

Chapter 6 A creative use of multimedia narratives in researching the meanings of values in living-boundaries and developing generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability

So far I have focused on using multimedia narratives to ostensibly and iteratively clarify my ontological and social values. Here I focus on the creative use of multimedia narratives to understand and communicate (that is, to research) their meanings in living-boundaries. I then show how I use multimedia narratives to develop generative and transformational forms of evaluation and accountability of educational practice that contribute to the evolution of my living-theory praxis in living-boundaries.

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6.1 Multimedia narratives to research meanings of energy-flowing values

University library shelves now groan under the weight of the literature on the subject of narrative and research, and tomes such as Clandinin's (2007) *The Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology* confer academic respectability on this research method. However, western academics are latecomers to the field as illustrated by the embodied, oral and scribal traditions of human societies represented by the cave paintings found on every continent of the world dating back to the beginning of research as learning made public. So, nothing is new, except – the advent of 21st century technology, which offers new possibilities to clarify, understand and communicate meanings of energy-flowing values not available to cavemen or to more recent generations of educational researchers.

Educational narratives are the descriptions and explanations created of the learning journey, which in their creation and offering enhance the well-being and well-becoming of the story tellers and audiences. They are narratives of educational influence in learning. This thesis can be read as an account of my educational influence in my own learning, that of others and of social formations. As I continue to engage in my living-theory research, I progressively recognize the person I want to be, in and of a world I want to live in, and developing the competences to contribute as fully as I can to my own learning and life and that of others.

In this section, I begin by clarifying what I mean by narrative and the contribution of multimedia narratives to my research. I use a multimedia

narrative to clarify, understand and communicate my meanings of my energy-flowing values in living-boundaries.

The words ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ are often used interchangeably. However narratives are usually understood to be coherent accounts of what has happened (Carter, 1993), whereas stories may be narratives, or they can be disconnected fragments, metaphorical or imagined possibilities. There is no clear-cut distinction in common usage or in the literature, so I use both words and rely on describing my purpose for employing the device to make clear what I mean.

Sometimes the stories I create are initially for myself alone, to remind me of thoughts and feelings to relive another time, and sometimes to examine, reappraise and grow from. These stories often comprise brief notes, images, sketches and video clips that are impenetrable to anyone else but carry deep meaning for me. Sometimes the stories I have created have provided grist to the generative mill of my imagination, and enabled me to work out thoughts, puzzles, contradictions, and imagine possibilities and bring them into being. Sometimes they have provided data to draw on as educational evaluative evidence of my practice, and allowed me to critically reflect so as to deepen my understandings of what I am doing to evolve, rather than revolve, my living-theory praxis.

I also use stories to communicate to others something of importance to me, sometimes for no other reason than to enjoy the pleasure of sharing thoughts and experiences that are meaningful to me. I think I am not uncommon in that desire, although unlike Archimedes I make sure I am fully attired first! Other times I want to communicate what I have learned influentially. The papers I have presented and the articles I have written offer exemplars. I freely offer such narratives as gifts in the sense that I create and offer them in the hope, but not the expectation, that they may be of interest and use to others.

Telling and retelling stories in the creation of narratives that communicate to self and/or others has an influence in forming and strengthening a particular memory, point of view, position held, value and belief – so stories can be transformational. Sometimes they stimulate new thoughts, or new connections, and bring into being what was not there before. If what is brought into being is constructive, they can be generative. I am aware that some stories can carry blight rather than hope. In the creation of multimedia narratives, I have on occasions been able to recognise, or been helped to recognise, and change the nature of the story I am telling myself from one that carries blight to one that is more productive and worthwhile. This has made an important contribution to the evolution of my living-theory praxis and I will return to this when I come to generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability.

Humans are great storytellers and our stories about the world and ourselves are influential. Stories not only change individual’s lives as they tell them, they also change other people’s lives. I come to the same conclusion that

Taleb (2010) expresses succinctly in his introduction to, 'The Black Swan: The impact of the highly improbable':

'You need a story to displace a story. Metaphors and stories are far more potent (alas) than ideas; they are also easier to remember and more fun to read. If I have to go after what I call the narrative disciplines, my best tool is a narrative.

Ideas come and go, stories stay.' (p. xxi)

In evolving my living-theory praxis I am concerned with narratives that are research narratives. As such they do not just contain smooth stories of self (MacLure, 1996) but there is a care that the 'stories of ruin' are not ruinous. They are in an organic relationship with our world and how we experience it. That world, as an ecology of being, comprises my internal world as well as the social and physical environment that I inhabit, shape and am shaped by.

Since embarking on this research programme I have created and told many stories in many forms. Each time I learn something in the narration. I offer some as gifts by making them public in the hope that others might find something of educational use to them. In those cases they are of the form that Carter (1993) describes:

'... capturing the complexity, specificity, and interconnectedness of the phenomenon with which we deal and, thus, redressed the deficiencies of the traditional atomistic and positivistic approaches in which teaching was decomposed into discrete variables and indicators of effectiveness.' (pp. 5-6)

Since Carter wrote this technology has developed apace, so that I can now develop multimedia narratives as I exemplified in Chapter 3 (pages 86-118), where I ostensibly and iteratively clarified the meanings of my values. This thesis is also such a multimedia narrative, one of many I have created, trying to capture and communicate the complexity and interconnectedness of my living-theory praxis. I use a multimedia form, as I did in Chapter 3, to communicate the energy-flowing values that give meaning and purpose to my life and that form my explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of my practice and evolve with my living-theory praxis. I also employ multimedia narrative to research meanings of my energy-flowing values in the course of evolving my living-theory praxis.

I am not an artist, illustrator or skilled in visual representations or written communication, yet communicating to and with others is a vital aspect of researching meanings of energy-flowing values to improve my practice. I do not believe that images or videos alone, any more than words alone, can suffice to communicate meanings, and telling is no substitute for eliciting shared meanings in the living-boundary between us. So I want you to understand my creative use of multimedia narrative as a generative and transformational approach to researching meanings of energy-flowing values by experiencing something of the use I have made of it.

In the context of what you have come to know of me, the complex ecology of my work and being, and my living-theory praxis, I ask you again to go beyond just using your intellect to engage empathetically via head, heart and body with a video clip taken at a meeting in 2010. I was given half-an-hour to talk about my thesis to people with a professional interest in gifted and talented education. I set up the camera thinking that the video would show me as my usual incomprehensible self but in the hope that I might get some clues as to how to improve.

My stomach was churning as we broke for coffee before my ‘slot’. I had tried to organise my thoughts to present my thesis, but was far from happy or confident with what I had prepared. Over the break I remember deliberately changing the story I was telling myself from, “this is going to be awful” to thinking of my audience as individuals I knew and respected, and what they might be interested in exploring with me concerning my thesis. I thought of the values I had been clarifying, and how I might live them in that space as fully as I could. The effect on me was odd. I felt unusually at ease as I let go of the content I had prepared and focussed instead on how to create an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational space in the living-boundaries between us. I thought about the people as persons, and how in my own terms I might extend to each a loving recognition, open channels of respectful connectedness between us and express my educational responsibility for myself and towards each of them. I set up the video camera opposite where I was sitting and asked someone to switch it on when I began talking, leave it to run and turn it off at the end. I am the only one you see in the video: I did not want to disrupt the space by asking people for permission to film them or to take someone else’s attention away from the conversation to video me.

When I had finished, I thought I had made a complete hash of the whole opportunity that I had so generously been offered. I was surprised when we broke for lunch and a few people independently, privately and in an unsolicited fashion, told me that I had made sense and that they empathised with what I was expressing. I looked at the video later with curiosity, which was unusual for me: I usually dislike looking at video footage of myself. I was surprised by what I saw. I do not think that the ninety or so thousand written words of the various versions of this thesis convey the spirit of what my thesis is as well as that video does. As I create this multimedia narrative as part of the thesis I continue to research meanings of my values in the process of trying to clarify, understand and communicate them in the living-boundary between us.

