics of a dialogical community, and this extract shows how we tried to define it, I should be able to derive a description of the form from the 'transformation' which Jack noted (\*3) in my own understanding, as a result of my participation in those conversations. However, when I try, later on, to '(present my) notion of the form of the dialectic', I need to avoid the mistake I made earlier, in reifying my understanding in a propositional form, with disastrous consequences

for my intentions to communicate with the teachers present earlier that afternoon. I've got to define the form I believe educational knowledge takes 'from within'; as part of my definition, I've got to show it in operation, to acknowledge the living reality of the dialectical form within which I exist, by showing how my understanding has been shaped by my dialogues with other competent practitioners.

### CONVERSATION III

The final conversation I recorded took place on 19.12.91. Those present were: Erica Holley and Andy Larter, from Greendown School, and Jack Whitehead.....This is what I learnt.

**Extract Four.** I want to include this final extract, because it shows how I was able, towards the end of the conversation that afternoon, to attempt a definition of how what I mean by educational knowledge comes into being. The extract also provides a demonstration of how such educational knowledge is shaped.

*Kevin: I think I see, now. It's something to do with having people who you have known over a long period of time, who can talk through with you, and share with you, ideas in dialogue and, within a kind of reassuring disciplined framework - it's something to do with the idea of community. It's something to do with (indistinct) over a period of time. It's something that will not necessarily reveal itself instantaneously, because I'm just kind of groping towards an understanding. It's the idea of being in this community, carrying out dialogues - it's talking to people about what you do, and listening to what they say back.*

*Andy: I'd just have to take slight issue with that. You've got to have what we're doing now - to have your ideas challenged within that reassuring framework -*

*Kevin: I was taking that as read! I feel as if I've come out with - a good kicking - within that framework.*

*Jack: There's something about that framework, though - the technical term is 'ontological security' - that notion of being accepted by the other, which really does give you that fundamental security in the ground of one's own being. Now, what Andy is talking about is challenging ideas in a way that doesn't really attack the security you feel, then your point, which threw me, was the notion of disciplined framework. I can't see what that means, or even whether it is taking place within a disciplined framework. I'd much sooner look at it as a process of change and transformation (\*3), but it's not chaotic. There is some order and discipline there -*

*Kevin: Rather than disciplined - 'ordered'?*

*Jack: I don't mind 'disciplined', or 'ordered'. It's the notion of 'framework'. There's something about 'framework' that seems to be limiting -*

*Kevin: - Constraining -*

*Jack: - Yes, and doesn't seem to have the openness -*

*Kevin: -Yes - 'shape of rationality'? There's something about these dialogues which are - by having a dialogue - you're undergoing - experiencing - an educational process -*

*Jack: For me, even the term 'dialogue' is getting in the way. There's something beneath the notion of dialogue, which was something to do with what Erica was saying about taking risks, about revealing who you feel yourself to be (\*4). So remember to be careful about using a term to communicate - which doesn't enable you to communicate, as directly as you can the meaning of the experiences you have had. And if you can take today, and the one on Tuesday, you'd be very close to presenting that process in action... You'd help people to get on the inside of that process of change and development which is educational and constitutes educational knowledge.*

**Comment.** This extract came towards the end of the third conversation, and shows how, as a consequence of what I had learnt over those few days in December, I was able to make a clearer formulation than previously of the way educational knowledge is shaped. It develops over time; it happens through dialogues within a community; there's a tentativeness about it, and an openness to the thoughts of others about what you're saying to them. It's not a full definition that I was putting together, of course, but the elements I touched on will need to be considered when I try to draw the threads together in the next chapter.



Significantly, the formulation I advanced was responded to by Andy and Jack, who succeeded, by doing so, in moving my thinking on a stage further, giving a small-scale demonstration of the process at work. Andy refined the idea of a 'reassuring framework'; I had assumed, without making it sufficiently clear, that within such a framework, there would necessarily be challenges to the ideas put forward, although such challenges would take place within a context of, as Jack said, 'being accepted by the other'. That context makes it more likely, I believe now, that the challenges will be listened to, understood, and accepted, since they are offered within dialogue, rather than from a desire to exercise power and gain superiority - Peter's point from Tuesday afternoon.

Jack was right to challenge my use of 'framework'. What I meant was some kind of supporting device, which gives order to the way in which educational knowledge develops, for it is not haphazard or incoherent. However, I accept Jack's point that the notion of a framework is too 'limiting' (\*3), in that it has a mechanistic quality that doesn't fit with the 'openness' of what I am trying to describe. I am happier with my reformulation - 'shape of rationality' - in that I believe what I am trying to describe is a process with particular qualities. It's not hard-edged, but it has form. It's also not random or chaotic, but is intelligently systematic. It's the way educators understand, communicate and take action.

Jack made the point, also, that I should beware of letting the terms I use get in the way of communicating 'as directly as (I) can the meaning of the experiences (I) have had.' I will bear that in mind (\*4), while also trying to cope with what I've learnt on the whole journey."

\*\*\*\*\*

As Kevin describes and explains his own professional learning in coming to a transformed understanding of the nature of a dialectical form of educational knowledge, he is, in my terms, creating his own living educational theory. I also believe he is helping to establish a new discipline of educational enquiry of the kind defined by Lomax in this seminar and demonstrated by Eames above:

An aspect of educational action research that interests me concerns learning. I see learning as the outcome of a dialectical process that leads to change. I think that there are two aspects to this - (a) the way we learn through representing our meanings to ourselves and (b) the way we learn by representing our meanings to others. I see this double dialectic of learning as an intra-subjective dialectic which occurs when we represent an idea to ourselves, maybe in a piece of writing, in a lesson plan or an action that we capture on video and this representation of our own idea confronts what we know and challenges us to re-think .... and as an inter-subjective dialectic which occurs where we share our representation of our idea with others and their affirming or questioning response to our communicated meaning challenges us to see something else. The double dialectic of learning highlights what I see as the two essential elements of a new discipline of educational enquiry for evidence-based professionalism: personal development and critical community. (Lomax, p. 5, 1999).

What I hope to have communicated in the paper so far is a justifiable belief that the self-studies of professional educators can make original and substantial contributions to educational knowledge and theory. What I now want to do is to engage with contributions to the other disciplines of education in a way which shows that these contributions can be integrated within the narrative of my own education. This section is important to me because of my need to stress the importance of the traditional disciplines in the creation of a new discipline of educational enquiry.

#### **\* Engaging with the other disciplines of Education**

Before I show how my educational theorising as a professional educator can engage with the politics and economics of education, I want to show something more of my own professional learning as I extend my cognitive range and concerns. This extension was one of the criteria used by Richard Peters (1966) in defining education. The context of this extension is my engagement with some philosophies of education presented at a symposium on Philosophy and Educational Research at the British Educational Research Association Conference in September 1998. I am thinking particularly of Schostak's (1998) questions concerning a return to the living in education and concerning freedom; Biesta's (1998) stress on the importance of location; Safström's (1998) point about responsibility and the need for post-modern curriculum theorising; Fielding's (1998) emphasis on the value of community; Bridge's (1998) concern

with the validity of truth-claims; Elliott's (1998) concern with evidence; Griffith's (1998) stress on the value of justice.

My mode of address is important at this point. In order to retain my sense of the integrity of my discipline as an educator I need to break with the traditional conventions on how to engage academically with ideas of other researchers as disembodied theoretical frameworks which are subject to various methods of validation. I am engaging with these ideas to see if they can become part of my own education and my life as an educational researcher and professional educator.

In developing my ideas on the living philosophies of educators I have focused on university and school teachers' capacities to create their own living theories in the process of asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'. The idea that each individual can create their own living educational theory has attracted other educational researchers (Pinnegar & Russell 1995, Lomax 1998a, 1999). I particularly want to refer to the work of Tom Russell of Queen's University in researching his own practice collaboratively with his students (Russell and Bullock 1998). This work certainly requires students to have the courage to engage with the fundamentals of teaching. It has a similar dialogical form to Laidlaw's (1996) presentation of her living theory, within which the values, skills and understandings, which help to constitute the professional knowledge-base of teaching, can be seen to emerge from her educative relationships. In conclusion I want to mention the educational significance of the world wide web for my research.

