CHAPTER 1

LIVING LIFE AS A 'PRESENCER OF DEVELOPMENTAL POSSIBILITIES'
Who is the 'I' telling his story of his educational influence?

'Yet looking forward before the event, the act of discovery appears personal and indeterminate. It starts with the solitary intimations of a problem of bits and pieces here and there which seem to offer clues to something hidden. They look like fragments of a yet unknown coherent whole. This tentative vision must turn into a personal obsession; for a problem that does not worry us is not a problem…This obsession, which spurs and guides us, is about something that no one can tell: it's content is indefinable, indeterminate, strictly personal.' *Michael Polanyi, 1983, pp 75-76*

'…His acts are personal judgements exercised responsibly with a view to a reality with which he is seeking to establish contact…Any conclusion, be it given as a surmise or claimed as a certainty, represents a commitment of the person who arrives at it…As he accepted …the discipline which the external pole of his endeavour imposed on him, he expects that others…will also recognise that presence that guided him…he will claim that his results are universally valid. Such is the *universal intent* of a scientific discovery.' *Michael Polanyi, 1983, pp 77-78*

I choose to start my thesis with these two quotes from Michael Polanyi to suggest that, though not a 'scientist' in any conventional sense, I too have been on a journey of discovery which, with the benefit of hindsight, I can now trace back over at least four decades. It is one that I set out on very probably without knowing it at the time – though as Polanyi says, I probably did have 'an intimation of the coherence of hitherto not comprehended particulars', seeing 'something that is hidden' (Polanyi, 1983, p 21), *and* have been 'guided by sensing the presence of a hidden reality toward which our clues are pointing' (p 24). As a consequence my discovery has not been produced by 'applying explicit rules to given facts' but 'anticipating the approach of a hidden truth' (p 76), as I've been seeking to establish contact with multiple realities that seem to characterise my field of practice.

In this opening chapter as I guide you through my 'reflexive biography' (Scott in Barnett, 2000), I hope to show you how I have been pursuing an original but diffuse question which I now believe I've been able to grasp, at least momentarily and sufficiently enough to explicate both the framing of the problem and my resolution to it, at least in one particular context. Though you will notice that there have been many diversions and excursions off the straight and narrow, I hope that by the end of this chapter you will have a better understanding of both the context and the purpose of my inquiring over the years, have a sense of why it has intrigued me so, and have a good appreciation of the key ideas that have brought me to this place where I feel I can now make claims about my personal knowing of reality with 'universal intent'.

And so to begin with the unfolding of my 'unique stories within the context of everyday events' (Paley, 1990, p xii) in this opening chapter, I tell the emergent story of my development as a professional who works with people both as scholars and leaders, to help them improve their influencing, learning, work performance, and leadership practice of self, others, and their social formation (Whitehead, 2009). Though this is something I've been occupied with one way or another for well over 40 years, my story

will focus primarily on developments from much later on, beginning in the early 90's when I first considered the idea of doing a PhD while at Kings College London, and continuing on into the 00's when I started my studies at the Centre for Action Research in Professional Practice (CARRP) at Bath University.

I say 'considered' because my reason for undertaking such a task was not to get the higher level qualification but to find a focus for my own personal inquiries which seemed to be continually expanding, stretching me wider and wider as the years went by. Though I found this ongoing exploration of whatever I got curious about to be enormously satisfying, I also experienced a growing tension inside myself which I realised was an increasing need to also synthesise and consolidate all this learning, to make it part of my everyday practice, and so make a contribution to the world around me. The focus and discipline involved in creating an original piece of PhD level work seemed to offer a fruitful path - and as the developers of 'appreciative inquiry' are fond of pointing out, questions that you focus on are 'fateful' in the sense of implicitly determining what we find (Ludema et al, 2001).

So what follows *is* a 'fateful' story in this sense, of my struggle to find the focus, narrow my explorations, and develop the disciplines needed to achieve a level of consolidation of effective practice and scholarly knowing I might find satisfactory…at least for a while! What I hope you will gain in this initial chapter is a better sense of the evolving contexts in which I've been operating and the central questions that have been energizing my work and my associated inquiries – so you can judge to what extent my thesis responds to the question that has been evolving over these many years. In this chapter in particular, I make extensive use of the 'patchwork' model, which I first came across in the writings of Richard Winter, for organizing my writing. As he says: 'A "patchwork text" is a general name for written texts where the unifying structure is not simply a linear narrative but a series of loosely linked pieces illustrating a theme or gradually building up a set of perspectives' (Winter, 1999, p. 67).