I ask you here to take time to look at a few minutes of this 10-minute clip on the next page (Video 18).



Video 18 Communicating my thesis
<http://tinyurl.com/3jr7jla>

As I watch this, it evokes in me the feelings of pleasure I felt at the time of being with creative, professional educators who were making an educational difference to children and young people's lives by developing and offering their talents, expertise and knowledge as educational gifts. It reminds me of the pleasure of feeling that my work had something of value to offer to educators whom I respect. I believe that in contrasting this to earlier videos I can see evidence that I am developing the talents I need to communicate more effectively the notion of educational theory, practice and provision arising from practice and research explained by energy-flowing values.

Run the cursor back and forth. I want you to share the feeling I have that I am living my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, as I seek to engage, and not just perform, to those present. I want you to share the feeling I have that I am seeking to connect and appreciate the knowledge and the values each person wants to live more fully through their practice they brought into the space. I am asking you to feel yourself as part of the space to address the questions I pose to you here in the context of what you have understood of my values: "What does the video communicate to you?" "Do you see evidence of me expressing a loving recognition of others and myself, respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility?" "Do you have a sense of an inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian educational space?" "Do you have a sense of the talents and knowledge that I have been working to develop and offer as gifts?" "Do I live the qualities of inclusive gifted and talented educational theory, practice and provision that I describe in the previous chapter?" By focussing your attention through these questions I am intending to enhance my embodied communication and add to your understanding of what I mean by learning to live a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life.

Gadamer (1975/2004) describes a particular form of conversation:

'To conduct a conversation requires first of all that the partners to it do not talk at cross purposes. Hence its necessary structure is that of question and answer. The first condition of the art of conversation is to ensure that the other person is with us.... To conduct a conversation.... requires that one does not try to out-argue the other person, but that one really considers the weight of the other's opinion. Hence it is an art of testing. But the art of testing is the art of questioning. For we have seen that to question means to lay open, to place in the open. As against the solidity of opinions, questioning makes the object and all its possibilities fluid. '(pp. 330-333)

As you watch and respond to the questions I have offered, I ask you to experience the boundary between us as a living, creative, educational space. I ask you not to try to out-argue me but to go beyond what I have said to test, question and make possibilities fluid.

In developing an educational conversation with you and using multimedia narratives to clarify, understand and communicate the meanings of my values with an educational intent, I am researching the meanings of values in living-boundaries to evolve my living-theory praxis. In that sense some stories can be educational conversations one has with oneself. I use the term 'educational' conversation to indicate that my intention is to enable you and me to progress our learning that helps us each to realise (to recognise and achieve) our best intent as fully as possible. How 'learning' is understood has implications for what I think my work is, and what constitutes improving practice, which becomes clearer when I consider issues concerning evaluation and accountability. I will come to this later.

The nature of a conversation is that while it may appear that the thread is pursued systematically it is also an organic flow as those engaged in the conversation creatively draw into it experiences, knowledge, feelings, imagined possibilities, beliefs and theories expressed in words, intonation, physicality and presence. This makes it impossible to understand the knowledge created in an educational conversation simply from its transcript. If you doubt this, think of an instance when someone said, 'yes' and yet you *knew* that they were actually saying 'no'. Sometimes it is not until the speakers have heard themselves that they understand what they meant and recognise the knowledge created in the living-boundary between themselves and others. A video of that conversation is not enough. It requires text to contextualise it with insights into the complex ecologies of those in the conversation, and others coming to it after the event, and to point to the significance of what is being communicated.

6.2 Values researched in living-boundaries

In the previous multimedia narrative, I showed you values clarified, understood and communicated in the living-boundary between educators at the South West Gifted and Talented Education network meeting and myself. Here, I want to illustrate values researched in the living-boundary of an i~we relationship using image and text to create a multimedia narrative. In an i~we relationship, each respects their own and the other's 'i' and an implicitly negotiated sense of 'we'. For me this is a relationship where the unique contribution of 'i' is held within 'we' and is neither subordinated nor dominant. It is a relationship that holds the potential for collaboration as a step beyond co-operation. The ~ is a trustworthy, inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian space for knowledge-creating research. Individuals form the living-boundary with a mutual commitment to enabling respectful connectedness and a loving recognition of self and other, and to express their educational responsibility for themselves and towards others and 'we'.



Figure 19 Photo of child by Belle Wallace

I have brought this photo into the thesis twice before: in Chapter 3 (pages 86-118) to clarify my ontological and social values and in Chapter 5, (pages 155- 190) to communicate the notion of developing gifted and talented theory, practice and provision from an educational perspective. I bring the image to you again to communicate a third point and to keep connection with the core thread of improving practice through the multidimensional and relationally dynamic nature of Living-Theory research, Here the photograph (Figure 19) connects two educators (Belle Wallace and Jack Whitehead) who have had a major transformational influence on my own educational journey and on me which I explain here (Huxtable, 2006a)

‘At the NACE conference, October 2005, Belle Wallace shared with me some of the photos she had taken to illustrate her work. One in particular struck me because of the physical response of Belle as she talked to me about it, which seemed to convey the passion for education and the values she held in common with Jack Whitehead and me. I was very mindful of Jack’s phrases ‘the flow of life affirming energy’ and ‘embodied knowledge’ as I looked at Belle as we talked about this picture.

Jack’s response to the photos is given in his Keynote for the Act, Reflect, Revise III Conference, Brantford Ontario. 11th Nov 2005 found at <http://tinyurl.com/4xjsdrf>

‘Such affirmations and visual narratives can be understood in a conversation between myself and Marie Huxtable. Marie is a psychologist working on educational projects in the Bath and North East Somerset local authority, the equivalent of your School Board. The affirmations of inclusionality felt and understood by Marie Huxtable and me are focused on our responses to the expressions in the eyes, face, body and hands of the pupil below as she shows what she has been working on, to the photographer Belle Wallace. Belle Wallace is currently President of the National Association for Able Children in Education (in the UK) and you can access her biography at <http://tinyurl.com/3b3cvjp> We both felt a flow of life-affirming energy in our responses to the image and with each other. We recognised this flow of energy between us and affirm that it carries our hope for the future of humanity and our own. For us, the way the pupil shows

Belle what she had produced carries two affirmations. There is the affirmation from the pupil that what has been produced is a source of pleasure and satisfaction. There is the affirmation from Belle and ourselves that we are seeking to enable ourselves and others to feel this quality of pleasure and satisfaction in what we and others are producing. I am associating such affirmations with what I mean by living a productive life in education.’

Together Belle, Jack and I have at times comprised a ‘we’ of an i~we educational relationship. While the living-boundary is a metaphor, the ~ space is not an abstraction. Its meaning is created and living between us as our relationship has developed. I am intending to communicate a sense of my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility clarified as they emerge in the living-boundary, the ~ space, in an i~we relationship which is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian.

In previous chapters, I offered examples of how I have used multimedia narrative to research values in living-boundaries between ‘worlds’ rather than between individuals. For instance, in Chapter 4 (pages), where I outlined the evolution of my living-theory praxis I introduced you to Sally Cartwright and a group of her students and evidence of the educational influence in their learning of engaging with an educational research community. From them, I became clearer about the distinction between a research community and an educational research community, and the living-boundary between them. The AS Extended Project provided a living-boundary between the world of school dominated by the demands of a given, prescribed, curriculum delivered by means of a prescribed pedagogy, and the world of ‘life’ where the young people have some freedom to pursue their own ‘curriculum’ and find and research their interests.

The Masters modules, accredited first through the University of Bath and lately through Liverpool Hope University, offer examples of educators researching their values to improve their practice in the living-boundary between the world of the practitioner and the world of the Academy. Chris Jones successfully presented her Masters dissertation for accreditation through Bath Spa University, ‘How do I Improve My Practice as an Inclusion Officer Working In a Children’s Service?’ (Jones, 2009). She demonstrates that multimedia narratives created by a living-theory researcher researching their values in the living-boundary between worlds of the Academy and practice, is a legitimate form of research.