The action research homepage at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw> has enabled me to share the above research theses, dissertations and ideas with a much wider audience than would have been possible only a few years ago, when they would only have been available on the University Library shelves of the University of Bath. The recent addition of a 'Chat Room' is enabling researchers to share their engagements and appreciations (D'Arcy 1998) of the above dissertations and theses and to communicate directly with the teacher-researchers in taking their ideas forward. This form of communication is also contributing to my sense of belonging to an educational community. In exploring the implications of the creation of living educational theories, for the development of the living philosophies of educators, I hope that I can contribute to the continuous revivification of the philosophy of education in the minds, practices, feelings and cultures of teachers as we work together to create a research-based profession of education.

In creating my own living educational theories (Whitehead, 1989) and sharing the ideas of 'living' theories' with my students and others, I see how important it is to enable researchers to feel confident that they can 'return to the living'. My commitment resonates with John Schostak's (1998) question, 'How does one make a return to the living in education?', and I believe my practice of freedom within my discipline of education does, as he says, involve the initiation of a series of actions or events which then can either be abandoned or projected forward as a lived condition. It is in this play of possibility that freedom is experienced, not as a simulated exercise, but as living beings, who, like all living things, are subject to death. With Feyerabend I believe that the meanings of values such as freedom can only be understood in the course of their emergence in practice.

In my educational enquiry, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', I exist as a value-centre, as a centre of consciousness where my "I" has no beginning and no end. In this I believe with Bakhtin in existence as dialogue:

"The only way I know of my birth is through accounts I have of it from others; and I shall never know my death, because my "self" will be alive only so long as I have consciousness - what is called "my" death, will not be known by me, but once again only by others... Stories are the means by which values are made coherent in particular situations. And this narrativity, this possibility of conceiving my beginning and end as a whole life, is always enacted in the time/space of the other: I may see my death, but not in the category of my "I". For my "I", death occurs only for others, even when the death in question is my own." (p.37. Holquist, 1990)

I also identify with Benhabib's use of a discourse theory of justification in establishing the validity of truth claims, her vision of an embodied and embedded human self whose identity is constituted narratively and her emphasis on seeing a moral point of view as the contingent achievement of an interactive form of rationality rather than as the timeless standpoint of a legislative reason. (Benhabib, S., p.6 1992).

In my attempts to communicate the nature of living educational theories and a new discipline of educational enquiry I stress the commitment of the action researcher to engage in a self-study of their own life in a particular location. In this I feel the support of Gert Biesta's (1998) enquiries, 'Where Are You? Where am I?' and his question below which stresses the importance of focusing on the location where 'I' of myself comes into presence:

"we should shift our attention from a perspective on the subject as a what, as a substance with an identity, to the question of the subject as a singular who. However: because any attempt to give an answer to this question runs the risk of falling back into an articulation of the what of his who, I have suggested that we should take one step further and focus on the place, the location where the subject comes into presence. What, then, is revealed if we follow this path?"

As I answered this kind of question in a self-study of my teacher-educator practices in the University of Bath (Whitehead, 1993) I felt the need to reveal what I meant by my responsibility as a professional educator. I use this value as a standard of judgement for testing the validity of my claims to educational knowledge. I have tried to show above how I lived this responsibility in my educative relationship with Kevin Eames as I insisted that I could not claim to have educated Kevin but that I could claim to have influenced his education as a form of improvisatory self-realisation. The recognition of this form of responsibility has been expressed most eloquently by Carl Safström (1998) when he draws on Levinas' (1994) idea that a precondition for conceiving the relationship between subjects in terms of communication is to abandon the search for security and self-coinciding and to substitute the idea of an ego identical with itself with a relation to the other in terms of responsibility.

In creating a new discipline of educational enquiry on the base of holding oneself accountable in terms of values as standards judgement, I accept the need to answer questions about how one might test the validity of the claims to knowledge which are made from within the discipline. I accept David Bridges' (1998) point that, as an educational researcher I am engaged in the articulation of propositions, in relation to my questions, which assert the truth or falsity of what I have to say and that I am operating with identifiable theories of truth. I recognise the importance of providing appropriate evidence to justify my claims (Elliott, 1998) and of establishing appropriate standards of judgement for examining practice-based Ph.Ds (Hughes, Denley and Whitehead 1998) and in the problems of testing the validity of the living educational theories constituted by the autobiographies of learning (Parker 1998, 1999). In my discipline as an educator I draw on Polanyi's (1958) decision to understand the world from his own point of view as an individual claiming originality and exercising his judgement with universal intent. From this base in Personal Knowledge I offer my accounts of my learning to 'validation' groups of my peers and ask that they apply Habermas' four criteria of validity as I seek to reach an understanding with them. I ask them to test the validity of my account in terms of its comprehensibility, the adequacy of the evidence I present to justify my propositional claims to knowledge, the clarity and justification of the values I use to constitute my account as 'educational' and the authenticity of my account which shows that over time, in practice, I can be seen to be exploring the implications of holding the values I claim to be living by.

In stressing the importance of social validation I am brought back to the theme of this symposium on creating community through educational research. I do agree with Michael Fielding (1998) when he says that we are in a crisis of intellectual and imaginative nerve which currently afflicts policy makers, teachers in schools, and the research community alike. He is concerned that the school effectiveness and school improvement movements appear to be articulating the moribund categories of a frightened, unimaginative society. I also agree with his emphasis on the need to develop an alternative perspective, which is focused on the centrality of community in human affairs in general and education in particular. For me the focus point of his ideas is that personal relations of community are expressive of who we are as persons and have no purposes beyond themselves, *'purposes are expressive of personal relations, not constitutive of them'*. In stressing the importance of who we are as persons I feel close to Wilson's and Wilson's (1998) point about the subject-matter of educational research that in our educational research we should be focusing on the personal qualities of educators. I trust that you will see this emphasis in my willingness to hold myself to account in relation to the values I use to give my life, as a professional educator, meaning and purpose.

In thinking about the values which are at the heart of my life both as an educator and citizen I recognise my commitment to justice. Morwenna Griffiths (1998) has helped to focus my attention on helping researchers



who want justice to argue among themselves in such a way that they are united, in spite of their differences against those who do not see themselves as working for justice, primarily, but rather, say, for efficiency and enhanced economic performance through education.

I agree with Griffiths' analysis about the importance of attempts to draw on theory and philosophy to help members of the research community to gain in reflexivity and clarity about the possibilities of empowerment and voice, and about the different assumptions about power which underlie them.

In the creation and testing of living educational theories I accept the gains in such reflexivity and clarity as part of an individual's education. In developing my philosophies as an educator I hope to integrate these insights from Griffiths' philosophical analyses of education within enquiries of the form, 'How do I live my values more fully in my practice?' and 'How do I help you to improve your learning?'. I am thinking of forms of integration which show my practical engagement, as an educator, with power relations in the process of asking, answering and researching such questions.

Of particular importance here is my educative relationships and community with my professional colleagues, Pam, Zoe and Moyra. We have analysed our research into an attempted collaboration using e-mail. This attempted collaboration succeeded in the sense that we analysed our failure but left me feeling, frustrated, irritated and angry with my co-participants. This account is due to be published in *Educational Action Researcher* during 1999 and I am hoping to return to some of the issues raised in this research in terms of the relationships we expressed in our different valuing of power, justice, love and care in the creation of community through our research.

In judging the quality of my educative relations and my claims to educational knowledge I accept the importance of establishing the nature of my educative influence through my students' voices and sense of empowerment. I hope this has been seen clearly above as I analysed my philosophies as an educator from the ground of my educative relationship with a practitioner-researcher. I intend to continue to extend my understanding of the philosophies of education by engaging with the contributions to the 1998 BERA Symposium on Philosophy and Educational Research and participating in a proposed philosophy seminar at BERA 1999.