I make use of this arrangement because I'm seeking to make sense of a learning and development history that spreads over some 40 years. To do this I will place before you extracts from various writings stretching back as far as the late 60's, to show how my focus, my thinking, and my practice has been changing (*and* in other ways, staying the same) over that period, as I've committed myself 'to a belief in all these as yet undisclosed… consequences…' (Polanyi, 1983, p 23), filled with a compelling sense of responsibility for pursuit of a hidden truth, knowing more than I can tell! I also use this form of writing to guard against any obvious attempt by myself to create a smooth, coherent, 'grand narrative' of what has essentially been a very varied and messy process, with many diversions and interruptions along the way.

So you will come across in this chapter a range of writings (==highlighted thus==) excerpted from longer papers located in the appendices to this chapter (these highlighted excerpts will also be visible in the appendices). I place each of these excerpts in context, offering up to date reflections, and seeking to link to earlier and later pieces, in order to create a 'red thread' through this chapter. You will also find that during this story I will make passing reference to many authors and academics who have influenced me, and hence my work with others, over the period, and who are important shapers of my experiences and the resulting narrative. Many of these will again make appearances in later chapters, especially Chapter 3 where I will explore in much more detail the axiological,

ontological, epistemological, and methodological aspects that condition both how I provide development support and how I've approached this piece of research. (Heron and Reason, 1997)

To give you an idea of the ground I'm going to cover in this opening chapter, I offer the following set of 'headlines' which I hope convey the flavour as well as the content of the sections that now follow: 'Early Days' – my initial experiences of leadership, consultancy, and my burgeoning interest in new ways of looking at organisation life, covering the period from the mid 60's till the end of the century; 'In the Middle' – the transition from an easy going and broad exploration to a more focused and disciplined interest in doing research on leadership and leadership development, covering the first few years of the new millenium; and 'The End Game' – exploring some of the key challenges I experienced in sampling and making sense of the huge mass of textual data associated with my MA work, linking these to my experience and knowledge of the literature, and then developing ways of organising and presenting my findings in a 'readerly' style.

THE EARLY DAYS – first flirtations and stirrings

Though I occupied positions of leadership at high school and later at university, I performed these naturally and without much reflection. It was only later, after I'd started my management education at Edinburgh in 1966-67 and then worked as a work study engineer in construction in Ontario, Canada that I believe I first started to get interested in learning about, and helping others learn and develop their, leadership.

Excerpt 1: the mystery surfaces – performance, people, and politics

Before returning to the UK in 1970, the last work study project I did at Nanticoke GS, a very large coal-fired power station on Lake Erie, was of a completely different order to what I'd been doing in the previous two years. From studies of detailed construction work processes e.g. rock drilling/concrete pouring/cable laying and so on, I was now pre-occupied with a major re-structuring of the overall planning and control system used to manage the very large and complex 3000 man project. And this, as I was soon to learn, involved grappling with the associated political and cultural fields in which this existed, and which in many ways were more significant than the technical efficacy of the system. As I quote in my work study report at the time 'The inter-group problems were not purely those of "personalities"…obviously also historical and situational determinants…[which] appeared to be that of "influence processes" a usual problem in line/staff relations.'

This was in a sense, my first proper management consultancy assignment but as an insider facilitating and supporting the main players. I can now see it was a significant and effective piece of work going far beyond the usual work study/efficiency focus, and dealing head on with deep-seated conflicts between three groups who needed to work together for the project to succeed. However, to use Miller and Rice's framework (Miller and Rice, 1967), each of the three departments had *shared* task (function) and sentient (nationality/style/age) boundaries which supported a mutual unwillingness to understand the views of the other departments, leading to continual communication difficulties, conflicts, and ineffective working patterns.

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This first excerpt reveals a glimpse of the interests that were to pre-occupy me for the next 40 years, and can be seen some twenty years later when first registering for a PhD at Kings College London. Here my research question was about 'facilitating better communications between journalist and managerial "sub cultures" within the BBC'. And again, some ten years after this in the early framing of my research question in June, 2002, when I started the CARPP programme at Bath: 'How do I improve my practice as an independent facilitator to help managers in large bureaucratic organisations improve their communication skills in order to create informal, innovative, issue-oriented and cross-disciplinary communities which support and enhance the effectiveness of their organisations'. Yes, more complicated - but still pretty much focused on the same theme!

Excerpt 2: learning new perspectives – it's OK to be confused!
But first let's move forward just a decade to 1979. I've been back in England for 9 years, and I'm now an enthusiastic management consultant several years into a new career, engaging in exciting re-structuring and change programmes with large organisations like Scottish and Newcastle Breweries, and the National Coal Board. Senior executives in these companies are seeming to attribute to me enormous wisdom and power to solve their problems...though I'd never worked in their industries or done their jobs! I had found this puzzling and frightening and after a couple of years of trying to stay one week ahead of the game (I *had* done an MBA at the London Business School in 1971 – what else does that equip you for?), I'd gone to The Grubb Institute in London, to seek their advice on how I might better live up to these inflated expectations. I worked with one of their senior consultants, the late Barry Palmer, and contracted to do over a period of some six or so sessions, something they called 'organisational role analysis'. As I say in the article I wrote some 25 years later when at Exeter 'The scales were falling from my eyes and the very things which I'd been using to guide my contribution to these large change programmes, and that people were finding so "insightful", "interesting", and "creative", were now starting to look rather simplistic, narrow, and decidedly biased'. The sentiments in the Graves poem he sent me, particularly the punch line - *'He in a new confusion of his understanding; I in a new understanding of my confusion.'* seemed to accurately capture and positively connote the very state I felt I was in: so it *was* OK to feel like this and a necessary step in learning and developing.

