

Chapter two

i) What is educational research ?

ii) What is good quality educational research?

*iii) The teacher's voice -an
explanation of why I believe a teacher's voice in educational
research is an important voice.*

There were many times when doing this work that I asked myself this question:

Why would someone like me, a full- time teacher in a comprehensive school, get involved in educational research? After all, it doesn't pay any bills and my life is filled up enough with dirty washing, cooking dinners, ferrying my children around, marking, department policies, attainment targets, OFSTED inspectors, friends, dreams and anxieties.

As you can see from this writing I did get involved and it was because of a need I felt to understand my work as a teacher and to try to improve it.

What being a teacher means to me is difficult to describe. There's a card stuck on my friend's fridge that makes me smile. It says:

" Administrator, social worker, coat finder, arbitrator, government directive reader, curriculum implementor, artistic director, form filler, language specialist, pencil sharpener, accountant... report writer, nose wiper, public relations officer, petty

cash clerk, examiner, surrogate parent, walking encyclopaedia, scapegoat.... But you can just call me a teacher!" (Cartoon by Angela Martin 1990)

I smile at that card because I recognise all those things as part of my work but all of the descriptors don't add up to what it's really like. I also know that to capture in writing the essence of what my teaching is about is difficult.

My research is based on an attempt to understand and improve what I do and communicate that to others. At a time when education is a priority of the three main political parties, my resolve to learn something about the process of education I'm engaged in seems like a good and powerful thing to do.

I research because it enables me to reflect on my practice as a teacher, to understand that practice better and attempt to improve it. Improving my practice improves the quality of the education I can offer to my students and in sharing that work with others I hope to give them insights into their work. Mine isn't a purely selfish endeavour. I am trying to get better at what I do. I'm helping myself and hopefully others to make changes for the better. My educational research is rooted in my everyday work and experiences. It's educational for me, my students and, I hope for those who read it.

I hope I appear confident about my work although it is a confidence married to uncertainty. I'm comforted by Elliot Eisner's advice to educational researchers that "*Working at the edge of incompetence takes courage*" (Eisner 1993) because I like the untidy, unpredictable business of teaching and learning and the attempts I make in my research to understand what I do and improve it. I'm happiest in what Donald Schon calls '*the swamp*' where "*messy, confusing problems defy technical solution.*" (Schon 1983).

But the 1990s is not the easiest time to teach and to research because of the massive changes that are happening in all areas of education. My research into my own practice has taken place in a comprehensive school at a time of immense change in education because of government legislation and of fundamental changes in the organisation and culture of my school because of school management decisions. Living through those changes has been difficult, sometimes impossible and often painful. As I try to understand the nature of my work and the way the changes are affecting it, and as I try to face up to what I don't like in my practice, my experience of being a teacher is often denied by others. Some of those who deny my practice have responsibility for monitoring the work of the teaching profession and can affect the quality of my working life. An example of this are the thoughts of the government chief inspector of schools, Chris Woodhead, who said in an interview "*How does one learn as a human being*

except through pressure and threat?" (Woodhead 1995). I would not have chosen to teach if I had believed that learning was achieved only by pressure and threat. And so I have to find a way of working in a culture of change, while facing up to the criticisms of those who do not share nor accept my values.

I research and write about my experiences as a teacher at a time when the very nature of what counts as educational research and the purpose of such research is being questioned and revised by the research community and others (Bassey 1995).

Teachers, like me, researching their own practice are still sometimes regarded suspiciously by some university academics (Hammersley 1993, 1995; D'Arcy 1994; Newby 1994; Whitehead 1996) and work like mine adds to the confusion about what counts as research and what does not.

My work is being undertaken on shifting ground. As I try to teach, reflect on what I do, attempt to understand, write about my work and present it to both a teacher and academic community nothing seems fixed or certain. My life as a teacher is affected by government legislation and the management of my school; my research is affected by the changing values of the academic community.

Gillian Rose wrote “ *To be exactly as we are, and to know it and to accept it; and yet always to push at the potential of what that might entail. What could be more reasonable? And yet, what could be more passionate?* “ (Rose 1995.)

I try to know my work as a teacher and I want to push at its potential. It is a reasonable yet passionate commitment to improve the quality of the work I do.

Part of this research is my attempt to represent the nature of my educative relationships in school in a way that present forms of educational research does not do.

I hope that in my form of representation I show how a reflective practitioner can use dialogue in talking and writing to understand her values and practice.