#### **\* Engaging with the politics of economics of educational knowledge**

I now want to turn to the politics of educational knowledge and relate my ideas on the creation and testing of living educational theories to their legitimisation in the Academy in Ph.D. degrees. I want to focus particularly on the idea of 'unconscious incompetence' (Denley, 1998) in relation to examiner's judgements on those educational action research theses, which are essentially studies of singularity (Bassey, 1995).

In a paper on the legitimising of an educational action research thesis for the award of a Ph.D. degree, Hughes and Denley analyse their experiences of a Ph.D. viva of Hughes' Ph.D. Hughes draws attention to the examiners' comments:

"She has undoubtedly learned a lot about her practice through the exercise, but the outside world learns little, because the interventions are specific to a particular context ..... We would learn more by comparing and contrasting aspects of practice in different contexts than from a study of the experience of just one worker". (Hughes, Denley & Whitehead 1998, pp. 434-435).

Given that the study was an educational action research study in the sense that it was a study of the professional learning of one worker in a particular context, the above examiner's comments demonstrate that there were genuine academic differences in philosophical approach or paradigms - this is one of the criteria which can be used to request a review of the results of an examination in the regulations of the University of Bath.

In his analysis of the examiners' recommendations on a resubmission Denley writes:

"The recommendations from the examination almost suggested that Jacqui's work should be reconceptualised and made to fit into another paradigm, rather than being examined against criteria appropriate to its own".

In writing about the viva Denley writes:

“What I had not expected was that this examiner’s methodological stance would have such a profound bearing on events. The concerns raised indicated a lack of understanding and a questioning of the adequacy of or even a disrespect for action research as an appropriate approach to address the sort of question relating to practice which Jacqui had formulated. I had expected, naively, that the examiner, if not actually sympathetic to the methodology, would at least be open to it..... I experienced a shift from thinking that I was ‘consciously competent’ to realising that I was in fact ‘unconsciously incompetent’ at the time of Jacqui’s first examination through my naivete in failing to appreciate the political dimension in the legitimisation of educational knowledge.” (Hughes, Denley & Whitehead, p. 443, 1998)

I think a focus of attention in the politics of educational knowledge is now on image-based research (Prosser, 1998) and the ways in which the new technologies enable the grip of print over educational research and theorising to be broken.

I now want to turn to the economics of education and to focus on the idea of a ‘sophisticated theory of education’ :

*“No sophisticated theory of education can ignore its contribution to economic development”* (Halsey, Lauder, Brown and Wells, p. 156. 1997).

Whilst I do acknowledge the importance of economic forces in my own educational theory I do also want to acknowledge the existence of sophisticated theories of education which ignore their contribution to economic development. I have supervised educational researchers whose educational theories have focused on the spiritual, aesthetic and ethical qualities in enquiries of the kind, ‘How do I help you to improve your learning?’ . I can well imagine sophisticated theories of education, which help individuals to remain life affirming in the face of the certainty of their own death, but which ignore their contribution to economic development. In making these points, in relation to the implications of the creation of living educational theories for the economics of education I want to emphasise the importance of a serious engagement with the living educational theories of professional educators as they seek to help their pupils to improve their learning.

I wonder whether economists (or other social scientists) who claim to be analysing ‘education’, yet who omit any engagement or appreciation of the living theories of professional educators, are in danger of continuing the reification of ‘education’ through their propositional theories? Are they not ‘masking’ the dialogical and dialectical educative processes which give, ‘Education’, the ‘Global Economy’ and the ‘Labour Market’ their life and vitality? As Kevin Eames explained above, his understanding of the nature of educational knowledge deepened from the ground of his experience of being a ‘living contradiction’. This learning emerged from the recognition that he was attempting to communicate the dialogical and dialectical nature of educational knowledge from within a solely propositional form of address.

In extending my cognitive range and concern in relation to the economics of educational knowledge I feel an affinity with John Raven (1995) who writes:

“The role which the public service plays in wealth creation is far too great to be adequately directed and supervised by multi-purpose elected assemblies. It is on public servants themselves - and not governments - that we must focus. We need to change our expectations of them and we need to develop better arrangements to direct and monitor their work.” (Raven, p.10, 1995).

I think the following quotation, although rather long, is worth including:

“It will be shown that our quality of life depends hardly at all on the quantity of manufactured goods we possess. It depends on such things as the quality of our relationships, our opportunities for accomplishment, and the extent to which we feel we have been able to influence what happens in our organisations and society. It depends on our opportunities to contribute in ways which please us or extend us. It depends on the human scale, levels of amenity, and more general livability of our cities, our personal security, our ability to give and receive help and our security for the future. It depends on our freedom from demeaning inquisitions into our private lives by ‘welfare’ agencies, and harassment

by tax collectors or the police. It depends on whether we have sufficient security to be able to think about the future without fear and to think creatively about the steps needed to create a desirable future. It depends on whether we are allowed to take the kind of action which is needed to create a secure future - something our current welfare legislation denies the 'unemployed'.

In later chapters we will discover that one reason why the market mechanism is incapable of recognising - let alone delivering - most of the potential sources of life satisfaction mentioned in the last paragraph because they cannot be monetarised. And most of those it can recognise - like security - can only be purchased collectively, not individually. Since our quality of life depends hardly at all on the factors with which the market engages it is obvious that it could be greatly enhanced at the same time as our consumption of resources and the impact which such consumption has on the global environment was greatly reduced." (Raven, p.5, 1995).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion I am suggesting that those who wish to be acknowledged as professional educators have a responsibility to create educational communities within which they can construct an appropriate professional knowledge-base for education. One way I am suggesting that this can be done is for professional educators, from all sectors of education, to engage in self-study research in asking, answering and researching questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', both in relation to our educative relationships with our students and to the traditional disciplines of education. In other words in the new discipline of educational enquiry proposed here, professional educators can create their own professional knowledge-base and living educational theories. We can do this by integrating, within our self-studies of our educative influences with our students, our professional learning as we engage with ideas from the philosophy, psychology, economics, politics, sociology, history and management of education. In this way it may be possible to transcend 'Balkanisation' in educational research in a community of professional educators and researchers who come together to assist each other to take their educational enquiries forward in the spirit of their new discipline as they engage with other learners in answering questions of the kind, 'how can I help you to improve your learning?'.

I am grateful for the support of Pat D'Arcy, Terry Hewitt, Linda Baumann, Erica Holley, Andy Larter, Moira Laidlaw, Ben Cunningham, Kevin Eames, Pam Cruise, Peter Mellett and Robyn Pound and to our visitors in our 'Monday evening' group; to members of the communities of action researcher in the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice at Bath, and at Kingston University.



## 4.6

**Lomax, P., Evans, M., Parker, Z. & Whitehead, J. (1999) Knowing ourselves as teacher educators: joint self-study through electronic mail.**

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## Knowing Ourselves as Teacher Educators: joint self-study through electronic mail

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**ABSTRACT** This article is the third in a series of joint self-studies of teacher educators. The enthusiasm and energy created by the first two enquiries led Pam Lomax, Moyra Evans and Zoe Parker to invite Jack Whitehead, who had been a sceptical onlooker and 'critical friend' into the third collaboration. Because the authors were located in three different geographical regions, they planned to use email as the main channel for communications. It is the story of this journey that is the focus of the present article. The authors did not even succeed in reaching agreement about the focus for their collaborative work. They failed to reach agreement on almost all the important issues. It was only the shame of having to admit this failure that pushed them to analyse their data and, in doing that, they came to see its potential to explain some of the complexities of using email as a medium of communication for collaborative self-study. The enquiry provides a critical assessment of the use of electronic mail within collaborative self-study, and critical insight into the tensions and dilemmas of collaboration as a strategy for self-study.