My work with Barry Palmer (McCaughan and Palmer, 1994) certainly brought to my attention the power of an alternative perspective to use to 'peer beneath the surface' and offer new understandings about self, others, and the cultures in which we performed. This was probably the real beginning of what I now refer to as 'systemic thinking'. A few months later I found myself enrolling on one of the famous two week Tavistock Working Conferences at Leicester (Sher, 2003) - my hard nosed consulting colleagues thought I must be having some kind of a breakdown to go on something as weird as this! - to be followed six months later with a move to work full time at The Grubb Institute for a year or so – I saw it as taking a 'sabbatical' – in order to *really* learn about learning my trade.

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Despite journeys like this into the Tavistock tradition of group dynamics (Lawrence, 1979) and later the more cognitive 'modelling' approach of NLP (Bandler and Grinder, 1979), I was still pretty much engaged with this idea of 'systems' out there that one could study/re-design/change, and was finding this view of 'socio-technical systems' (Flood, 1999) a very useful approach in all kinds of situations. I was now much more aware of the 'human variable' and the benefits of involvement. So I was now a sophisticated 'systems' man - or was I…?

Excerpt 5[4]: how I see the problem is *part* of the problem!

A couple of learning experiences in the early 90's completely shifted this 'paradigm' if you like, and 'nudged' me along another much less certain path. I'd heard about the Milan Systemic Family Therapy approach while working at the Grubb Institute in the early 80's, and was intrigued with the mysterious way they seemed to be working with anorexic children and their families. Always being game to learn new approaches which I could adopt and adapt to my own organisational practice, I went along (almost a decade later!) to a two day family therapy workshop being run by Cechin and Boscolo, two of the founders (with Selvini Palazolli and Prata) of this innovative approach based on the ideas of Gregory Bateson (Jones, E, 1993). I was astonished at the impact on what could be seen in what they called the 'observer position'; and further, as I report: 'The comments made by Cechin were mostly playful and irreverent - as though what we were doing was a kind of a game, and we could allow ourselves to improvise and play about with the realities we were 'showing'/observing. He seemed to be modelling a kind of lightness where positions could be taken with a kind of temporary conviction - and then dropped without too much sense of loss, to explore another possibility.' It seemed as though what we were seeing was 'created'/not 'real', that other constructions might be more useful e.g. use the term A 'shows' and *not* A 'is', and that it was in our interest to find such constructions e.g. frame problems in ways that were resolvable. As the late David Campbell of the Tavistock, who was to become a colleague and close friend, proposed in a seminar I attended soon after: 'how I see the problem is *part* of the problem!' (Campbell, 2000)

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Excerpt 3: creating *social* realities - choosing what to foreground

The second frame breaking event happened in June 1993. I was now running a small consultancy at Kings College London and had attended a five day workshop on 'systemic thinking' being run by Peter Lang at the Kensington Consultation Centre in London. Special guests invited included American academics Ken Gergen and Sheila MacNamee, who were to talk to us about 'social construction' – intriguing? In fact I found the experience literally 'mindblowing' as Ken and Sheila introduced us to this wholly new way of looking at experience (Gergen and MacNamee, 1992), offering some delightful role plays to show us how each successive 'response' could completely alter the meaning of a conversation. I was so impressed, I invested in a ten day visit to New Hampshire in the USA where Ken and other colleagues like Shotter, Sampson, Cronen, and Lather were holding the first international 'social construction' conference.

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[4] this excerpt appears out of order because the papers in the appendix are in *date* order and this incident, though happening in the early 90's, was only commented on in a paper written some ten years later, after I'd registered on the Bath CARPP programme

After the conference I wrote a ten page note trying to capture the amazing variety of ideas that had been introduced e.g. Patti Lather suggested that validity is a limit question of research methodology…less a matter of looking harder or more closely, but of seeing multiple frames which are able to co-exist…[so] There is an issue of what I'd choose to foreground and what I choose to background, and the difference this makes to the interpretation... This was also my first experience of an academic conference, and I remember feeling a level of irritation with many of the presenters who seemed over-concerned with disciplinary boundaries and not so concerned with practical matters. But it was also an expansion of my willingness to be uncertain, to welcome alternative and competing perspectives, and a desire to engage more deeply with this way of looking at experience.