I want to try to do three things before writing about my researched work as a teacher :
consider the contemporary debate about the nature of educational research; relate some of the standards of judgment I use for educational research and explain how I've gone about it all.

I. What is Educational Research?

I pose this question because the answer is central to the work of educational researchers but there doesn't appear to be an answer; just disagreement and confusion.

The terms educational research and research in/ on education often seem to be used as

if they are interchangeable but I think they are fundamentally different. Their essential difference is the intention of the researcher towards the work and the reader.

'*The Guardian*' in April 1995 ran an article on educational research, research in/ on education by Stephen Pimenoff that examined the increasingly popular view that traditional research in education is frequently seen as irrelevant by teachers and ignored by policy makers. Academics bemoaned the way that research was not being used by those with the power and funding to effect change nor by teachers it was meant to influence. Roger Murphy of Nottingham University was quoted as saying:

"research is rather constrained and unimaginative right now. It has become more narrowly prescriptive, moving to tightly defined areas consistent with the political agenda"

David Hargreaves of Cambridge University was the least optimistic about teachers and research saying "*most teachers have no use for educational research...*" and Chris Day of Nottingham University added "*historically, teachers have been paid to teach, academics to research... and a gulf formed between them. Teachers are interested in research, but don't have time to read it...*"

As the writer of the article points out research reports are often “ *impenetrably written, long winded, pedantic, and full of jargon and statistics*” which doesn’t help policy makers or teachers.

In 1995 it appears that the government is only interested in research consistent with its educational policies. Researchers in education seem to want an audience of teachers and from what the researchers say in this article , teachers aren’t that interested .

Communicating with teachers, therefore, seems to be one of the biggest challenges for researchers. Pam Lomax of Kingston University in the same article, is clear that “ *much conventional research fails to address the concerns of teachers. It throws no light on professional dilemmas, does not help teacher development, and lacks authenticity. Often it has been directed at problems formulated by outsiders. the resulting report often misrepresents what teachers do*”

This kind of debate concerns not just the nature of research concerned with education but the quality of that kind of research too. In his presidential address at the AERA Annual Meeting in April 1993 Elliot Eisner shared his ideas for the future of such research. He said :

“ If there are different ways to understand the world, and if there are different forms that make such understanding possible, then it would seem to follow that any comprehensive effort to understand the processes and outcomes of schooling would profit from a pluralistic rather than monolithic approach to research”. (Eisner 1993)

I agree that there is a need for a pluralistic approach having no desire to set out a series of prescriptions for how research should be conducted in the research community. I simply want there to be more possibilities for research: in the way it is conducted and the form in which it is presented. Research in education is different to educational research as Lomax explains below. One need not deny the other for they have different purposes. I now want to argue that research in education may be carried out according to the criteria of the social sciences; educational research cannot.

During 1995 I was invited to take part in two research studies: one by the Department of Education in Swansea; the other by the Centre for Educational Policy and Management, The Open University. Swansea is monitoring the implementation of KS3 history. The Open University, the relationships between the efficiency of resource management and school effectiveness. Both studies are research into education. Despite being original investigations and relevant to education I would not call them educational research. Why not ? I'd like to measure them against some points outlined by Pam Lomax. In her

inaugural address at Kingston University Pam Lomax was clear about what was so

different about educational research:

“ Educational research is different from those approaches that frame questions in terms which invite the premature closing down of issues by their concepts, language or methods. It is different from those that fail to question their own assumptions. In social science research the expectation is that the values of the researcher are kept separate from the data and do not influence its collection or interpretation. Social science research is always done by outsiders to the issue under investigation... Social scientists may improve their understanding of the issues but there is no requirement for educational development. Social science does not claim to be practical or contain the improvement of practice as an imperative of the research process, rather it provides others with data for making decisions. Social scientists control their data by providing questions for others to answer, by focusing on what can be measured” (Lomax 1994).

If I take from that extract what social science is, then there are clues to what educational research may be:

Educational research opens up issues in education; it questions the assumptions of the researcher; it demands educational development; the researcher must be open about their educational values and how those affect the research; the research exists only by the involvement of the researcher with the clear intention to improve practice and the report does not provide measurement but description. There appears to be some

common ground among practising researchers; that research should be add to our understanding and show educational development and improvement.

The Swansea research into the implementation of KS3 history included a questionnaire.

The questions were to be answered Yes / No or a score was given to the statement most appropriate to the view held by the person completing it. The Open University questionnaire consisted of ten pairs of statements about school. I had to indicate which of the statements described the situation I currently experienced and which statement accurately reflected the ideal situation I would like to see in my school.