This article describes an unsuccessful attempt to engage in joint self-study. It was intended as the third of a series, in which the first two had been aimed at developing a method of joint self-study within specific contexts. An important focus of the third study was to be our work together in facilitating the continuing education of teachers and, particularly, how we could share the process of this at an international conference to which we had committed ourselves to make a joint presentation. Our substantive focus was intended to direct us to examine what we meant by working together to support

teacher researchers, and to explore the action we took to improve our understanding and our practice in relation to this. It is important that the reader understands that the joint self-study method is distinct from the partnership and collaboration that was to be the focus of the study, and from the form of our intended communication. Because we were located in three different geographical regions, we planned to use electronic mail, a medium that we hoped could capture the process of our reflexive and dialectical critique (Winter, 1989) as we worked to improve our practice supporting teacher researchers.

The dilemmas and tensions highlighted by the research are largely unresolved and the three helpful comments of the anonymous colleague who refereed the first version of this article have brought to the surface once again the negative feelings that led to us abandoning the project and writing this article. One of the comments that can be addressed is the referee's discomfort with 'the unproblematic 'we' that writes the article, given that the article is concerned with the problematising of 'we' as a collaborative group'. Although the task of editing the material was done by Pam, she drew as far as possible upon the words of her colleagues to construct the text that 'we' subsequently agreed to own. This highlights one successful outcome of the research that was not recognised in the original article – that we have jointly been able to agree an account of the research that we are willing to make public.

### Background to the Study

Lomax & Evans began to engage in joint self-study from 1994–95 (Lomax & Evans, 1996). Their aim was to explore some of the issues that underpinned their successful collaboration in developing, implementing and getting postgraduate accreditation for school-based practitioner research at Denbigh School (Evans, 1996a). Pam was interested in exploring the use of memory work, particularly how transcripts of tape-recorded data could be used subsequently to focus memory work (Haug et al, 1987; Crawford et al, 1992; Schratz & Schratz-Hadwich, 1995). Moyra was interested in writing 'stories' derived from the memory work to explore sensitive issues about the meanings and relationships embedded in the original data (Clandinin, 1992; Carter, 1993; Convery, 1993; Evans, 1996b). Moyra and Pam had clear ground rules for this work, starting with two texts that were individually chosen, challenging each other on the chosen text, tape recording and transcribing the memory work session, sharing the individual writing that emerged (Moyra wrote a fictionalised story) and agreeing the final article. The issues they agreed to publish were to do with Moyra's interest in the differentiated relationships between school and university, and within school; and Pam's interest in the logical and ethical difficulty of using teachers practice as evidence of her own success as a teacher educator. Both these issues were seen by Moyra and Pam to expose their vulnerability, but both agreed that the risk entailed was worth taking.



This research was well received by colleagues from the Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP) Special Interest Group of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) attending Pam & Moyra's session at the 1995 AERA meeting in San Francisco and encouraged them to develop the method further. The opportunity for doing this was created when Moyra and Pam become joint tutors to a group of teachers undertaking an action research project for the final year of an MA. This second enquiry (Lomax et al, 1997, 1998) differed from the first, in that Pam and Moyra wrote a poem and a story about their initial reactions to the students specifically to focus a memory work session. Other data collected during the year long project included tape recordings of teaching sessions, records of how students felt at various stages of the course, written reflections by the tutors on specific sessions and extended written comments by the tutors on the dissertations submitted by the students. Zoe, a third tutor in the team was invited to join this collaboration soon after it began. This second study was more 'sensitive' than the first because the students and their thoughts were included. Ethical issues were frequently discussed; data was shared with the students; openness and transparency were at the top of the agenda. An interim paper, based on the early stages of the research, and focusing on the issues of transparency and vulnerability in relation to inviting students to participate in their tutors' self-study, was presented to the Kingston Hill Action Research Group. Comments from the group (including Jack) were integrated into the text and the paper was presented at the 1996 AERA Conference in New York. Again, the work provoked a great deal of interest from S-STEP colleagues, particularly Jack, who was keenly supportive of the work because it seemed to have relevance to his own idea of living educational theory (Whitehead, 1993). As a result, the four of us began to discuss the possibility of engaging in collaborative self-study.

### The Significance of Self-Study

The significance of self-study has been highlighted by Zeichner (1998) who has said that 'The birth of the self study in the teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research'. Yet, the concept of self-study is a broad one, ranging from a reflective investigation of ones own teaching, often highly informal, to one approaching formal research with all the priorities and concerns that implies (Barnes, 1998). Within the educational action research approach that the four of us favour, self-study is about doing research that leads to claims supported by evidence that can be validated and is contextualised within an imperative to improve practice (McNiff et al, 1996). The characteristics of this approach include the centrality of the 'I'; the use of personal values as yardsticks for judging practice; the importance of collaboration through different forms of educative relation; the possibility of developing personal living educational theories; and the possibility of making individual contributions to an epistemology/epistemologies of practice (Lomax et al, 1996). This approach is congruent with Hamilton &

Pinnegar's (1998) identification of openness, collaboration and reframing as the main features of self-study.

Jack points out that he was instrumental in introducing Pam, Moyra and Zoe to S-STEP, of which he was one of the founding members. Jack's interest is in the way that educational action researchers can contribute to the reconstruction of educational theories from self-studies of their own professional learning as they ask, answer and research questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?'. He points to the *Teacher Education Quarterly*, which devoted a special issue to Self-Study and Living Educational Theory (Pinnegar & Russell, 1995), and to the living theory Dissertations and Theses on his action research homepage at <<http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>> as examples of what he means by self-study.

However, the work of S-STEP is eclectic and many of its members do not work within the 'living theory' tradition as can be seen from the diversity of papers in the edited collection of papers from the 1996 Herstmonceaux Castle Conference (Hamilton, 1998), the 1998 Herstmonceaux Castle Conference Proceedings (Cole & Finley, 1998) and publications from other 'founder' members (Russell & Munby, 1992; Russell & Korthagan, 1995; Loughran & Northfield, 1996).

Pam, Moyra and Zoe have developed their particular contribution in terms of a 'joint' self-study approach, which they believed could make an original contribution to the existing literature on self-study. Their idea of joint self-study was one in which they intended to jointly address the issues arising from their shared practice, but one in which they expected their individual perspectives and interests to be affirmed. Pam is interested in the 'methodology' of action research, particularly how teachers 'represent' their action research (Lomax, 1994a,b, 1998); Moyra has pioneered the use of 'fictionalised story' as a means of personal and professional development and as a way of representing action research (Evans, 1997, 1998); Zoe uses the idea of an 'auto/biography of learning' as a form in which teachers can represent an edited version of their lives which focuses on the articulation and explanation of what it means for them to learn (Parker, 1998; Lomax & Parker, 1995).

The third self-study had its inception at the 1996 AERA Conference. At that time plans were being made for the first Herstmonceaux Castle S-STEP Conference to be held in August 1996, and the four of us determined to make a presentation about our practice supporting teachers' research from a joint self-study approach. We intended to use email to share and critique each others ideas, and we intended to base our paper on a description and explanation of the process, through which we helped each other to improve our individual practices. The use of electronic mail was seen to have a number of advantages. It has the potential to distance the enquirer from his/her self in order to enhance group reflection on sensitive issues. It has the potential to make time to think, to help the responder to consider carefully before replying and to change the form of words to get nearer to the heart of what one is trying to say. Other people's views can be obtained

concurrently, so people don't have to take turns. Taking turns often means that the speakers respond to the last point raised, rather than add their own views on what others have already explored. At the beginning of this research we were all excited at the prospect of using email for our joint self-study and believed that it could bridge the gap created by different location and separate professional lives.