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These two events were inviting me to fashion a new world view where e.g. validity could become something that is multi-hued, and where I could have some choice in looking at situations from several different points of view, taking responsibility for foregrounding one over another to grapple with each local situation. I can see that I had now become engaged in evolving what I'd now call a new 'language-game' (Wittgenstein, 1958) which was transforming my view of knowing and how I was learning, and helping me picture a new form of living.

Excerpts 4: shifting from 'expertise' to 'co-creation'
It was also during this period that I first registered for a PhD, encouraged by a KCL colleague Ray Holland (Holland, 1990) who was to become my first supervisor. I was at the time working on a book with David Campbell (who was to become my second supervisor!) and Tim Coldicott, two consulting colleagues, on applying 'systemic thinking' in organizations. I sent Ray an early draft of what was to become the second chapter of this book, which outlined some of my and Tim's thoughts about 'principles' we thought might be important in our 'systemic' work i.e. 'From these 10 reframes…we can draw certain conclusions about the criteria that systemic consultation in large organisations needs to address…as we begin shifting from 'expertise to co-creation' His response was very encouraging: 'I can see immediately how you have ordered some of the most significant achievements of the systemic-constructionist bodies of knowledge into a usable framework'.

This first venture into writing suggested that the 'early 'stirrings' from the Nanticoke GS period were still alive and well some twenty years later…perhaps Polanyi was right? By this time, I'd also been working very hard on development projects in large organizations for some 15 years, both as line manager and independent consultant. And while I was 'earning a living' this way, I also regularly engaged in a parallel stream of explorations in a wide range of other professional fields like family therapy, and body-oriented practices like shiatsu, t'ai chi, and Feldenkrais, trying out a wide range of ideas from these fields to improve my facilitation and coaching practice. I will comment further on these developments in Chapter 3.

Most importantly, during this period I seemed to have crossed a critical development boundary, transforming the way I was looking at and relating to the world about me. For

example, using Torbert's leadership development framework (see Chapter 6 for more on this), I had left behind me the levels of Expert and Achiever, explored many highways and byways in the 'post-conventional' territory of Individualist action-logic and was now pushing into capabilities at the Alchemist level and beyond (Torbert and Associates, 2004). Very exciting!

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But we'd now entered a new millennium and with time passing, I felt I needed to become much more disciplined about my approach to my research studies. With only minimal support and supervision since first registering in 1994, the virtual lack of formal progress on my PhD studies told me I needed more of an academic structure and closer supervision if I was to engage more effectively with academic inquiry and writing: 'physician heal thyself'…the CARPP experience at Bath University was beckoning!

IN THE MIDDLE – becoming more focused and disciplined about inquiry
After registering with CARPP at Bath in 2002, I began to work at improving the discipline of my reading and writing. I developed a greater ability to reflect and be reflexive during what was an exhilarating first year with regular workshops and the need to write and discuss short papers in small group reviews with a supervisor. The most stimulating challenge was the basic question offered by one of the tutors, Jack Whitehead: 'how do I improve my practice?' which certainly seemed to fit beautifully with my own inquiry, and has continued to do so ever since.

One of the important issues to respond to in this regard was to become more aware of the embedded assumptions and values that I was committed to and expressing in my work, to help me identify what 'tradition' if any I might implicitly be working in. In my case it seemed to me and others in my supervision group, that I was someone working in the 'systems' tradition and the next three excerpts I offer, all concern my inquiry into this claim. In particular they demonstrate that while this might have been 'true' in the 60's and 70's, I had experienced a continuing dissatisfaction with aspects of this tradition and had sought to find new angles from outside the field through which to broaden my own knowing and 'improve my practice'. I believe these extracts also show very clearly my by then, almost built-in tendency to continually 'presence developmental possibilities'[5] for myself through which to translate my cognitive knowing into new embodied practices.

Excerpt 6: **searching for 'roots in the future'?**
The first of these excerpts was sparked off by a student colleague reflecting on her 'Jewish history' which reminded me of my own sense of fragmentation, alienation and a lack of rootedness - in the context of an upbringing in a broken home in apartheid-riven South Africa, and subsequent re-location in England some 35 years previously. As I remark, as a way of understanding what I'd been doing all these years, I was now seeing

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[5] this way of describing the process emerged much later on in conversation with Jack Whitehead in 2008, but as you'll be aware, was to become a central feature of my coaching work

this as 'a search for roots in the future…to look at my experience, my tacit knowledge, and intentionality as an implicit search for roots for an emerging identity - not in my past but in places where I've not yet been…for a "me" who would feel grounded, confident, and "at home"' This revealed to me more explicitly not only the historical influence of my biography (and geography) on present thinking, but also the seemingly magical way that the less-than-conscious, embodied form of thinking that goes on all the time, can be released through a 'not thinking' kind of activity like driving on a motorway!