6.3 Multimedia narratives contributing to generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability

The purpose of educational evaluation and accountability is to contribute to improving, in terms of values, what is done in the present and future: it is not to simply justify the past. In evaluating and accounting for my practice, I can do so in a way that gives rise to new, hope-filled possibilities and in that sense can be generative. I can also evaluate and account for my practice

in a manner that enables me to evolve, not simply replicate my practice in a different form, and in that sense can be transformational. In this section I clarify what I mean, and how multimedia narratives may contribute to generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability.

6.3.1 Evaluating what I do

My values, clarified in the course of their emergence in my living-theory research, form not only my explanatory principles but also my living standards of judgment. In talking about 'educational evaluation', I am concerned with the exploration of data that allows me to see the progress I am making in developing my values-based practice and most importantly, informs action to improve it. The manner of representing data influences and is influenced by what I look for, what I collect and how, and what generative and transformational sense I make of it.

The purpose of many forms of data is to provide evidence to vindicate or justify what has happened. However as Eisner (1985) points out:

'If we want to understand why we get what we get from our schools, we need to pay attention not simply to the score, but to the ways in which the game is played.' (p. 5-6)

I believe the purpose of educational evaluation is to understand how we might go beyond the game, and develop generative and transformational values-based practice that goes beyond the limitations of our previous imagined possibilities. Biesta (2007) expresses something similar when he addresses some of the limitations of evidence-based practice:

'The most important question for educational professionals is therefore not about the effectiveness of their actions but about the potential educational value of what they do, that is, about the educational desirability of the opportunities for learning that follow from their actions (and what should be prevented at all costs is the situation in which there is a performative contradiction between what they preach and what they practice). This is why the "what works" agenda of evidence-based practice is at least insufficient and probably misplaced in the case of education, because judgment in education is not simply about what is possible (a factual judgment) but about what is educationally desirable (a value judgment).' (p. 12)

Forms of evidence are therefore needed that represent the energy-flowing life-affirming and life-enhancing values that enable us to see if we are practicing what we preach, and clarify, understand and communicate what is educationally desirable about what we are trying to bring more into being. Eisner (1985) recognised the need before the means became available:

'For educational evaluation this means that the form of the qualities we use: the particular words we select, the sentences we construct, the cadence, tempo, tone, and tenor of our language is a primary

means for conveying what our (hopefully) refined sensibilities have revealed to us. We have the task – ubiquitous in human experience – of creating an equivalent in the public world for the ideas and feelings we have construed in the private world.’ (p. 9)

What we do in the ‘private world’ is to extend others and ourselves a loving recognition and open a channel for connectedness trusting that each will respect the space and not violate it. In that living-boundary, understandings of each other and our selves evolve. For instance, we can use holiday snaps and videos as a device, a portal, to invite others to share in our experiences of well-being and well-becoming in a way that the postcard can not. The equivalent in the ‘public world’ of the educator and academic are multimedia narratives that include explanations of our educational influences in learning.

Local and national government policies and practices are part of the context, the possibilities and constraints. They set explicit success criteria, which must be responded to, but should not be confused with the living standards by which I judge educational practice. I also appreciate that they may have a considerable influence in the formation of my values, the principles that give meaning and purpose to my life, and influence how I interrelate with individuals, collectives and my world. However, my contention is that such influences do not form the explanatory principles of my educational practice or the values-based standards of judgement that I am seeking to improve but rather set the context and a challenge to develop successful forms of communication.

Educational narratives offer evidence of changes created and experienced by the individual or group in relation to their values. Processes and approaches to evaluating work to improve education therefore have to do with values as evaluative criteria and recognising and appreciating the creation and contribution of valued knowledge and the unique educational contribution of people to the learning of themselves, others and the organisations and social formations in which they live and work. I have come to the same conclusion as Eisner (1985):

‘Evaluation deals with appraising the value of some object, enterprise, or activity. Evaluation is ineluctably value-orientated. Without a conception of virtue, one cannot evaluate anything. One can measure, one can test, one cannot evaluate.’ (p. 5)

Test scores and other quantitative data, in my mind, may make a useful contribution to monitoring but do not enable me to evaluate my work. The evaluative data that I collect, must reflect the change connected with the values I espouse, communicate the improving quality of the dynamic educational relationships, recognise the uniqueness as well as the collective learning which is life-enhancing and contributes to further improvement.

I live in a culture of ‘action’ and ‘number’, where it is most important to be seen to be doing something, even if it is counter-productive, and the more the better. This is not to say that action is not important, but busy action

seems to be more valued than thinking as action. I now generally try to resist the desire to justify my existence by dashing from place to place. However, I feel somewhat defensive because I do not appear busy or successful by many 'performance indicators' even though I work harder and, I believe, more productively than ever. Having said that, I think the question I would pose is - how do I show those to whom I account, and myself, that I am more productive in a manner that informs my practice? What is it that leads me to pose the question in that way and how is 'productive' to be understood?

As I read what I have written here I am struck by the contrast between the questions that interest me and those posited by traditional forms of evaluation and the literature on the influence of goal-orientation on outcomes. For instance, Bell and Kozlowski (2002) write:

'Goal orientation is a construct originating in the educational literature that suggests individuals hold either a learning or performance orientation toward tasks (e.g., Dweck, 1986, 1989). A learning orientation is characterised by a desire to increase one's competence by developing new skills and mastering new situations. In contrast, performance orientation reflects a desire to demonstrate one's competence to others and to be positively evaluated by others.' (p. 4)

They conclude:

'A considerable amount of research in recent years has demonstrated the importance of goal orientation in training and employment contexts. This research has typically found that learning orientation leads to positive outcomes and performance orientation leads to either equivocal or negative outcomes.' (p. 19)

This work particularly attracted my attention because of the connections with the insights originating with Dweck (2000) that I draw on in other spheres of my work. There should be a consistency in the values expressed and the theories that influence my practice, no matter what the sphere.

The form of these questions, and the orientation of those seeking to develop an educational form of evaluation of their work, are somewhat different from those exemplified in the paper by Muijs and Lindsay (2007) where they consider methods of evaluating professional development. I have quoted at length from this paper as it brings together in two paragraphs many of the problems of traditional approaches to evaluating educational processes and practices:

'Guskey (2002) suggests that when designing evaluations one works backwards, starting with level 5, both in planning the CPD activity and the evaluation thereof. This ensures that the final goal of improving student outcomes is central to the process. While Guskey suggests five levels of evaluation, we would add a further level, focusing on the issue of cost-effectiveness of CPD. As Belfield *et al.*

(2001) rightly point out in the context of medical practice, CPD should not be undertaken if the costs to the system outweigh the benefits. Also, if other ways of raising the performance of teachers and students are more cost-effective, doubts would have to be raised over the validity of conducting CPD. It would be also useful to know the cost-effectiveness of different modes of CPD, on which we currently possess little information.

This model is therefore predicated on the view that the goal of education and schools is the cognitive, social and emotional development of students, and that therefore professional development ongoing in schools should ultimately result in some benefits to them if it is worth pursuing. As a result, while important in itself participant satisfaction is rated at the lowest level while student outcomes are rated higher. This is, of course, a strong and contestable value judgment, and it is clear that this model is not compatible with forms of CPD that have resulted from different value positions. It should be noted that this approach does not address specific content of CPD or the technical quality of the evaluation procedures. These are important considerations but may apply to all levels.’ (pp. 199-200)

The understanding of learning is limited to skills and knowledge acquisition through discrete activity and application in the short term. An indication of this is given in the disembodied phrase ‘student outcomes’. The development of the educator is mechanistic and impersonal as is the development of the students. The process with which Muijs and Lindsay appear to be concerned with might be better described as instructional rather than educational, as there is no recognition or consideration of the centrality of intra- or inter-personal multi-dimensional dynamic educational relationships and values as evaluative criteria. Their statistical analysis is extensive but the sense of person and the complexity of the contexts are lost in the categories. Bell (1998) put this well in his paper:

‘We often do not take ourselves seriously; often we do not reflect adequately upon our social context (the baggage we bring in and bring in and the contrast which we perceive) and we have problems in recognising the complexity of the environmental context...