The present article is based on an analysis of our email communicators between April and July 1996. The emails show that we were unable to agree a starting point for joint self-study and by August 1996 we had nothing new to present at the Conference. We failed to reach agreement on almost all the important issues. Jack presented his own ideas at the Castle, and Pam, Moyra and Zoe presented an account of their second joint self-study. It was Pam who subsequently analysed the early email data; and in doing that we have come to see the potential of our data to explain some of the complexities of joint self-study and the role of email. The present account has been agreed by all of us and we use the shared pronoun intentionally. Below we present a number of issues that emerged from the analysis of a series of emails that were sent and received by different combinations of the group from April 1996 up until we met to discuss progress in August 1996. The research did not stop at this point, but subsequent emails show the relationship of the group deteriorating to the extent that none of us were emotionally capable of continuing the analysis. Once, we agreed to abandon this joint self-study, relationships have mended, and we are eager to work together as critical friends and partners, but so far not as a group of four.

We present this article because we think that it raises serious issues about collaborative work that are rarely raised. Looking back at the emails, it is possible to see a maze of issues around which we could construct several papers and to identify persistent issues that weave in and out of different conversations. Below Pam has summarised the main issues that emerged from an analysis of the data and presented glimpses from the journey that led us to agree that these were major issues.

### The Issues

1. We failed to find a concrete focus. There was a shared concern. There is no questioning our commitment to a purpose and that purpose was to improve our practice as teacher educators through joint self-study. We were used to working together and enjoyed our collaborative work. We were all involved in the Kingston Hill Action Research Network, which we believe aspires to Hargreaves (1995, p. 153) idea of creating 'a collective professional confidence' through developing 'the situated certainties of collective professional wisdom among particular communities of teachers'. E-mail as the means of our communication offered enormous opportunity to share reflections, offer support and critique and learn from each other. The extract from our taped conversation in August 1996 (reproduced towards the end of the article) shows our enthusiasm and energy towards the goal of improving our practice as teacher educators through joint self-study, although the



subsequent analysis of the email data suggests that we did not share agreement on what it meant. The email data shows that we did not find a focus.

2. We did not question our understanding of self-study. We did not see the need to distinguish the joint self-study method from the collaborative practices and partnerships that were intended as the focus for our study. Our historic relationships with each other interfered in our relation as a group of four researchers, and we did not keep our joint self-study practice separate from the emotions raised in our collaborations and partnerships. Discussion and agendas already underway before the group decided to engage in joint self-study got in the way of establishing our *modus operandi*. We did not separate what belonged outside the research from what had a proper place within the research because we did not establish agreed ground rules for joint self-study.

3. We did not question how far joint self-study relies on the nature and composition of the collaborating group. The first self-study had been a partnership. The second self-study included a third person in an existing partnership and this seemed to enrich rather than complicate the research. We expected the same for the email research. We expected it to build upon and extend the method and focus of the joint self-study. There was a lot going for the collaboration – a history of collaborative work, a shared perspective on action research, common values – but it failed. Certainly the dynamics of our collaboration was different in this third collaborative self-study from the first two. We are unsure how far this was due to the dilemmas and tensions of inviting a fourth person, male, into an existing collaborative partnership of three women, whether the group became too large to function efficiently, or whether the mode of communication, email, was to blame.

### The Data

Table I is a summary of the emails that were used for the analysis that follows. Pam drafted this account from an analysis of data from her own archive, and we recognise that there are gaps and inaccuracies.

SELF-STUDY THROUGH EMAIL

**AUTHORS - PLEASE SUPPLY A CLEAN COPY OF TABLE I  
PRINTED OUT ON A SINGLE SHEET OF A4 PAPER THAT  
CAN BE USED AS ARTWORK**

Note: Arrows show direction of the email.

Table I. LEGEND?????????

### The Narrative of a Collaborative Journey: the first leg

Our failure to agree a focus for our collaborative self-study was not due to any dearth of ideas from individuals in the group. It was due to us (as a group) not taking up any of the ideas that were offered.

#### 1. Moyra's story

*After returning from AEA, New York 1996, Moyra wrote a story titled: In which Robert T. Smith grapples with a new idea and comes home from the Conference with some questions which disturb his equanimity. Her reason for writing the story was to present a variety of issues to do with self-study on which she hoped we would focus our collaborative work. Pam acknowledged receiving the story at the end of April: Thanks for your story. I have got it and did manage to download it. I haven't read it yet. Is it for Zoe also? (960426.08). Zoe responded at length to the story almost one month later, saying: Pam told me that Moyra had written a story about AERA, a little while ago. Then Moyra mentioned it too, today I read it at last. (960530.122). Moyra mentions the story again in the missing email (960707.m) almost three months later, in the context of her suggestion for our joint paper for AERA 1997. She writes: We need to explain our position on action research and how what we do is different from the action research of Robert T. Smith, for example ... I think our email correspondence is further data over a period of time, which also brings Jack into the scene (showing how difficult it is for him to 'enter our house', once it is built), and my story of Robert T. Smith is also data which we could use, and has been referred to in our correspondence ... I agree with Pam that Jack seems to be answering from his own agenda. But I have been dismayed that Jack hadn't answered me at all ...*

Moyra's continuing reference to her story suggests that it remained important to her agenda. Why, then, did Zoe receive the story so late? Why is there no response to Zoe's long email. At one time or other we probably all shared Zoe's feelings: 'We are all such selfish inward looking folk, ready to talk and think about ourselves and the meanings we favour and reluctant to



give time to excavating the meanings others offer' (960500.m2). When did Jack receive the story? In his response to Moyra's dismay at him not responding, Jack says: 'Part of the problem of the delay in my response reaching you was that my emails got returned! Another was the length of your letter' (960708.09). The technology itself, at least to start with, was limited for all of us. Email was an infrequently used channel of communication for Zoe and Moyra and they experienced a number of technical difficulties as they began to make more use of it. Zoe's response to Moyra's story as been forwarded by Pam, suggesting there were difficulties there. Moyra says: 'To all of you – I find it difficult to respond to all the emails which I read on Friday morning, because on looking at them more carefully, I realise that I cannot have been sent some (or one) of them' (960707.21). However, were these the main reasons for not taking up the agendas suggested by individuals? Could it be that the listeners were waiting to be led further and that those putting forward the ideas did not lead on? Was it a lack of care in listening; a lack of care for the other who was therefore unheard? Was it that the ideas had no appeal to those listening? Is the point that Zoe makes in response to Moyra's story significant: 'How much should we keep trying as teachers, or as friends to get messages through which don't appear to be of interest to our audience?' (960530.122).

## 2. Collaborating on a Symposium for the Castle

*Early in May Jack outlined his ideas for collaborating on a symposium for the Castle.*

*JW>PL: ... What I'm thinking is that if we can find a way of saying a claim that we think is really significant and then referring people to the evidence on our homepages, we could really focus attention, at the Conference, on understanding our contribution to educational research, its theory, methodologies and forms of representation. (960502.100)*

*Pam wrote the proposal based on the ideas in bold italics and incorporating the current work of the five of us who were to present the symposium. Jack was to send the proposal to S-STEP. Two weeks later Jack had another idea:*

*JW>PL: I submitted the proposal we agreed. But it does lend itself to be presented as a response to Ardra's questions which would allow us to engage in some collaborative action research and to invite the rest of the participants to debate with us . (960514.201)*

*This was followed next day by a short paper: Towards an Epistemology of Practice, by Ben Cunningham, Moyra Evans, Pam Lomax, Zoe Parker and Jack Whitehead. The paper included Ardra's question, a celebratory paragraph about each of us and an*

invitation to the audience to engage with us in moving our enquiry forward by responding to our work on  
<<http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw>>. (960515.131)

PL>ALL: My immediate response is that I do not want to locate our original proposals within Ardra's suggestions, but I would like to use her question in order to validate our work ... We will have the added challenge of seeing if we can do this collaboratively, because there are five of us presenting at the castle ... I am sending this draft to the others ... (960500.m1)

The debate about what should be included heated up. Jack's text had included the statement: We would like to engage with you in co-creating a different form of epistemology for educational researchers, an epistemology of practice. Pam was not happy with this.