A student in my group felt that the 'roots in the future' metaphor suggested I was suspended in the air! But while reading some material on 'complexity theory' (Stacey, 2001) I got the idea that we could also be 'pulled by the future', though what attracts us; and which cannot be understood from our everyday consciousness. So it seemed to be OK to be 'seeking roots' on a journey towards some Polanyian 'attractor'! I also see in this writing and the metaphor of 'seeking roots', the start of a fundamental shift in me from being interested primarily in epistemological and methodological concerns, to questions of ontology and axiology – as I say, 'a search for a "me" who would feel grounded, confident, and "at home"'. And though I didn't realize it at the time, this focus on ontology first and epistemology second, was to find a stimulating resource in the 'living educational theory' approach that my supervisor Jack Whitehead had developed i.e. how to inquire into how my embodied values/standards of judgement emerge as I study my everyday practice with others (Whitehead, 2009).

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The second extract I offer comes from a follow up paper I wrote some six months later where I labelled the 'I' that is doing the researching, as a 'systems' man.

Excerpt 7: **marginalized voices and re-punctuating 'power relations'**
As you can see in this paper, I had been 'driven' over the years to seek out a wide range of different perspectives to remedy what I felt to be shortcomings in my practice, or at least shortcomings in the 'theories' of my practice. In addition to the key concept from 'complexity theory' of 'emergence' (Stacey, 2001), in this paper I pick out experiences that have continued to have a strong influence on my perceptions, motivations, and behaviour, including the idea of 'punctuating' experience:

'the influence of the "observer perspective"…So what you saw was not an objective fact *about* the system, but a 'punctuation' which became a part of the system or problem you were thinking about… we create our own realities in language in conversation with others… through use in a language-game (Wittgenstein, 1958)…[and the need] to understand the practices and power relations that produce and sustain a particular view of life and reality…[and] to problematise or deconstruct accepted views of what is going on, seems essential if I am to help people in that system create space for other possibilities to emerge'

As I re-read this paper, I'm amazed at how persistently my dissatisfaction with my current practice at the time, has driven me onward to look for better ways of understanding and influencing learning and change over a period of some 25 years. For

example my criticism here of the views of advanced 'systems' writers like Senge (1990) and Flood (1999) regarding their neglect of 'power' in work relations, shows how problematic I find cultures that marginalise voices, and explains why I'm so interested in pursuing Foucault's views on this issue, to see how I might address this more effectively with clients and students. Going back to the Polanyi quotes at the start of the chapter, it seems clear to me that there has definitely been something at work here that could quite properly be called an 'obsession'.

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The third extract comes from another early CARPP paper where I seek to show how my own thinking is being influenced by the ideas of others, in this instance the ideas of Michel Foucault. My admittedly passive and tacit awareness of the marginalisation of a large part of society during my upbringing in apartheid-ridden South Africa provides one shameful reason. Less obviously but felt strongly enough, is my own long-standing sense of fragmentation associated with the separation not only of 'white' from 'black', 'indian', and 'coloured' but also 'white' (English/'rooinek') from 'white' (Afrikaans/'boer'). Many of the 'voices' that I should have had within me throughout my early development as a South African are sadly mute or poorly developed, a realization brought home to me while taking part in the 1997 Worldwork seminar in Mumbai, run by Arnie Mindell, and focusing on facilitating conflict resolution and 'deep democracy' (Mindell, 1995).

Excerpt 8: **'fingerprints' - do I know '…what what I do, does?'**
As I wrote in the previous section, Foucault's ideas (1977) allow me to 'understand the practices and power relations that produce and sustain a particular view of life and reality…[and] to problematise or deconstruct accepted views of what is going on, seems essential if I am to help people in that system create space for other possibilities to emerge'. In the face of the numbing effects of the formal aspects of bureaucratic life, I've regularly been shocked at how timid and passive intelligent and powerful people can behave, blaming 'them' up there for the problems. And at a more personal level, I have also had to admit to the self-subjugating process of striving to achieve what seem to be generally admired ideals, and the resulting tendency to marginalize local knowledge, especially of the 'tacit' variety, in favour of expert 'universal' knowledge. It is here that I believe his thinking encourages us to listen to forgotten or marginalised voices, opening up new possibilities for influence and sense making; and offers me the opportunity to get closer to the 'truth' or 'reality' of living, not in a universal world but in a world defined by a particular discourse.

In writing this paper, I seemed to have become far more aware of the effects of power relations, that both constrain and afford, and the challenges of becoming and staying aware of your own contribution to/'fingerprints on' existing asymmetries as you act with the best intentions. 'As Foucault himself put it: people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do, does (quoted in Prado, 2000, p 29)' And with this greater awareness of 'what what I do, does' I feel that it is possible, despite the 'masking and insidious effects of disciplinary power', to become an *agent* in the production of my own life and those around me.