Reality is complex and no single view will be adequate to explain the nature of the complexity within and around us.

In quoting Donald Schön, Chambers (1997 p.190) says,

“In the varied topography of professional practice, there is a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. On the high ground, manageable problems lend themselves to solution through the application of research-based theory and technique. In the swampy lowland, messy, confusing problems defy technical solution. The irony of this situation is that the problems of the high ground tend to be relatively unimportant to

individuals or society at large, however great technical interest may be, while in the swamp lie the problems of greatest human concern. The practitioner must choose. Shall he [*sic*] remain on the high ground where he can solve relatively unimportant problems according to prevailing standards of rigour, or shall he descend to the swamp of important problems and non-rigorous enquiry?"

The evolving paradigm turns this on its head, as Schön perhaps would wish. His high ground describes the conditions of normal professionalism, but a new professionalism is taking over. The imagery is upended: the swamp becomes the new high ground.

In the new paradigm of understanding, the “swamp” or mess becomes the primary ground of understanding and learning. The challenges for the researcher grow; the sense of vulnerability and anxiety (as well as excitement) grows. Non-self-reflective practitioners have for many years focused on the manageable and the limited type of problem on which their discipline focuses...’ (pp. 181-182)

White (2007) also raises the conundrum that faces all educators: how do we know whether what we are doing is what we should be doing, and, how do we know if we are doing it well? Do not we strive to enable all the children in our care to grow to be successful, fulfilled adults? And White identifies this as the challenge: what is it to be a successful, fulfilled adult? This has been one of the questions that have occupied me for a long time.

The purpose of educational evaluation is to contribute to improving, in terms of values, what is done in the present and future: it is not to simply justify the past. Being held to account, often means to feel the pangs of guilt, as looking back I will always have wished I had done things differently. That is because I now have the benefit of hindsight; that most exact of sciences. To say that I can live today with tomorrow’s knowledge is obviously absurd, but that is precisely what many approaches to evaluation imply.

By asking why I should want to evaluate and account for what I do, I have to go beyond the glib response: ‘that is what I am told I have to do’. The question takes me back to re-clarifying and understanding the purpose of my research in the context of the knowledge created through that research. The purpose of my research is both to improve my educational practice and generate educational knowledge. Creating multimedia narratives as generative and transformational forms of educational evaluation and accountability holds the possibility for me to come to a deeper understanding of the meaning of what it is for me to improve my living-theory praxis.

It is the point of reflecting on, rather than in action, that provides a further opportunity for me to learn from what I have been doing. In making my account public, I have to be mindful of my audience and this requires that I

look at my work through a different lens. This is not comfortable. I feel exposed and concerned not to be misunderstood, and this forces clarity where I have previously skimmed over issues. The validity of what I am expressing is checked with others, and in those conversations, opens up the possibility of the creation of new knowledge for me and for them.

Evaluation then takes on a different purpose other than to justify, to protect, to form a shield to withstand criticism. It is to communicate with a view to improving what is happening, with values foregrounded as the evaluative criteria. So, the educational narratives I offer here as evidence of my educational influence have my values as explanatory principles, and as living standards of judgement, clarified as they emerge in living-boundaries.

Evaluation that shows progress in terms of values as living standards of judgment has an educational influence in my own learning, and that of other practitioners and policy makers, by contributing to the educational knowledge base. The evaluative evidence I seek is that which will help me understand how I have contributed to a person emancipating themselves in their own learning and lives, and the systemic contribution of that learning, and offers me insights into how I may advance further.

I am clear that in developing an educational evaluative approach I seek evidence of educational influence, not of a causal relationship between what I do and someone else's actions. I do not want to replace one set of impositional power structures with another, not even my own. I want people to take responsibility for their own actions, and their own educational influence in their own learning, which is what I see as emancipating and liberating.

Nothing stays the same, no more than the same place can ever be visited twice, but somehow the prevailing power reproduces and persists, and the oppressed becomes the oppressor. Charles's (2007) shows how it is possible for individuals to break free of such a cycle to emancipate and liberate themselves. In researching his question, '... how I can improve my practice as someone seeking to make a transformational contribution to the position of people of African origin', as management consultant, educator and father, he explains how he works free of replicating and inflicting on others, what he has suffered as a result of the racial prejudice of others. Through his living-theory research he brings Ubuntu, guiltless recognition and societal re-identification as living standards of judgment into the Academy.

There may be moments of epiphany, but for the most part, educational influences that contribute to transformational change takes time, effort and a creative, uncertain journey along a foggy, often indistinct and multidimensional path. I have been clear for a long time that the forms of evaluation I have been expected to use on occasions might help 'prove' what I have done, but they do not help me *improve* what I am doing. Biesta (2007) talks of something similar when he writes:

'Research can only tell us what has worked in a particular situation, not what will work in any future situation. The role of the

educational professional in this process is not to translate general rules into particular lines of action. It is rather to use research findings to make one's problem solving more intelligent. This not only involves deliberation and judgment about the means and techniques of education; it involves at the very same time deliberation and judgment about the ends of education — and this in a strict and conjugate relation with deliberation and judgment about the means.' (pp. 20,22)

I rather like some of the ideas Johnson (2006) expresses in his book 'The Present' where he talks of being fully in the present, learning from the past and helping to create the future, which are tied together through realizing your purpose in life, what it is that makes your work and life meaningful. He describes what I think I am coming to understand describes living a successful life:

'Being more successful means becoming more of who you are capable of being. Each of us defines for ourselves what it means to be more successful.' (p. 78)

If I am successful here, then I will offer something that is open to evolving and creative influences, and does not simply revolve and recreate the 'old order'. Through this thesis I want to find a way of communicating to, and with, others and myself, in a way that is open handed: a gift offered rather than given, which might be responded to in the same open-handed manner as an invitation to engage which may be accepted rather than taken. A closed hand of give-and-take too readily becomes a fist. I therefore offer as a gift these living educational narratives, holding together description, explanation and appreciation of progress, as evaluative, generative and transformational evidence of my influence. I wrote in the BERA 2008 paper (Huxtable, 2008b):

'I see a 'gift' as one offered freely, not in order to gain furtherance in some form of the person offering the gift but in the hope of making a contribution to the well-being or well-becoming of others. That is not to say there is not a sense of self affirmation in the creation and offering of something they value, or that a gift accepted and which proves to be valuable, as well as valued, is not affirming or may even bring with it personal gain, but rather that is not the prime intention. The idea of catalytic validity is useful in extending my thinking about gifts in general and educational gifts in particular.

'Catalytic validity represents the degree to which the research process re-orient, focuses and energizes participants toward knowing reality in order to transform it, a process Freire terms conscientization. ... The argument for catalytic validity lies not only within recognition of the reality-altering impact of the research process, but also in the desire to consciously channel this impact so that respondents gain self-understanding and, ultimately, self-determination through research participation.' (Lather, 1991, p. 68)

In this spirit, I wish to create and offer multimedia narratives as a generative and transformational form of educational evaluation and accountability of what I do as educational gifts to others and myself.

Berger (1972) in his book, 'Ways of Seeing', describes the complexity of sharing with you what I 'see':

'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe...

Yet this seeing which comes before words, and can never be quite covered by them, is not a question of mechanically reacting to stimuli. (It can only be thought of in this way if one isolates the small part of the process which concerns the eye's retina.) We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act, what we see is brought within our reach – though not necessarily within arm's reach. To touch something is to situate oneself in relation to it. (Close your eyes, move round the room and notice how the faculty of touch is like a static, limited form of sight.) We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves. Our vision is continually active, continually moving, continually holding things in a circle around itself, constituting what is present to us as we are.' (pp.8-7).