Pam: I am not sure that it is co-creating as we have already gone a long way in developing our ideas about epistemology. For example the chapter in ... (Lomax, Whitehead & Evans, 1996) and the paper ... presented at AERA (Lomax & Parker, 1996). These papers make ... explicit ... ideas that we (you and I) have worked on together for some time. We have ... presented them together at the UCET Seminar and with Moyra at the BEMAS Conference ... Are you really saying that you want to co-create something new? Or are you really saying that you would like the audience to work with us to test out whether their own self-studies can fit within our conception of an epistemology of practice?

Zoe: Perhaps rather than co-creating ... this specific task and paper is a new venture, or a new version of an ongoing quest for ways of working better together and ways of understanding better what we each and together mean by an epistemology of practice ... In this joint paper, unless all its authors speak out for their own meaning, how on earth can we honestly ask the audience to join us in creating meaning? (960500.m2)

The conversation continued but there is no record in Pam's archive until 30 May (10 days later):

PL>JW: The paper seems a bit narcissistic. Personally I don't think it is worth resuscitating all this. Ardra's question can be used much more critically by us to question our own position rather than saying it is a good question because it applies to others who have rejected our work. Do I make sense? I guess you won't think so. (960530.112)

*And one hour later the same day:*

*JW>PL: Help, help, help. Boy, have I got a problem. I hate not meeting deadlines! How do I get out, round, through this one. Here it is. I want to send the attached file to the Castle people because I cant see a way of getting our joint piece together in the next few days ... (960604.121)*

Jack says he hated not meeting he deadlines, but showed less concern for his collaborators. Was this because of frustration? Moyra did not contribute to discussion on his paper, perhaps because she was still awaiting an answer to hers. Pam was very critical of the paper because it did not seem to be located in the work they had already done together. Zoe was trying hard not to antagonise anyone and not getting much response to what she wrote. Was this an example of an individual agenda that did not provide the opportunity for others in the group to share in its ownership; of Jack riding rough shod over the others in order to get his own agenda through? Or was it that we failed to recognise the importance of 'old' agendas and 'histories' that prevented us from forging something new, as Zoe infers above? At times we could not be sure if the current issue represented a new debate for us all or rehearsed old ground for some. Perhaps if we had started with a 'memory work' session or each written a story about our view of our relationship and shared it, this would not have happened. Why is it that we do not use the techniques that we insist our students use and to what cost?

### *3. Old Agendas and Historic Talk*

*Pam: ... you do not seem to want to find out what those people really meant ... instead you seem to want to reinterpret it for them so that it fits your model ... you then congratulated them for being so clever. This could seem patronising!*

*Jack: I see that I am insisting that each individual ... has their own educational theory which guides their actions. I do congratulate individuals ... who produce their own living theories, partly because I see I have helped them in a way they acknowledge, and partly because I see they have celebrated their own uniqueness ... Do you feel patronised by my responses to you and your work? How do you feel about my responses to you and your work? I know you have said that I don't seem to take your work seriously. Yet I use it with each of my students in a way which shows that they have taken it seriously.*

*Pam: ... When I send you papers I do not get any real engagement. I get a part on the back ... or I get the impression you would rather I did something different from what I am doing. (960429.18)*



The email above belonged to Pam and Jack rather than the group, yet it was also significant to the relationships of the group, and shows how earlier issues can impinge on what comes later and get incorporated without each of us realising or agreeing. We were to come to realise the mass and complexity of our individual relationships with each other as the research progressed. The email above flags up two issues. The first concerns Pam feeling marginalised by Jack, and her difficulty in getting this across. On other occasion she writes: 'In your recent response to ARLIST why did you not give a plug to the Quality book? At least it includes the work of teachers striving to improve their own practice. I was disappointed and puzzled' (960704.08). The second issue concerns perceptions from the other three that Jack was unwilling to address issues, unless they were framed within his own language and world view. For example, in an email containing ideas about how each of us could contribute to the Castle presentation, Pam suggests that Jack, 'explain why he finds it so difficult to collaborate with our work, explain why he cannot create a link with his own interests except as a 'critical parent' (960626.13). Zoe says: 'I sometimes feel Jack is giving different people the same response ... This could be seen as formulaic and ignoring individuals' particular needs (960704.155). Moyra writes: 'Jack, you come up with almost expected answers to our questions ... You do not seem to translate our jumble of meanings into your own area of interest. You seem to be secure in your own enquiry. There does not seem uncertainty in your enquiry, only certainty that you will fight to get your/our work onto the political agenda. How does this constitute an enquiry?' (960707.21).

#### 4. The issue of Jack as a collaborator

*PL>JW: ... I sent the paper yesterday ... Have you read it? You say its nice to see we (Z, M & P) are working together. What about the bits I incorporated from you? Do you not think that the 'we' might have a bit of 'you' n it or do you have difficulty putting your 'I' into our 'we' ... I feel you do not have any ownership in our work but rather take a paternal interest in it ... What is your view. (960624.093)*

*ME>PL/ZP: I've read Jack's questions, and wonder if he is asking too much from one paper, to make explicit for instance where he says about story influencing our practice ... Perhaps we could trace the influence of story on our practice - maybe for AERA? Where could Jack fit into this? What do you mean about him being a 'critical parent' - is this where he fits into our development of story within self-study? (960703.05)*

*PL>ME/ZP: He really annoys me sometimes. He was not interested in how we had dealt with his questions, raised previously. He seems to always nit pick new ones. That's why I called him a critical parent, it was a criticism of his role ... I don't think he could*

SELF-STUDY THROUGH EMAIL

*fit into this. But he does not need to fit into all our work. I thought he wanted to fit in by looking at his own practice. But he only responds to ours ... (960704-.092)*

*ME>PL/ZP: The whole area of you saying he finds it difficult to collaborative with our work itself needs exploration – how are we helping him into our work? How far is our work, once constructed as a paper, closed to anyone else entering it? Don't we need to start again with Jack as a full partner rather than as an after thought? (960703.05)*

*JW>ALL: Pam has sent me your letter of 4th July. I would really enjoy participating fully in your enquiries both to help you move your enquiries forward and for you to help me with mine and for us to develop a collaborative enquiry together. From the letter of the 4th July I feel you, Moyra, trying to find a way of including me in the developing conversation. Pam's words feel very different ... I'm fascinated by your developing partnerships between Kingston and Schools as you encourage more teachers to adopt an action research approach to professional development. I'd like to join any enquiry into the growth of these partnerships. I'm fascinated by Zoe's PhD programme and want to help her 'fly free' in creating an autobiography of her own learning which can be legitimated in the Academy. I'm working at supporting Pam in sustaining and extending the action research programmes at Kingston and at developing an epistemology of practice by explicating the educational standards which can be used to test the validity of individuals' claims to know their own educational development. ... I'm also interested in overcoming tensions in relationships which get in the way of creative contributions to research and practice. I'm thinking of the emotional blocks which people can develop when someone violates the other's space or sense of integrity. There is a balance to be struck ... (960704.132)*

*PL>ALL: Personally I like straight talking because otherwise I find it difficult to know what people mean. I share Jack's concern for the integrity of what people are doing and the need to respect it. This is a two edged sword. Jack, I found your response to how you are going to help us three rather patronising because it was framed within your agenda. I found your request for us to help you interesting but I am not sure about how much energy I want to put into promoting what you want to promote. (960704.135)*

*JW>ALL: My own understanding is that it is Moyra's agenda to support action research approaches to professional development*

around Denbigh School, in partnership with you at Kingston. The fact that this movement owes something to earlier work with Kevin Eames seems to me to offer cause for celebration. I wonder if Moyra experiences my note as 'patronising'. My understanding of my support for your work at Kingston was that it was part of your agenda for me to come support the work. It is also part of my agenda to promote this kind of work so I'm not sure how it is 'framed within my agenda', when the contract of support was framed by you ... I wonder if Zoe experiences my note as 'patronising'. I always feel Zoe to be her own person who I try to work within, 'flying free' of patronising influences. If either Moyra or Zoe responds by saying that they did not find my response patronising, I wonder if this will modify your response which identifies your feelings of being patronised with 'us three'. (960704.143)