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When I work with a group involving different professionals like accountants and programme makers, I often feel that they are just talking at each other and no real communication is taking place. There seems to be little appreciation of one's own standpoint or that of 'the other', so it seems to me that such people need to become much more aware of their own tacit knowledge e.g. assumptions, beliefs, root metaphors, etc, before they can hope to understand these 'others'. And the next excerpt comments further on this idea.

Excerpt 9: moral frameworks: from 'subsidiary' to 'focal' awareness
Accordingly, and still building on key ideas the literature offers in this third extract, I seek to clarify further the nature and value of *tacit knowledge* and the challenges involved in making this a more central focus of my work with others. I identify two features which are to significantly influence the further development of my research: the idea that much learning is largely a tacit process (called 'in-dwelling' by Polanyi) and one that in contrast to most 'objective' teaching practices, directly includes the body/emotions as well as relevant aspects of context; and secondly, that much of this learning can usefully be understood as forming embodied 'artifacts' which embed the individual in the context in which they are working (Ilyenkov in Burkitt, 1999). In other words, both of these can be understood as particular forms of 'local practice'.

Polanyi offers some useful ideas in this regard. As he puts it, in comprehending an entity e.g. an idea or object, we rely on our awareness of its particulars (through subsidiary awareness), to attend in what is an emergent process, to their joint meaning. So as I report: 'Whenever we use something to function as a proximal term of tacit knowledge, we incorporate it into our body, or extend our body to include it…so that we come to dwell in it…and it becomes a sentient extension of our body…[and therefore can act] like a moral framework which acts as the "proximal term" through which life is viewed…[so] Our body becomes the ultimate instrument of all our external knowledge, and there can be no purely objective knowledge.'. So one of the big challenges for me is how to work with managers to help them develop alternative epistemologies through 'interiorisation', so that it becomes something that influences their perception and behaviour as they go about working to improve their own effectiveness in their relations with other individuals and groups.

My thinking here also points to the concept of the 'language-game' (Wittgenstein, 1958) which effectively reframes experiencing, and 'practice theory' (Schatzki et al, 2001) which reveals the continuities between individual and local context, which is something which I will be developing further in Chapters 4 and 5 where I look at work by people like Vygotsky, Ilyenkov, and Garfinkel, as well as Wittgenstein. There are also signs that I have begun to contemplate a fundamental paradox I'm facing in this research: how to capture and write about what I see as the most important kind of learning and knowing i.e. tacit knowing about practice in context, while working in typically asymmetric power relations as a purveyor of what is seen as largely propositional expertise. With a focus on the explicit, both knowledge and expertise, that consultants of all forms are expected to bring, how possible is it for me not to be caught up in such power games? In seeking to help others through e.g. showing them how to fight the drag of central policies and create space for local initiatives, am I not

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devaluing the very thing I say I'm valuing: their own experience, local knowledge, ideas, contextual sensitivity and networks of capability?

THE END GAME – clarifying the focus
In this final part I focus on what has emerged as the actual focus for the PhD itself – the study of the contribution of online coaching pedagogy to the Masters in Leadership Studies at Exeter. These developments have taken place during the period 2003 to 2011, a period which includes two years of temporary absence from study due to personal/family circumstances. What had originally been a broad interest circa 1995 in the facilitation of intergroup communications in organisations had gradually been pared down over the years to a much narrower focus circa 2003: how to improve my practice helping mature students self educate and develop capability in leadership, in order themselves to engage more effectively in such work in a world of 'supercomplexity' (Barnett, 2000). In this final section I use excerpts or 'patches' from ten further papers/diagrams/e mail exchanges included in the appendices to Chapter 1, to populate the narrative with now increasingly up to date examples of how I've been presencing my own developmental possibilities as an online coach and a PhD research student, while offering the same kind of educational support to students, and the educational social formation in which they study.

Excerpts 10: 'living present' - how can we work on the future in the present?
This part of the narrative starts just after I'd successfully passed the Diploma transfer stage in early 2002. The first excerpt is drawn from a note I wrote for a supervision discussion following a special review I'd requested with Judi Marshall one of the founders with Peter Reason, of the CARPP action research programme. She felt I was 'formidably resourced' - would my seemingly continual search for 'more/better' perhaps become degenerative? She thought I would be attracted to 'Patricia Shaw's work on complexity (Shaw, 2002) and the use of a conversational approach to strategy and change…her ideas of 'opening conversations'- which I took to be essentially *contextualising* interactions…I'd come across her colleague Douglas Griffin's work on leadership and ethics (Griffin, 2002)…I liked his way of talking about a 'living present'…In this more spacious and participative sense of the present, things like identity formation and social context arise *at the same time,* not sequentially. She wondered if I might be interested in the potential for working in a far more fluid and creative way with whatever comes up[6]…