If I am to offer authentic educational evaluative evidence, it is important that I be aware of the underlying tensions I experience, and be alert to unhelpful and subliminal strategies I develop. One, for instance, is my resistance to making visible the 'stories of ruin' (MacLure, 1996) from which I could learn. At the same time I acknowledge the real threat that can arise from making such evidence public where it runs contra to the dominant theory and practices espoused by those in powerful positions.

So, while I seek to develop educational evaluation, I am aware it would be most imprudent and naïve to believe that all evidence can be made public in all forums. I am not the first to recognise this. The phrase 'lies, damn lies and statistics', is well known. What is evidenced with statistical data relates to the intention of those using it. An illustration of this is the school that received a congratulatory letter from the government department concerned with schools, as one of the most improved schools in the country and in the same year received another telling them they were a 'challenge school'. A 'challenge' school was a school that was below the standard the department set as acceptable. The data had not changed, just the intention of those using it.

My forays into evidencing my influence are fraught with anxieties. I want to know that I have had an influence, but am fearful that what I might find is evidence that I have wasted time, resources and energy or even worse, that what I have done has had a negating effect. I can have all the notions in the world about how things should be done, but if what I do makes no difference to improving the quality of the educational experience of children and young people, then I have not done what I intended. One tension arises

from wanting and needing honest evidence of the influence I have and being prepared to face myself living a contradiction and in effect negating my values. Can I, as Belle Wallace has put it, face myself without fear or veneer?

Another source of tension arises from dealing with the response of others. In making a claim to have had an influence, some people interpret this as smugness, self-congratulating, and self-serving. The problem is not one of facing honest criticism, but in dealing with the disquiet arising from that element of self-doubt that such comments cause to surface.

There is an ironic humour here, as I find that authentic and educational forms of evaluation and research require me to make something of myself public, which is something I am uncomfortable with at the best of times. Bell (1998) discusses three contexts of vulnerability, the personal, the social and the environmental. He sums up some of the issues of living with, rather than avoiding, these emotional challenges of reflective self study research methodologies as follows:

Problems and Prizes of Vulnerability Bell (1998, p. 190)

Problem of non-self-reflective vulnerability	Prize of self-reflection with vulnerability
Unrealistic quality standards	Realistic expectation
Paranoia	Tolerance
Doubt	Humility
Self-preservation	Self-giving
Incessant self-expression	Listening
Undue self-assertion	Self-containment
Out of my depth	But I can learn
Out of my context	But I can experience
Keep it out!	But I am already part of “it” and “it” is part of me

It is interesting that social scientists spend much time trying to remove the influence of the ‘personal person’ as the source of unique variance from their study, yet in educational research this influence is pivotal. What distinguishes education from schooling, and educational research from education research, is the concern with understanding improving practice in the context of the unique, ontological values related influence that individuals have in their own learning and in the learning of others, and the contribution the ‘personal person’ makes to their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others. In the educational evaluation of my educational practice, I am relating narratives that contain evidence of the systemic influence of my practice.

6.3.2 Accounting for what I do

I refocus here on the distinction between evaluation and accountability. I have addressed what I think is useful to me in terms of evaluation – an

educational form of values-based evaluation, which contributes to improving the journey rather than justifying where I have been. So what is different with accountability?

I touched on the issue of accountability previously in this thesis (page 23) when I wrote:

‘I understand as a professional educator I account to others, to the ethical standards of my professional body and the requirements of my employer, and I hold myself to account, to my own values. I believe as a professional educator I am responsible for my practice, and it beholds to me to seek ways to understand to improve my educational theory and practice.’

Here I intend to clarify further approaches to developing forms of accountability, which I have developed in the course of researching my practice to improve it. The Cambridge on-line dictionary offers an example of the everyday usage of the term ‘accountable’, namely:

‘Someone who is accountable is completely responsible for what they do and must be able to give a satisfactory reason for it.’

There are two clear distinctions made here that are not overtly addressed by evaluation – accepting responsibility for my actions, and giving satisfactory reasons, a valid explanation, for what I do. Perhaps there is one further point that distinguishes between evaluation and accountability: namely, to hold myself accountable I must be able to make valid, evidence-based judgements about whether I am doing what I say I am doing. The forms of evaluation I have considered enable me to hold myself accountable as I accept responsibility for what I do, and create values-based explanations for why I do what I do, and recognise that I have an emotional investment in telling ‘smooth stories of self’ (MacLure, 1996, p. 283).

I can talk with increasing excitement about my work to anyone who is rash enough to appear interested. At times people have even told me they understand what I am trying to communicate: I am not sure who is more surprised on those occasions – them or me. Each time I talk *with*, rather than *to*, someone, I feel that my thinking has taken a step forward, and the need to improve how I communicate is more evident.

To communicate beyond an individual encounter requires I produce a narrative, which lasts beyond the ephemeral moment – and that is where I have been so stuck. Having failed, I redouble my efforts. A rather dumb thing to do, since it was not effort that was lacking in the first place

I enjoy talking with people, not *to* them but *with* them, where I have a sense of a co-creative communion. This is how I can understand being in an inclusive collaborative, creative, educational relationship. I can feel myself and the other person/s come alive as we mutually enjoy a productive intellectual ‘dance’ about something that matters to us. You can see evidence of this in the video of Chris Jones and I working together, which

we presented in a paper at the BERA 2006 conference (Jones and Huxtable, 2006) and in this extract from Chris's commentary on the video <http://youtu.be/RIbR0X67DtY>:



Figure 20 Extract from BERA 2006 paper

‘Can anyone see what I see? Does anyone feel as I feel? As I watch the flow of interaction between one and the other, I am reminded of Rayner’s Paper Dance of Inclusivity (<http://www.jackwhitehead.com/rayner1sor.mov>) and O’Donohue’s ‘web of betweenness’ (2003). I am looking at inclusivity in action of which I am a part and I am seeing the flow of life-affirming energy between Marie, the group and me, and as I watch, I am feeling the joy of what for me gives life meaning – the flow of interaction between one and the other and the pleasure of that co-dynamic relationship. I am reminded of these feelings of joy when I was a teacher interacting with the class: I am learning from them; they are learning from me; we are all learning together in a co-creational relationship which could not happen without one or the other within that moment in time.’

As you run the cursor back and forth watching the flow of energy in the living-boundary between us, and read Chris’s words, do you feel any connection with why you do what you do as an educator? Within that feeling for me lie the standards by which I judge my work. It is that which drives my planning, and it is that, which for me is lost, and at times denied, by the approaches to evaluating, planning and accounting for my practice which I am often expected to use.

Through coordinating and developing APEX I want to hold myself accountable for contributing to my employer’s vision, which I repeat here:

‘We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this’ (Bath and North East Somerset Children and Young People’s Plan 2005)

I have become increasingly aware that ‘measures of impact’ of activity do not enable me to hold myself to account, and at times such immobile procedures can distract from what is important. What then can convince me that I am doing what I believe is worthwhile?

I am required, by those I report to, to provide statistics, and numerically driven forms of data, but I am not convinced by those figures that I have done anything useful. There are huge databases set up to tell the government how many children have this grade or that, how many are on this register or that, but even if all the children in the Authority attended school 100 per cent of the time and had above the national average SATs, GCSEs, and A Levels I would not be convinced that I had contributed to a world of educational quality: even if I could do the impossible and demonstrate a direct causal link between anything I did and those figures.

Local and national government policies and strategies are part of the context, the possibilities and constraints of my practice. These policies set explicit success criteria, such as ‘standards’ described by high-stakes tests, which must be responded to. However, they should not be confused with, the living, values-based standards that distinguish education and educational research and associated forms of evaluation and accountability. Michelle Paule expressed something of my feeling when she said in her keynote at the NACE 2007 annual conference that the exams are:

‘...a test not of what they can do but what is to be done with them.’