ZP>ALL: I am getting sorely confused as to who is responding to what here. I can't see the I for the we's. I don't find Jack (or his note) patronising, nor does Pam say that I do ... I think that, hard though this collaboration is proving to be, we should persevere ... I think that we need to be able to say what we want to for ourselves and decide individually which things we want to challenge or thank the others for. (960704.155)

ME>ALL: ... I am surprised that the use of the word (patronising) can evoke so heated a response ... why did she (Pam) use it in the first place? Unless she meant to stimulate a more passionate response than she thought she's get otherwise? Zoe says that Jack's comments are not patronising, and Jack asks what I think. I see them as not satisfying my wish for Jack to shift his ground a bit. But maybe this is all to do with us responding from our own agendas. Does this mean that we can't collaborate? What does collaboration mean to each of us? It's beginning to raise questions in me that I'd never thought of before. Maybe collaboration has got something to do with shifting away from our own agendas, and sharing other people's? Is Pam, in her comments about being patronised, trying to get Jack to 'fly free' of where he is grounded?

JW>ALL: I am also interested in overcoming tensions in relationships which get in the way of creative contributions to research and practice. I'm thinking of the emotional blocks which people can develop when someone violates the other's space or sense of integrity. There is a balance to be struck between creative and destructive tension. This is how I'm feeling at the moment. I have individual letters from all three of you. Moyra's letters are



*always inviting. Zoe's letters a joy. Pam's letters stimulating and energising. Then, when I get your joint correspondence the tone and feelings change dramatically. If you look at the 4th July letter I think you will understand my tension of holding together both feelings of inclusion and exclusion. When you look at the letter again, feel it from my point of view. I have always enjoyed working with you but there is a 'feeling' in this letter, which I don't feel close to as a welcoming invitation to collaborative with you. (960704.132)*

Zoe pinpointed an important omission: we had not agreed ground rules, and the result was misunderstanding and distrust. We had no rules to establish when an issue was ended. None of us were used to sharing email communications in a group and it took us a long time to get into this habit. None of us found it natural to address communication to three others or to have a conversation with one, while the other two listened in. The emails are punctuated by *deja-vu* where one of us makes a response to a conversation that has been closed by others who have already moved to something else. Failing to sort out the technology and technique of using email was not only annoying and frustrating, but was responsible for some very bad patches in our relations. Our failure to sort out the ground rules meant that at times, as individuals, we felt marginalised and excluded by the thought of the others 'ganging up' or having conversations behind our backs. Zoe puts this clearly: 'I think we should be careful that all our self-study messages go to all four of us always. Conversations we hold aside from that should never be seen as talking behind each others' backs. We have to be able to have our individual relationships as well as this joint/group relationship' (960704.155). Perhaps this was the reason for Jack's over reaction to being called patronising and his rationalisation in terms of being able to work with each of us but not us all together. It is significant that Pam could call him patronising in a private email between the two of them (see old agendas and historic talk), but not in an email between the four of us. Was this because we did not find it easy to separate the private from the public?

##### *5. From a Conversation in August*

*Z: Jack, you said you like working with us and get some energy or power or force that you can take out to your other enterprises.*

*P: It might be that you should be exploring that energy.*

*Z: What I think would make a very interesting enquiry is if we understood more about what the power bit is and I think we are powerful ...*

*M: Are you frightened of moving into an enquiry of that nature? In case you lose your...*

*J: I don't think it's fear; I think it's a genuine recognition of some of the risks involved and destroying some of the creative energy which comes from the group – I think we all recognise – I mean it's life affirming, it's bloody great.*

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*P: I think much of the work you see doesn't show the struggle that individuals have in coming to a new meaning between them. Now wouldn't it be lovely to show that – how we could actually produce a new meaning through our struggle – our own individual interests.*

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*J: That's the area that really fascinates me, Why, when I go to Kingston, that would normally finish me off through working so intensely ... and yet when I leave, I'm on a high even though I'm knackered.*

*P: I feel like that.*

*M: I do, yes ... is it the teachers, or is it the work that we're doing?*

*P: Well it's to do with that work isn't it?*

*Z: It's to do with building a research culture, that's one of the things it's to do with.*

*P: It's to do with doing teaching, which I think I do when I ...*

*J: The buzz that I get is when I see that we can have worked with a certain individual, and you can feel a move forward that is being made ...*

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*Z: I'm interested in how the group relationship is going to evolve – I don't have a specific question or anything – I know that I want to go on working in this group and I'm interested that Jack is joining it, just the dynamics and that are interesting.*

*P: He's not joining the group because he's always been a member of the group, what he's doing is engaging in the research – we've been a group for quite a while haven't we, but it's the joining in the research that makes a difference, and can I say something, when you started talking you brought your old agenda in and Moyra reacted to it. And actually Moyra brings her old agenda in actually, you bring in the feelings and the emotional part of it.*

*M: Well, I think we all do.*

*P: We all do and maybe that's something to have a think about.*

*J: I really respect what you call our old agendas – they're still living, they're very important.*

*P: Maybe, but in a way they get in the way of seeing what is going to happen because they've got a control around it – if we're going to explore what's happening, document it, discuss it, look at it, all the things we get our students to do, then in a way we've got to put those old agendas on the side and bring them back later ... to test them out.*

*J: That I like, could I just give you an example of what I would see – as my life's project, not as an old agenda ... I don't think it's a case of the old agenda gets in the way.*

*P: No, but these are macro agendas ... And we know that larger agenda, its not all a shared agenda, and maybe we can leave it to the side a bit, because I think what we're doing would contribute to your work there, as it would contribute to Moyra's ideas about feelings and emotions, but they don't have to be the thing being looked at ...*

*M: One of the things that the email flagged up was the difficulty in understanding what we each meant by what we were saying, and the power differential between us ...*

## Conclusions

### Issue 1

Zeichner (1998) sees self-study as part of 'the new scholarship of teacher education' where 'more and more of the research about teacher education is being conducted by those who actually do the work of teacher education'. Zeichner's emphasis on 'the work of teacher education' as the purpose of teacher educators' self-study highlights the deficit of our own unsuccessful research, where we never reached a focus on questions concerning our educational relationships and influence with our students.

This is one area that distinguishes the email project from the two pieces of research that Pam and Moyra, and Pam, Moyra and Zoe had undertaken in response to their growing interest in developing joint self-study as part of their action research repertoire. Their idea of joint self-study was clearly focused on joint work – Moyra and Pam's partnership



in getting accreditation for teachers' school-based research in the first study, and Pam, Moyra and Zoe's team teaching in the second. These studies addressed both the relationships of the researchers to their students and each other, and the educational context itself.

In the third study we did not find a joint focus that we could all address equally as teacher educators. Was this because our individual practice was too different and self-study demands we focus on our own practice? None of our individual practices and partnerships were shared by all the group. Could they ever be? It seems likely that effective self-study needs a concrete focus and, where joint self-study takes place, the focus needs to be a shared practice, if not a joint practice. This raises questions about the nature of joint practice and whether it is possible where individuals occupy positions of differential power, such as those occupied by individuals in our group. As Moyra said at the end, 'one of the things that the email flagged up was the difficulty in understanding what we each meant by what we were saying, and the power differential between us ...'.

Did our medium of communication exacerbate this? Could it be the very nature of email, with its propensity for encouraging us to change the words to get nearer to the heart of what we mean, that is more alienating than face to face conversation? Whether the communication medium itself deters practical action in favour of argument is an interesting, but unanswered question.