Using what Pam Lomax said : neither study revealed the values of the researcher; I was not clear if the studies intended to improve practice or whose practice it informed; the data was controlled because the questions were provided but it was not expected that the questions themselves could be questioned; I had no sense of the educational development of the researcher. Now there is nothing wrong with that. That kind of research informs policy and is relevant to my work in school. But it is research that is undertaken by researchers ' outside' the subject of research. In my research I am ' inside' the research.

There appears to be a critical gap between what academics call educational research conducted in a traditional way and presented in a traditional form, that they feel comfortable with and that I am happier calling research in education, and the educational research like mine that seems to defy traditional classification. This critical gap of understanding what counts as research isn't confined to education but to the whole field of qualitative research. There is a current debate, described below, among academics about the definition and assessment of educational research; how it should be conducted, represented and legitimated.

The crisis of qualitative research

Professor Y. Lincoln's 1993 paper to an Economic and Social Science Research Council sponsored seminar identified a '*disintegration of consensus*' within the wider research community. She wrote that the consensus regarding the appropriateness of the scientific method for research in the social sciences has been attacked and new paradigms proposed, creating "*a more personal, professional crisis*" for academics.

In Lincoln's recent work with Denzin qualitative research is located as a field of enquiry which crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matter and which operates in a complex history spanning five critical moments. These moments, which are past and yet still hold in the present, they describe thus: the traditional (1900 - 1950); the modernist (1950-

1970); blurred genres (1970- 1986); the crisis of representation (1986 - 1990); and postmodern or present moments (1990 - present) . What do these terms describe?

The traditionalist period is usually linked with the positivist paradigm, that is, that knowledge is certain; it really has been established; it has nothing to do with value judgements or interpretation and it can accumulate so that fuller understanding can be reached.

The modern age and blurred genres are linked with post positivist arguments that question certainty and objectivity. The boundaries between subject disciplines were no longer clear cut in the 1960s and 1970s “*A form of genre dispersion was occurring; documentaries that read like fiction (Mailer), parables posing as ethnographies (Castaaneda), theoretical treatises that look like travelogues (Levi- Strauss)* “ (Denzin and Lincoln 1994)

If such diversity of practice was accepted how could ideas be represented? In the crisis of representation issues of validity, reliability and objectivity must be questioned. If qualitative researchers can use different forms to represent and interpret the lived experience how can such work be evaluated? And what of these ‘ present moments’

where we work that have been described as “post- post modern”? Denzin and Lincoln argue that for qualitative research

“ things will never be the same. We are in a new age where messy, uncertain, multivoiced texts, cultural criticism and new experimental works will become more common, as will more reflexive forms of fieldwork, analysis and intertextual representation... the field of qualitative research is defined by a series of tensions, contradictions, and hesitations.. This tension works back and forth between the broad, doubting postmodern sensibility and the more certain, traditional positivist , postpositivist and natural conceptions...” (Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. 1994)

Where does it all leave us?

Lincoln claims that:

“ ...we are between stories. The Old Story will no longer do, and we know that it is inadequate. but the New Story is not yet in place”

It seems to me that research in education is the old and continuing story and that educational research is the new story that we are not quite sure how to classify.

Educational research is indeed “ *between stories*” with the inadequate old ways being replaced by the ill-formed new.

Educational research

The crisis of qualitative research is a crisis at the heart of educational research because all research into and about education can no longer be confined by the old conventions of social science research. North American academics of the 1990s question whether the narrow definitions of validity and reliability used by the Academy to assess the quality of research are appropriate to educational research. (Denzin, N. and Lincoln, Y. 1994)

Professor Pam Lomax of Kingston University in her inaugural address in January 1994 put the case for an educational research that is different from the disciplines approach to education and different from social science. It is time, she argued for the “ *academy to open its doors to methodologies and epistemologies that are currently excluded and enable a view of educational research no longer dependent on the prescriptions of social science*”

Lomax agreed with Alastair MacIntyre that it was time that a university should be a place where rival standpoints exist alongside each other and a place of constrained disagreement. She did not argue for the replacement of one paradigm for another:

“ I am not suggesting that the social sciences abandon their hard won rights to investigate the social world (including education) from their own particular perspectives. I am asking them to move over a little, to recognise a new partner, to respect another way.” (Lomax 1994).

What can educational research be?