I had worried about losing my identity/expertise…if I started to work in a more unstructured and shared way, just what would I be bringing to the party? But following my review with Judi of the earlier 'smorgasbord' comment from Donna Ladkin, another of the CARPP tutors, it became clear I did need to develop a sharper focus! I also didn't need to be so 'formidably resourced': I could be effective working more in the moment, improvising, and presencing. I soon tried this approach out with one of my BBC groups. Rather than offering a structured approach we 'talked briefly about the notion of how we construct our futures not in grand plans/formal agendas but in what we do in our informal interactions in the present…invited them to be aware *as they worked* of what kind of a future they seemed to be constructing and comparing this to what they were saying they wanted to create… came across Jack's [Whitehead] reference to Scharmer's

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[6] in commenting on the ideas of 'contextualising' and 'living present' in the context of working more fluidly and creatively, this excerpt reveals two very significant aspects of my emerging pedagogy as early as 2003

article on 'presencing' (Scharmer, 2000)…felt a shock of recognition: he was using 'my' model of change in his paper!...the similarities were clearly there, particularly in the language used…continue pursuing the goal of working on the future in the present *and* raising awareness of the tacit knowledge available to people to deepen their awareness'

Clearly, I would need to pay more attention to my learning edges e.g. like what is holding back the fluent expression of my multi-vocality in mutual inquiries, and looking first to my own experiences as against abstract ideas. And this is to what I turned to after having a year off to take care of family difficulties.

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After successfully completing the Diploma Transfer process in April 2003 I took a year's break, re-registering in October, 2004. What had emerged since my last formal piece of writing was that my general approach during the Diploma stage did in retrospect look quite open-ended – as though I was preparing myself to study 'anything'. I'm sure this was what Judi Marshall was pointing to when she remarked during our discussion in Bristol in June, 2003, that my research questions were mainly about the 'how', and therefore asked *what* my inquiry was about. Indeed, what was it to be about? Two things then happened which were to help me with this need to develop a clearer 'what' focus for my research.

In March, 2004 I was appointed a consulting fellow at The Centre for Leadership Studies in Exeter and quite early on was invited by Peter Case the academic director of the MA programme, to become one of the first coaches (the other was Donna Ladkin, ex CARPP) on the new 'coached e learning' version of the degree. It soon began to dawn on me that despite my long held interest in the wider aspects of organisation behaviour, I had quite fortuitously located myself in an institution that offered a particularly rich context in which to pursue inquiry into one crucial element of that complex domain – that of *leadership* - and the questions about what it is, how it's done, how to develop it, and so on. I was introduced early on to Keith Grint's idea that that leadership is 'an indeterminate skill that masquerades as a determinate skill' (Grint, 2000, p 419), and much more to do with the skillful application of a number of 'arts' of leadership.

Excerpt 11: developing 'leaders' and a 'relational' view of leadership?
What was now staring me in the face was the opportunity to study leadership and leadership development, not 'out there' in other external organisations, but at first hand on the MA in Leadership Studies I was coaching on! So an opportunity for me to be researching and speaking 'from' as against 'about' (Shotter, 2008). Talk about not seeing the wood for the trees! But in contrast to my usual preference for looking to 'contextual' interpretations of events, this caused me to reflect on the very personal and unique nature of the artistic process, and the thought that perhaps I needed to be a little less closed to insights from the 'individual as centre of the world' perspective.

While I was starting to get to grips with this new educational coaching role, I continued with my leadership development consulting work. And in this context, working with

groups of leaders within organizations, I continued to pursue my inquiries into more relational approaches to leadership and development. Working on an assignment for Royal Mail with Jonathan Gosling, Director of the CLS, we began experimenting with this approach where "leading becomes more a function and expression of a network of relationships and less that of actions of *the* leader " (Gergen, 1999, p 6)…Further, in contrast to more conventional approaches where capability is seen as something "out there" and something to learn to do, we were being more ambitious and were "hoping participants might move more towards qualities/performances that *they were a part of* i.e. constituted by the relations they were in." This concept of leadership represents a more extreme form of relatedness or "becoming", pointing towards what Martin Wood referred to as the "excluded middle" (Wood, 2005)…I was now more committed to "the argument that meaning and identity are largely constituted by how we use language in networks conditioned by power/knowledge relations…the notion that mind is embodied, thought largely unconscious, and abstract concepts mostly metaphoric…the proposition that these ideas and associated human behaviours can usefully be seen as embedded in complex responsive processes (Stacey, 2001)"… This new perspective chimed with a conversation I'd had with Jack Whitehead about Alan Rayner's work on 'inclusionality' (Rayner, 2010), where his use of terms such as the "complex local self" and "relationally dynamic awareness" seemed to point towards a more relational ontology'.