The evidence I seek of whether I am making a worthwhile contribution is intimately interrelated with understanding what I am trying to do and why. As a psychologist, I know that assessment and intervention exist in a dynamic relationship; the one informs the understanding of the other. We usually talk of assessment and intervention, learning and teaching, without reference to the intention, the values, the bigger question of ‘why are we doing this?’. For the most part there is a unidirectional short-sighted focus on behavioural objectives which resolves itself into a ‘plan, do, review’ approach often expressed in neat diagrams where activity is entered into discrete boxes (see Figure 21 below)

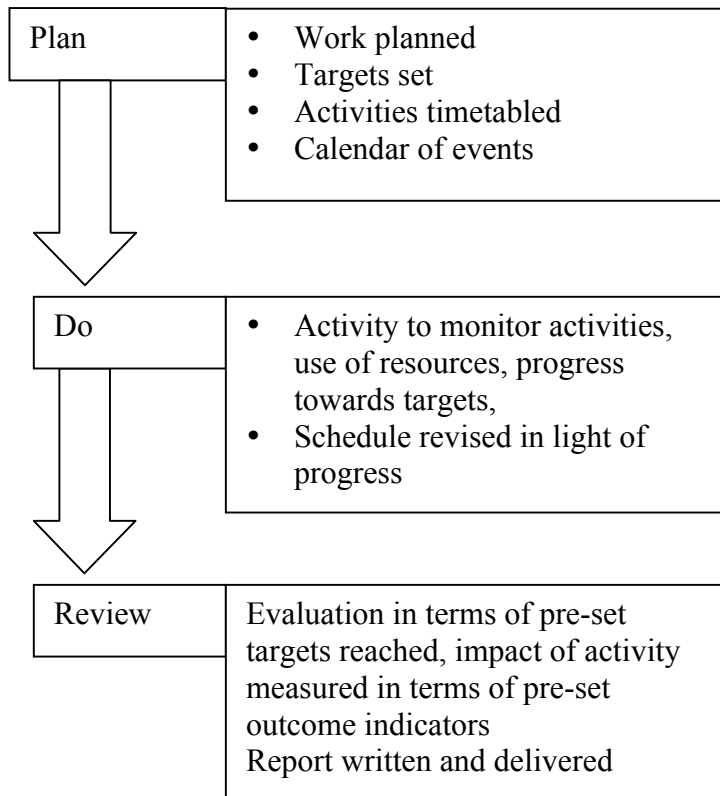


Figure 21 A generally-expected form of plan, do, review formats

There are variations on this theme but they share these basic features. There are no feedback loops that allow receptiveness to the information collected through practice with evolutionary responses. Details might change, for instance the timeline or the use of resources, but the targets, once set by the Local Authority/Government, take on an importance all of their own. It is rare that abandoning targets or altering them in the light of practice is possible. Should targets not be met, this is seen those who set them as a failure of the plan or its implementation, rather than as a positive, creative, development, arising from practice. Targets are treated as reified destinations and are not used as sighting posts offering a direction towards a distant horizon. Time and energy are devoted to ‘getting somewhere’, rather than in attending with continued curiosity and creativity to the point of travelling, the nature of the journey, the pleasure of exploring the ‘here and now’, or in creative conversations with fellow travellers.

I have found that too often targets are achieved, but have lost any connection with real life. Where in the plans, targets or statistics is there any communication of what it is for a child to get to know the person they want to be? Where is the value placed on improving the educational quality of the space for a child to reflect on the knowledge they are creating of themselves and the world they want to live in? Where is the importance recognised of the opportunity for a child to create, value and offer their gifts, appreciate their talents as they develop them and receptively respond to those of others? Where is the valuing and the possibility for me to offer the knowledge I am creating through theorising my practice?

Perhaps the disconnection between reality and what is demanded on paper arises because the purpose of many forms of accountability is not so much to enable a person to be held accountable to living their values, but rather to say whether they completed a specified task. The form of representation reflects this. A recurrent theme in my work-plans over the years has been:

‘Developing evaluation, monitoring and accreditation procedures and approaches which overtly value the learning and learners indicated in the policy statements.’

I have been acutely aware of how inadequate the forms of representation are to enable me to communicate the educational qualities that I am seeking to hold myself accountable to, and how disconnected they feel from what happens in practice. The way things are happening comes from methods rooted in fixed logics and epistemologies, where a hypothesis is offered in terms of an answer, and the test is whether the answer is ‘proven’ at the end of a given time period to be right or not. From that answer, gross generalisations are often made as to how and what populations should learn, how they should learn and how they should be taught. There is no room for creative responses: any learning or theorising is incidental, and communicating what is being learnt by an individual or a group is discouraged as dissent. Pace, challenge and stretch targets are part of the accepted language. Correlations are taken as causal relationships and ‘normal’ is a statistically-driven label disconnected from an individual’s reality or needs. There is no place for a living form of research or accountability with a warm, nurturing, creative space for querying the ‘rightness’ of the question, or for evolving diverse answers that respond to the diversity which describes human beings.

On the other hand, I can and do relate videos, pictures, or moments in videos, such as the example given here, to the educational values, which I began to clarify in Chapter 3. I introduced a video in Chapter 4 (page 139) to show the educational influence researching my practice to improve it has had. I bring it into the thesis here both to strengthen the connection with the narrative thread and to emphasise the relationally dynamic and multidimensional nature of Living-Theory research. I also present it as evidence as I hold myself accountable to living the educational values that form not only the explanatory principles but also the living standards of judgment of my practice.



Video 11 Pleasure and confidence in affirmation of knowledge creators

<http://tinyurl.com/44of77d>

You may remember this is a video of a group of AS Extended Project students who worked with Sally Cartwright, a member of the Masters group I supported. They are talking to a group of 14-19 strategy managers about their experience of working in a research group. A fuller account is given in an article in the Educational Journal of Living Theories (Huxtable, 2009a). I invite you again to watch this 5 minute extract of the 40 minute video, and ask whether you see as I do the pleasure and confidence flowing in the affirmation of valued knowledge created by self and other and in the camaraderie of creative learners in productive conversations. I see focussed attention and effort to creating knowledge and understanding, and pleasure and enthusiasm. I see the young people extending themselves and others a loving recognition, opening channels of respectful connectedness and expressing an educational responsibility for themselves and towards others. In making their knowledge public in such a forum they are contributing to the learning of the social formation that influences beyond their own school. By allowing the video of their presentation to be made public on YouTube, they offer an educational gift to others beyond their immediate locality. They also offer it as a gift to me as they enable me to account for my practice as I accept responsibility and give a values-based explanation for what I do.

As the form of evidence influences the activity that is valued and engaged in, I have to find a form of evidence that communicates what I value. The manner of planning is influenced by its framing, and so I must find a dynamic form which is intentionally receptive, and communicates a flowing responsiveness to information that arises from action. When I look at the most recent work of Whitehead creating multimedia narratives (Whitehead, 2011a) I can see such a form, which communicates and informs practice and provides evaluative evidence, which is valid and rigorous. In the accounts, which Whitehead creates as he accounts for himself and his work, I see a

living, dynamic work-plan where the processes and evidence of monitoring, evaluation and accountability contribute to the plan because they are part of, not apart from, it. The creation of these accounts is in the public space, which invites engagement, and as they accumulate, each becomes part of the terrain for the next. As the accounts are presented on the web, there is also the possibility of making connections using hyperlinks and integrating video clips too.