It's always tempting to pare back to a few simple statements the layers of ideas built up over time about research. Giving into such temptation I 'm reminded of the following definitions but aware that it is important to

“distinguish between statements of what research activity is and statements of what high quality research is. It is the difference between defining a game of cricket and defining a good game of cricket. The first would indicate the aspects which must be present for it to be called cricket, whilst the second would indicate how these aspects would appear in practice in a good game of cricket.” (Harlen 1994)

So, here are some accepted 'rules' of educational research. I've underlined the phrases

I think are important to remember from Stenhouse, Bassey and Harlen. Stenhouse in 1979 declared that research is “a systematic enquiry made public”; in 1981 he gave this definition

“research is systematic self-critical enquiry. As an enquiry, it is founded in curiosity and a desire to understand; but it is a stable, not a fleeting, curiosity, systematic in the sense of being sustained by a strategy”. (Stenhouse 1981)

Stenhouse was clear about what counted as research in education:

“ I mean by research in education, research conducted within the educational intention and contributory to the educational enterprise. There is, of course, in history, philosophy, psychology and sociology, research on education conducted from the standpoint of the disciplines which contributes to the education enterprise incidentally if not at all. It is, one might say, educational research only in the sense that Durkheim gave us suicidal research. Research is educational to the extent that it can be related to the practice of education” (Stenhouse. 1981.)

Thirteen years later Michael Bassey offered this definition that included the intention to improve practice “educational research aims critically to inform educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action” and was clear that *“ this definition embraces the realms of empirical, reflective and creative research, the categories of theoretical, evaluative and action research, the search for generalisations and the study of singularities, the audiences of researchers, practitioners and policy makers, the positivist and interpretive paradigms.” (Bassey 1995.)*

To be a researcher is obviously to belong to a broad church; all it takes is to enquire into the business of education if we accept definitions such as those by Stenhouse, Bassey and this by Wynne Harlen:

“ educational research is original investigation or scholarship undertaken in order to gain knowledge and understanding or to apply existing knowledge and understanding relevant to education” (Harlen 1994).

All three confirm that educational research must be original and relevant to education,

It seems that opening up issues, questioning assumptions, educational development, defining educational values, improving practice and so on have to be present for the research to be called educational research.

But before that, just in case we forget why we do research in the midst of all the descriptions of how it should be done: Eisner reminds us of the major aim of educational research *“it has to do with the improvement of educational practice so that the lives of those who teach and learn are themselves enhanced.... we do research to understand. We try to understand in order to make our schools better places for both the children and adults who share their lives there.”* (Eisner 1993)

II What is good quality educational research?

When inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education visit classrooms to judge the quality of teaching and learning they are required to grade each teacher's lesson. For a school to "do well" it must have a good percentage of lessons marked at grades 1, 2 or 3. I wouldn't attempt to grade educational research although I do have a few stock reactions when reading such papers and taking the example of OFSTED they are something like:

3: "yes, fine, very interesting but so what?"

2: "I like this. I want to find out more. I'd like to talk to this person."

1. This is more like when a goal is scored at football. I want to throw a punch in the air and shout "YES!".

What qualities does such educational research have that provoke me to such reactions? In judging my research I want you to go beyond the predictable, necessary and worthy attributes of educational research and decide if I capture something else.

My thinking has been stimulated by Tony Ghaye and Jean McNiff in their collaborative work. In "Action Researcher" Spring 1994 a conversation of theirs was printed which contained some interesting thoughts on quality in research. "Tony:... I think we need to reverse our thinking about how we come to make judgements about the quality of an account. Instead of asking questions of the kind, 'is it rigorous?', 'is it valid?', 'has it been systematically carried out?' 'is it critical?' and so on we should turn and look the other way also. Here we might find huddled together, perhaps a little shy as yet to come out into the open questions we should be asking like "what did I feel when I read the account? Did I feel compelled to act as a consequence of reading the account? and so on... we need to establish a language, desperately and quickly, that we can use in order to communicate the essence of what I'm trying to say here". (Ghaye and McNiff 1994)

In many ways Tony Ghaye has already begun his work on a new language to describe good quality educational research. In Book One of a trilogy of CARN critical conversations (1993) he and others set out their aims for the three books. The qualities they list could be used to judge educational research and I'd like to use them to do so. The qualities should be these: that reports should be participatory; grounded; critical; democratic; affective; conversational and that they show possibility; hope; confrontation and liberation. These qualities were described within the context of the books and I'd like to use them for a different purpose. While adapting some of the meanings used in Critical Conversations I

hope to keep to that spirit of energy and commitment they were intended to

foster. I've listed them in the order they are in "Critical Conversations".