### *Issue 2*

The lack of specific focus for our joint self-study was compounded by a lack of discussion about what we meant by joint self-study. It was a huge mistake not to explore how we wanted to collaborate at the start of the research. We did not ask ourselves how collaboration could be useful in self-study or what collaboration meant to each of us. We did not distinguish joint self-study as a mechanism for achieving our action research ends from collaboration as practical action towards a shared goal. We did not establish agreed ground rules for either collaboration or for using email as a channel of communication.

Our failure to establish ground rules for collaboration, such as those established in the first two self-studies, led us into territory that all of us found difficult to explore. This has raised ethical and practical questions that focus on boundary, and have not been addressed in this article because they relate to data subsequent to August 1996 that we have not shared because of the resentment, irritation and sadness it causes us all. We did not find it easy to separate what belonged outside the collaboration from what had a proper place within the collaboration. Everything became included. Pam blamed this on old agendas that 'get in the way of seeing what is going to happen because they've got a control around it – if we're going to explore what's happening, document it, discuss it, look at it, all the things we get our students to do, then in a way we've got to put those old agendas on the side' (6 August, tape).

The email data shows that much of the time was spent in individuals trying to negotiate the form that joint self-study should take to include their own. Where we did not get our own way we were destructive of a group approach. As individuals we blamed each other for this state of affairs, and because we lacked a shared understanding of the nature of a joint self-study, we were unable to help each other over the hurdles. Perhaps because we operated through email, we paid too little attention to how the group process could support a shared task or to the individual skills needed to make that process work. It seemed that at times we did not listen or failed to show that we had listened, so that individuals who felt unheard or unheeded became less motivated to collaborate; agendas were introduced by individuals without providing sufficient incentive or opportunity for others to share in their ownership; the person with the idea did not always provide sufficient leadership to carry the idea forward. We did not consider at the time whether we had a shared understanding of what self-study might mean or whether it was possible to move it from the specific interests of an individual to become a shared activity.

Email, as the means of communication compounded these problems, although it was not the main cause of them. Because we were not expert in the use of email, we failed to label the communications to do with the agreed self-study and these became mixed with other messages. There were no boundaries and we found it difficult to separate our private conversations and individual support for each other from a joint self-study focus. The technology itself was limited and did not always work. Messages got lost. Long emails were tedious to deal with in the context of a busy professional life where there seemed to be other more pressing issues; we had different times of the day and week when we used the channel for communicating about the research. Email was also limiting because we did not know how to work effectively with it. Messages intended for all were received by some leading to hurt and distrust. Lack of ground rules meant that we did not always distinguish private communications from communications that were intended to be shared by all. Establishing an agreed procedure for using email was an important omission in our research.

### *Issue 3*

In engaging in a joint self-study of our practice, we each (Pam, Moyra, Zoe and Jack) expected that we would be able to draw upon the frames of reference and the theoretical interests that constitute our own, distinct contributions to educational action research – particularly as we have always found these to be congruent. However, the data shows that at times our practice was in conflict with this value position. We do agree that the integrity of all our work is important and we believe that how we recognise that in each other is a key part of collaborative endeavour. We would all say that each of our areas of work should command equal interest and respect. However, although we can agree in principle, we did not seem to agree about what this meant in practice. The domination of one agenda in a relationship

can mean another agenda is not heard or thought of as important. The email data put this issue in sharp relief, with silences being as significant as messages.

Certainly, the dynamic of our collaboration was different in this third collaborative self-study from the first two. We are unsure whether this was due to the dilemmas and tensions of inviting a fourth person, male, into an existing collaborative partnership of three women or whether we began to address issues that had not been raised before. Yet, looking at two of the three joint/collaborative self-studies reported alongside our own second self-study in the recent book by Hamilton (1998) it is interesting that the collaborative study conducted by three women (LaBoskey et al, 1998) does not highlight discord while the joint self-study conducted by the mixed gender group (Conle et al, 1998) refers to the tensions of group enquiry in the title of the article. We are not sure whether the changed gender balance of our group was significant, but the existing partnership had already been the focus of joint self-study, and a relationship of trust had been established that enabled the three women to publish research findings that exposed some of their vulnerabilities as teachers and learners without inhibiting their wish to continue.

The fourth person became a member of the group because he had a close collaborative relationship with the other three; he was intrigued by the energy with which the other three reported their research findings; and because he himself was becoming increasingly interested in the affective dimensions of educative relationships. Yet, although it was clear that the enthusiasm and energy created by the first two enquiries intrigued Jack, t Moyra, Pam and Zoe, he did not appear to engage seriously with their ideas. Pam has experienced Jack's lack of engagement in relation to her interest in methodology, Moyra has experienced it in relation to her use of story, Zoe has experienced it in terms of her focus on autobiography. Although Jack was clearly committed and interested in the idea of developing partnership and collaboration, he seemed ill at ease with the idea of joint self-study as a method. For example, in the taped conversation Moyra says, 'Are you frightened of moving into an enquiry of that nature? In case you lose your ...' and Jack replies, 'I don't think it's fear; I think its a genuine recognition of some of the risks involved and destroying some of the creative energy ...' (6 August, tape).

In retrospect, it can be seen that Jack was not on the inside of the 'connected' form of relationship that had allowed the others to expose some of their vulnerabilities, while respecting each others unspoken wish for silence in relation to others. Whether this is an issue to do with gender or due to the fact that the three women were located in the same institutional context and Jack in another, we cannot agree upon. What seems clear is that Jack's notion of collaborative self-study was at odds with the others notion of joint self-study. Jack points out that he had worked with Pam in supporting action research at Kingston and Bath Universities from 1985 (Lomax & Whitehead, 1998). Since 1993 he had provided support for students and supervisors of action research at Kingston under a consultancy agreement



with Bath. He had been an external supervisor for Moyra's PhD programme, working with Pam, who was the Director of Study for both Moyra's and Zoe's PhD programmes. Jack's view is that although it is rewarding to work with each of the others separately, the dynamics created by a group of four left him with resentment, irritation and sadness.

Did the fact of the email communication itself exasperate differences between us? In using email, as with any written comment, the meaning can be misinterpreted and the speaker is not on hand to clarify, so there is an onus on the communicator to make the message as clear as possible in the first place. This did not always happen. There were many ideas that were proffered, but ignored by some or all of us, so that individuals became angry and less motivated to argue through their ideas. This was partly, but not wholly to do with the technology of email available at the time, which was limited, did not always work and with which we were not all equally familiar. A more likely reason for the lack of progress was that communication by email follows a similar pattern to all communication and depends for success on interpersonal skills or agreed intentions that were lacking in our instance. Do we lack these skills in our normal interaction? Does using email give us more time to feel offended by the other's lack of concern? Does email allow too much reflection on the word, and not enough access to the intention that is often transmitted by body language rather than by the word.

Issues of collaboration in action research have been debated before (Somekh, 1994), but to study ourselves jointly as a research project and through email, is a new venture. The problematic of language and meaning in collaborative self-study has been an issue running through our communications. The tape recorded discussion in August 1996 shows a much more positive face to face relationship between members of the group than is revealed by the email data up to that point. Was this because email presents the minute detail of what people actually said over time – and there is little escape from that – so that the final analysis is made from a more complete record than is possible in most other research. Did the email give a 'truer' picture than the tape recorder?

Alternatively, is it more to do with the dynamic of the email communication? Is it because email is so divorced from the softening influence of body language? Is it because we cannot see the effect our email has on the other and, therefore, we cannot modify the impression we make to one more suitable to the weightiness of the matter in hand? Is it that we are much more circumspect with what we say than what we write or do we pay less attention to what we hear than what we read? Is looking back over our email records a more destructive force than personal reflection unaided by such minutely recorded text? If this is the case, does email compound emotional responses that are more likely to be dissipated in face to face relationships? Is it possible that the type of communication that Belenky and her colleagues (1986) speak about, which they attribute particularly to women's ways of knowing, was inhibited in the email we shared? Could it be that email does not allow for a 'connected' relationship and leads us all (men

and women) to respond to and from a more logical-rational position than we are used to doing? These are important areas for future research.

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