In a reflective conversation about my work, I ask myself ‘how well am I doing?’ I also ask ‘what would convince me, or enable me to believe that I am doing anything useful?’ As I watch these videos and those of the Masters group, the Improving Practice Conversation Café, as I visit the Saturday workshops... I begin to feel that I am contributing to a world of educational quality. What gives me that feeling? People tell me that they would not be doing what they are doing if I had not done what I have done; I am still puzzled about what that is. I can feel the connection with all those who contribute, not to *my* work, but to the success of APEX. I therefore want to recognise and broadcast the work of those, like Joy Mounter, who give living meaning to what I value. Her accounts can be accessed from <http://www.actionresearch.net/writings/mastermod.shtml>. This is her work, not mine, yet I feel I can recognise something that I did that may have contributed to her thinking and work, and ultimately to that of the children. So, in her account, I find evidence I can draw on to evaluate and be accountable for my own.

Are numbers important? Of course, a thousand whispers might be heard where one can be lost on the wind. However, the mistake that must never be made is to think that quantity can stand in place of quality – the quality of the unique gift created and offered by each human being as a contribution to the flourishing of humanity.

I find that the imposition of standards, related to predefined learning outcomes, and forms of representation, which are reduced to text and statistics, dulls creativity and limits educational possibilities. This assertion is based on my own observations. The work of psychologists such as Deci and Dweck give insights into why this may be the case.

Deci (1996) draws on 25 years of work with his colleague Ryan on intrinsic and extrinsic drives, and the integrated and authentic self. He concludes, ‘... *self-motivation, rather than external motivation, is at the heart of creativity, responsibility, health behaviour, and lasting change.*’ (p.9). He offers a reframing of a common question posed in schools, ‘how can teachers motivate their pupils?’ to an educationally influential one when he says that the ‘proper question’ is, ‘*how can people create the conditions within which others will motivate themselves?*’ (p.10)

Dweck’s work on self-theories also points to the impact of an over concern with performance goals. She postulates two different theories that people hold to account for intelligence: an entity theory that is associated with a fixed mindset and performance goals, and an incremental theory that is associated with a growth mindset and a focus on learning goals. Put simply,

a person can hold a self-theory of ‘I am smart’ (entity self-theory) or ‘I can learn to be smart (incremental self-theory). A person’s self-theory has implications for how they approach learning opportunities, respond to impositions, and maintain or relinquish aspirations faced with failure and external pressures.

Instruction is important at times, and the transmission of knowledge created by previous generations has a place in education. Traditional standards and forms of representation may be appropriate for monitoring the efficiency and effectiveness of the instructional procedures and strategies used. However, I do not believe that the *sole* purpose of education is to provide cost-effective skills training or efficient transmission of information.

As an educational psychologist, my primary concern now is to develop my practice as a contribution to improving the educational experience of learning. Different forms of evaluating and accounting for my practice are needed. This goes beyond improving an ability to acquire the skills of reading where the evidence of ‘success’ is in terms of a reading score. How do I produce evidence to understand how what I do contributes to that child’s developing an understanding of themselves as: a valued knowledge creator, a contributor to their own ability to learn and to that of others; a communicator able and willing to engage with their own thinking and that of others, or someone able to engage in an educational relationship. I value efforts to improve instructional techniques and strategies for ‘teaching reading’, and in that context believe that quantitative measures can be useful at times. However, this is only part of the story, and as an educational researcher I need to develop criteria and forms of evaluative evidence which reflect my ontological values so as to be able to decide which particular instructional technique are appropriate educationally.

Living research is the process whereby the systematic and organic relationship between questions and responses and the person/s asking them and a rationale, that is, a reasoned and reasonable explanation, are held together. The data I collect has to enable me to reflect on the relationally-dynamic understandings of my praxis. As Hymer (2007) points out, the forms of representation not only contribute to the communication but also shape what is recognised as data and are integral to understanding and generating responses to the evolving questions of living research.

The form of representation of data offers different opportunities to not only provide evidence for claims, but to inform the evolution of those claims. I reflect on emails, reports, papers, memos, notes, workplans, video, photographs and notes of personal reflections. I go beyond Schön (1995) and suggest that an epistemology does not just require new forms of communication; the forms of communication form it. Question, response and forms of communication are held in a dynamic relationship.

In clarifying what is meant by forms of data, I am here clarifying the form of research in which I am engaged— namely, living research – a form that gives explicit recognition to the organic as well as the systematic phases of

enquiry and the inter-relational dynamic of data collection with the ‘task’ and ‘question’.

The second reason I discuss data collection here, is due to my concern with evaluation and accountability – the data that forms evidence is intimately interrelated with these two issues just as much as it is with shaping the question and the research journey. What I wish to do, is to enhance the ability of children and young people to improve their learning so as to understand themselves, their worlds and the contribution they can make. This bears unpicking again.

People are a complicated mixture of contradictions – we like the security of the known and sometimes cling to it with a destructive certainty, yet we are driven by a curiosity that can take us from warmth and comfort to uncertain, and potentially fatal, places. What moves us? I do not know, but I think that this is unique to the person and moment. Perhaps that is why I rail against the notion of ‘potential’, because this suggests that there is a preordained path that someone is to follow, and my job as educator is to find it and put them on it. Defining people, early-identification, targets, underachievement, all of these words add fuel to turn my irritation into anger. Perhaps this can give me a clue to the energy I require to leave security behind and ‘boldly go’. Gagne in a presentation to the World Congress Gifted and Talented Conference 2007 drew a distinction between motivation and volition, which might relate to Vasilyuk’s (1991) notion of energy; you may wish to do something, but it requires energy to do something about it.

Workplans are an influential form of data collection: targets become inflexible destinations rather than serving as vehicles or signposts. A workplan can define reality rather than reflect or shape it. Many people appear to find it easy to describe what they do, filling in workplans by dexterously interweaving targets from a myriad of sources. They are able to communicate what they do in the form of one side of a page of A4 paper covered with neat boxes and bullet points. At times, I am also required to make such presentations. But I find those demands emotionally and intellectually challenging, as the gulf between my living experience of my practice and such representations becomes a vivid and yawning chasm. What is the nature of the chasm between these analytic plans and the lived and living experience of my practice that creates such disquiet?

The communication of practice through traditional workplans or reports presents reality as comprising discrete events with predetermined outcomes. By putting events and outcomes in boxes, they are represented as ‘entities’, having no dynamic interconnection or relationship with other activities, or with the people who are involved. The events and outcomes are impervious to the creative possibilities that the multidimensional flowing complexity of ‘reality’ offers. By traditional workplans and reports, I mean to include the ‘tips for teachers’, the ‘packages’, the traditional social science approaches.

A move towards a more fluid, inclusional way of understanding ‘leadership’ and ‘organisational change’ is being made in the world of commerce through the work of people such as Senge and Scharmer (Senge and

Scharmer, 2000). In addition, the Introduction, as a set of Frequently Asked Questions, to, 'A Little Book of f-LAWS' (Ackoff, Addison and Bibb, 2006) serves as an illustration of these developments in what they say and the way they say it:

'When American management guru, Russell Ackoff, and his co-author, Herbert Addison showed us their f-Laws, we asked British author, Sally Bibb, to respond in the light of current organizational thinking and best practice. Sally's is a voice from another generation, another gender and another continent. On every left-hand page we've printed Ackoff and Addison's f-Law with their commentary. Opposite, you'll find Sally Bibb's reply. In each case, we've retained their spelling, punctuation and 'voice'.

What do you mean by 'the best' organizations?

Sally looks always at how things can be done better. When she talks about 'the best' organizations, she's talking about ones that strive to be: Collaborative ~ Ethical ~ Flexible ~ Innovative ~ Responsible ~ Sustainable ~ Transparent ~ Trustworthy' (p.2)

Where in education, which should be driven by values, is there reference to values when talking about 'the best' practice of school or organisation? I take 'values' to communicate what is important to me, and 'beliefs' to reflect what I believe to be true. It is important that I am clear and consistent in communicating what I mean by 'values' otherwise this thesis cannot be understood, so I periodically reiterate this point.

Traditional approaches are used to create accounts to represent reality, but there is a move that seems to occur when the representation is taken to *be* reality. A tool then becomes the purpose, signposts become the destinations, and monitoring devices become confused with evaluation of what is of real value.