If educational research is to be of good quality I would expect to see many of

these qualities in accounts of that research:

- **participatory**: that the researcher invites a response from the reader so that it

is clear that the account is tentative; true to the writer in the 'here and now' but

open to change.

- **grounded**: that the accounts are about workplaces, people and their concerns

and rooted in the researcher's values

- **critical**: that the researcher is self-critical and reflective.

- **democratic**: that the voices of the researched are heard within the account and

that these are allowed to make their own meanings and are not always

interpreted by the researcher.

- **affective**: that the research reflects a range of emotions: uncertainty;

bewilderment; wonder; anxiety and so on.

- **conversational**: that the writing captures something of the essence or spirit of

the researcher; that it engages the reader almost as if they are in conversation

with the writer.

I'd also want an account to have a sense of the following:

- **possibility**: the sense that it was unfinished; that there is still more to be done.

- **hope**: that improvement has taken place and will continue to do so

- **confrontation**: the sense that the researcher has confronted difficult questions

about their enquiry and is willing to keep on thinking and being critical.

And finally, **liberation**: that the account is that of a researcher who aims to

understand their life and work through their own point of view.

When you read my account I hope you want to say " Yes!" I hope you find that

I've given you something to think about and accounted for my work in a way that

has allowed you to enter into my concerns.

I want you to be moved by the way I have described and explained my life's work,

teaching. My professional development has grown out of this. I hope you will see

how I have given meaning and purpose to my professional life by exploring how

my values motivate me in the economic, political and social contexts in which I

am placed, and how these values are embodied in my practice.

III The Teacher's Voice: "Is there anyone here from education?"

I like the question ' *Is there anyone here from education?* ' It was said by an aide to the Prime Minister at the time Sir Keith Joseph was Education Secretary. The Guardian reported that the aide was asked what the government was going to do about education.

" She replied bluntly: " It's a disaster"

Then she added: " Is there anyone here from education?" Fortunately there wasn't.

(The Guardian 23 February 1983.)

For a long time I have had the impression that a number of academics researching in education would be most relieved if teachers weren't around when they presented their research. As a teacher / researcher I find the clear distinctions some people struggle to make between theory and practice unconvincing. Too often in research teachers are depicted as in the swamp with their faces in the mud.

In 1985 Margaret Threadgold was concerned to bridge the gap between teachers and researchers but look at what she wrote:

" There is frequently a gulf between theorists and practitioners in any sphere of work... In educational studies I am aware that the relationships between those concerned with educational research on the one hand and teachers on the other, has been subject to these difficulties. There has been a significant problem of communication between the two which

has resulted in teachers often ignoring relevant research or regarding their findings with cynicism”

Her solution was that *‘ the teacher is either involved in a project guided by a researcher or is working alongside the researcher on a school- based project.’* (Threadgold 1985)

The teacher, according to Threadgold then, has to work alongside or be guided by the researcher and obviously can't be trusted to research independently. Eight years later

Michael Hubermann writes that researchers only get involved with teachers if they are charitable and at personal cost! In his article on the dissemination of research and its effects on practice and theory Hubermann states:

“ Up to now, mainstream researchers in education have often avoided dissemination like the plague. Working with practitioners has been seen as a distraction from their priorities and , in some cases, a real handicap to professional advancement. Similarly, members of the research community who have devoted blocks of time to the ‘field’ have defined that activity as social activism, or altruism, or as a gesture of good faith...”

When researcher and teacher have come together he believes *“The value to the practitioners has always been obvious: access to new, potentially powerful ideas and tools. The value to researchers has been less clear”* (Huberman 1993)

In the growing literature in teacher thinking the aim of many researchers has been articulated by Halkes and Olson :

...” one is not so much striving for the disclosure of ‘the’ effective teacher, but for the explanation and understanding of the teaching processes as they are. After all, it is the teacher’s subjective school-related knowledge which determines for the most part what happens in the classroom; whether the teacher can articulate his/ her knowledge or not.”
(Halkes and Olson 1984)

For an explanation and understanding of teaching should not the voice of teachers be listened to? Explanations of practice by teachers could contribute to the professional development of other practising teachers and to those involved in teaching education, as teachers and students. Those in teacher education according to James Calderhead:

“ lack a well established epistemology of practice, and it is suggested that that an eclectic, exploratory approach to its development will avoid the inevitable imprisonment in restricted ways of thinking about teaching and learning to teach. The development of further understanding of professional development may be dependent on recognising the complexity and diversity of both research and practice and acknowledging that the relationship between the two is interactive and multifaceted” (Calderhead, J. 1993)

Indeed, Lomax, Evans and Whitehead (1996) have argued that accounts by teachers of their educational development through their work in trying to improve the quality of education for their students would be at the heart of an epistemology of practice.

During my research I became increasingly aware that many researchers in education spoke about teachers and for teachers thus controlling what teachers said about themselves and their classrooms. Even when the teacher is central to the research as in Ivor Goodson's "Studying Teachers' Lives" their voices are controlled by the researcher. Goodson wrote :

" The study of teachers' lives depends for its viability and desirability upon teachers themselves. They initially control most of the important data and those involved in such study must ensure that they continue throughout the process to exercise control and to be actively involved in the negotiation and production of reports. If this successfully accomplished, we may be developing an important new field for collaborative inquiry" (Goodson 1992)

I liked what this teacher wrote about research related to education:

" much research related to education had the cutting edge of a sponge; for a long time I questioned the honesty of much that I read about in some of the academic journals. Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting that the authors were anything but sincere and well intentioned. What I'm trying to say is that their research did not speak the truth to me. These works seemed more concerned with statistics than sensitivities; rats rather than brats; research rather than the researched" (Jones 1981)

This teacher wants research to speak to him in a way that he can recognise for he is concerned with sensitivities and children and he seems unable to find a truthful account.

As I was struggling to articulate what I felt about being a teacher, included and yet excluded from research in education: included because teachers were described; excluded because a

teacher's voice didn't speak to me except through the interpreter, the researcher , I read Jane Miller's book " Seductions" which prompted me to write the following :

" In her book which explores reading and culture Jane Miller (1990) uses seduction as a metaphor to show how women are excluded from literary theory. For women read teachers as the metaphor fits. Thus teachers are seduced by academics who simultaneously include and exclude us in their writing about teaching. Our presence is taken for granted and yet denied and we are enticed into narratives which reduce us by exalting us".

I am still entranced by that idea of being reduced by being exalted. I recognise it as a woman, a mother and a teacher. An example of a teacher being reduced by being exalted comes in Marion Dadds' recent work " Passionate Enquiry and School Development: a story about action research" (Falmer Press 1995). The tone is set in the introduction by John Elliott who wrote:

" At its heart is the case story of Vicki, a primary school teacher... It depicts her use of action research... to improve her teaching and to develop herself as a person and a professional... With great skill Marion Dadds renders Vicki's work as a teacher- researcher intelligible in the light of the complex interactions between her biographical context, the organisational climate and culture of the schools she worked in, and the personal qualities she brought to the role"

and this way of writing about Vicki is true to Dadds' text where she writes " *Vicki, teacher action researcher is the heroine of the case story at the heart of the book* " Throughout the text Dadds gets in the way of Vicki even though Vicki is said to have read and to have agreed

with Dadds' interpretations. Dadds' writes of the moment when she met with Vicki at the end of the writing of the research "*I realised that the Vicki in the text had ceased to be the real life Vicki. internally valid though the case story was, Vicki-in- text had become a construction of my inner world*" (Dadds 1995) Exalted and reduced, Vicki's work is interpreted by the researcher who acts as gatekeeper to the teacher's work.

It's interesting to take another feminist viewpoint on power and voice and use it as if for teachers. Valerie Walkerdine wrote about living her life knowing that femininity was a fiction that was lived as though it were a universal truth.

" I am suggesting that femininity and masculinity are fictions.... deeply embedded in the social world which can take on the status of fact when inscribed in the powerful practices, like schooling, through which we are regulated." (Walkerdine 1990)

I suggest that the work of teaching is a fiction embedded in the social practice of schooling. That is not to say that there is no truth in the fiction but it is how teachers live those fictions that I find interesting. Walkerdine writes "*is there an authentic female voice ? For me the answer lies not, as some feminists have suggested, in some kind of essential feminine voice that had been silenced, but in that which exists in the interstices of our subjugation. We can*

tell other stories. These stories can be very frightening because they appear to blow apart the fictions through which we have come to understand ourselves.... the stories of our subjugation do not tell the whole truth" (Walkerdine 1990)

There is not one essential teacher voice but individually teachers can tell other stories to those stories told on our behalf. We can ' rename ' teaching by writing about our experiences from our own points of view as we attempt to explain our own educational development. This is what I have tried to do.

In the next four chapters I concentrate on my work in school.