It is interesting to me to reflect on my change of mind. I began my career as an educational psychologist particularly attracted to behavioural approaches to developing interventions for and with teachers, children and parents. Objectives-based approaches to teaching were being developed in various forms during the 1970s and 1980s. I became competent at creating intervention plans with goals, objectives, starting points, steps and forms of progress monitoring, neatly partitioned and represented in boxes and charts. I devised various such formats, which were used by teachers and myself. (Levey and Mallon, 1984; Levey, Tempest and Knapman, 1986; Knapman, Huxtable and Tempest, 1987.)

Such approaches have their uses. For instance, using them has enabled me to help children establish such skills as developing a basic sight vocabulary, organising themselves with equipment in class, and learning to dress themselves, three dissimilar situations. When used by educators with an educational intent, these instructional devices can be beneficial. However, I now realise that the vehicle too often becomes the destination, and while the

child might learn a sight vocabulary they can also learn to loath reading, become instructor-dependent and lose a sense of their own ability to create knowledge of value.

I realised early in my career as a school psychologist that objectives-based approaches to teaching readily slipped into teaching-to-objectives, but I was not aware of just how prevalent this sort of ‘slippage’ is, and the extent of the unintended damage that can result. In relation to work-plans and reports, in one form of report and plan the descriptions and targets are used as ‘servants’ to inform action and to be changed as information accrues. In another, the reports and plans are treated as ‘masters’, forming action, rather than being form in response to action.

So, one of the difficulties in describing my work is the simplistic nature of description encapsulated by boxes and bullet points, and the pressure to attribute causal relationships. To communicate what I do requires a more organic form of representation, which informs my work in an evolving receptively responsive process in the act of communicating it.

The form of presenting National Strategies does not show the dynamic systemic relationships that exist in reality and that are at the heart of evolving the quality of educational practice and provision and living-theory praxis. Occasionally some indication is given that the activity described in one box might influence that in another box, but the relationship is not dynamic. This, for instance, is a common format I have been required to use by the local authority (see Figure 22 below).

PRIORITY:		
ACTIVITY:		
OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY:		
PURPOSE...		
TARGET GROUP(s)		
SUCCESS CRITERIA. (including intermediate steps)		
LINKS WITH OTHER SERVICE PLANS/PRIORITIES		
+		
ACTION TO BE TAKEN	TIMESCALE/ DEADLINE	PERSON RESPONSIBLE

Figure 22 An example form as required by the Local Education Authority

The QCA (Qualifications and Curriculum Agency) in March 2008 made some inroads by offering a more organic representation as illustrated by this curriculum tree. (Figure 23)

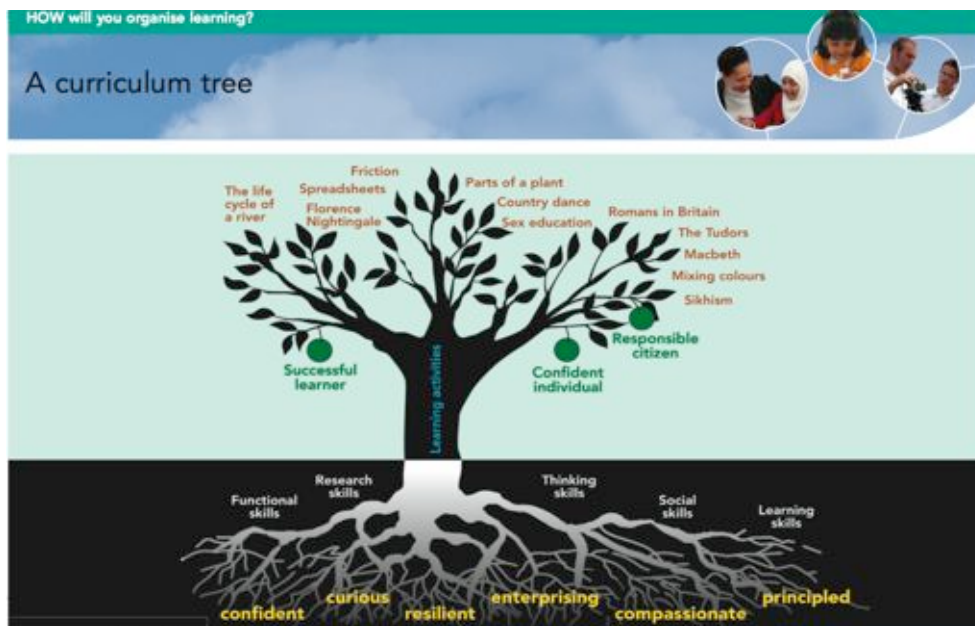


Figure 23 An example of a curriculum tree issued by the QCA, which shows that linear, boxlike forms are not the only possible approach.

However there is no indication of energised systemic and organic relationships, or the flowing multidimensional interconnectedness, within and between contexts, activities or people. Somehow the humanness seems to be missing; the person coming to recognise themselves and what it is that gives purpose and meaning to their lives, the heart and passion of the educator, the educational relationships that are the lifeblood of education, the values that are the bedrock of developing educational practice and relationships. Despite this lone example, I do not see any evidence of QCA's bold innovation being replicated, let alone being built on, and the form of action plans flowing from central and local government continues in the traditional sterile, and sterilising, mode of representation. It may be no coincidence that after QCA morphed into QCDA (the Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency) it was terminated by the government.

As my work on 'high ability' progressed, I increasingly recognised the dynamic inter-relational, multidimensional connections and influences of different activities. I felt a need to keep the practicalities connected to my evolving theoretical framework and conceptual challenges, and I therefore evolved a different format for my workplan. I described this in the paper presented to the BERA 2006 conference (Huxtable, 2006b):

A picture emerged of the areas of focus for my work, which enabled me to keep in mind the 'balance' of what I was doing, the inter-relationships of people and activity, and the 'vision' and possibilities for development. I described in Chapter 4 (page 123) how I used the picture to inform the development of opportunities for children and young people and the leading

programme for teachers, as I work to improve the systemic influence of APEX.



Figure 14 Framework for developing APEX

I have used this form of planning for several years now, and find this representational form to be an improvement over boxes and unidirectional and linear lists. I initially had each activity neatly connected with arrows radiating from the centre, but removed them on the advice of Joy Mounter's Year 2 class: the children pointed out that the activities were interrelated and connected, and using arrows removed those connections. The quality of the conversations with the children has kept me hopeful: if 6-year-olds can manage to understand a multidimensional, interrelational theory of learning, and help me develop a more inclusional work-plan, then surely as adults we

should be capable of going beyond the simplistic and mechanistic approaches that prevail in the national and local education system.

6.4 Postscript

I have been asking you to engage with this thesis as a multimedia narrative and to do so with ‘head, heart and body’. I have explained that I do not think that a simple intellectual engagement with text alone will enable us to create a shared understanding of the energy-flowing values and relationally-dynamic and multidimensional nature of living-theory praxis.

I have shown in this chapter how creating multimedia narratives can also contribute to educational forms of evaluation and accountability, which have generative and transformational possibilities and enhance educational influences in learning. In the process, I have clarified my meanings of and improved my understanding for myself of expressions of my energy-flowing values in living-boundaries. This knowledge becomes embodied and expressed in my practice. I have also shown in this chapter how forms of representation influence my practice, and how making creative use of multimedia can enable me to more coherently clarify, understand and communicate meanings of energy-flowing values in living-boundaries, so as to evolve my living-theory praxis as I evaluate my practice and hold myself accountable.

At the beginning of this chapter, I wrote that some stories comprise fragments of text, images and video that communicate to no one but me. Other stories are more extensive but not published or made public, while others are presented and shared. In the next chapter I will enlarge on how I have used this form of data created in the organic and systematic phases in a relationally-dynamic multidimensional approach to research. This integrates the creation of knowledge of the world, self and self in and of the world. I call this Living-Theory TASC.