What stands out from this excerpt is how, while I have become even more interested in *relational and diffused* views of leadership, I have at the same time started to focus my research attention on the process of coaching *individuals* to improve their leadership skills. My year off and the rapid developments in the first 6 months of restarting study seems to have had the desired effect: I appear to have found a fruitful research site where I could explore my ideas about the 'relational' kind of leadership that interests me – I might call this my 'ought' view of leadership - while paying attention to the 'is' view of helping individual students improve their own leadership practice. I was now left with the question: 'is it possible to entertain a notion of diffused, dispersed, and distributed leading implied by the process perspective, while engaging and working effectively with individuals who are called 'leaders' and who wish to develop their own skills?' As Alvesson and Deetz have proposed (2000), I'm now attempting to follow different themes without attempting to resolve tensions which might offer a synthesis… at least at this stage. What a difference a year can bring!

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

Excerpt 12: **'becoming' through 'rooting in the present'**
With the need to take part in workshops at both Bath and Exeter, I find I've many opportunities to reflect on my learning during the MA coaching activity and my development work with organizations. My impromptu mutterings into my digital dictaphone while driving back and forth on the M4/M5 motorways, lead to a rich array of insights and new ideas, which I transcribe and write 'diary notes' about. One of these magical creative moments occurs when I find myself synthesizing a range of concepts and experiences which develop and expand my earlier identity-related idea of 'seeking roots in the future'. The new idea moves to a more dynamic process verb: 'rooting in the present'. This is a search for roots but in the present discussion or situation, and –

taking the presencing 'move' - in ways that already embody those 'roots in the future' something that I can work with and influence *in the moment* rather than just reflect on after the fact…[the] sort of stance that Patricia Shaw [2002] talks about in her book on complexity…In this new framing I seem able to take my original metaphor of 'seeking roots' in a more *relational* direction in which I transform the metaphor from its existing methodological or 'how' emphasis, to a 'becoming' or ontological framing i.e. **'I'm searching for my identity in the present moment, in an ongoing process of 'becoming'…finding out/creating who I am *as* I help others.** Here I bring the relational perspective explored previously as an 'out there' epistemological concept, much closer to home to a place where I'm proposing that the formation and maintenance of my very identity could be influenced in the process of educating students and clients.

<center>*   *   *</center>

Excerpts 13: creating a 'virtual' culture of inquiry: minimal conditions?
And now as I settle into focusing my research lens primarily on my coaching work on the MA programme, the opportunity for monitoring and analyzing such a process in more detail becomes a possibility. And this is what the next excerpt starts to explore, taken from a chapter I wrote for a new book on 'systemic thinking' co-edited by the late David Campbell. What I focus on in this chapter is how to create and support learning opportunities that are experienced as 'close' to the context of performance, thus reducing learning transfer by bringing into focus the *relational and contextual* implications of personal and organisational development, as well as the more usual cognitive and behavioural aspects. As I comment in regard to the MA: 'Obvious problems to struggle with here include asymmetric power relations between the university and mature students (the university 'knows'/the students don't), dynamising and personalising the learning materials to suit a wide range of participants (creating a 'personal' MA), and encouraging students to apply ideas, and learn from applying these, in their work roles (tackling the 'transfer' problem identified earlier)'

What becomes clearer as my experience builds, is that 'it seems quite possible to create a pedagogy which is quite *personal* in character, where knowledge appears to be largely *co-constituted*, *and* where the learning is very much to do with *local performing contexts*…[a] working hypothesis begins to form: "close learning" in the pedagogic or development "space" is best achieved when the coach is able through his/her "receptive-responsiveness" (Rayner, 2010), to "indwell" (to live with…at a tacit, experiential level for a period of time)… the *learning relationship* between coach and student…[in this situation] the coach is able intuitively to make comments and share ideas which seem to come from *within* the relationship, providing powerful support to the student…[and this] very much constitutes the conditions for a 'culture of inquiry'.

It seems that as the MA programme begins to draw me in, my writing turns more to dealing with the character of specific issues affecting student learning and the coaching relationship. At the same time having to write a chapter on my version of 'systemic thinking' generates the concept of a 'systemic' mindset or spiral which helps me generate multiple perspectives that can inform a side-by-side approach to coaching. My earlier thinking about 'close learning' gets a stimulus from the regular interactions 'at close quarters' that the weekly learning log exchanges provide; and the digital record of

these interchanges begins to provides a textual record which, though I don't realize it at the time, will prove invaluable in the later stages of the research.

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Excerpt 14: **'close learning': development as improvisation?**
In 2005 the new director of the MA, Donna Ladkin, and I decided to write an academic paper about the programme, involving two other colleagues in the process, and this next excerpt comes from a piece of writing that was a part of this first formal inquiry into the online coached version of the long running residential programme (Ladkin et al, 2008). It was written in response to a question from one of the independent reviewers of our submission to *Leadership* who asked us to compare our approach with action learning. As I was asked to draft our response to this, it brought home to me the importance in such writing of positioning one's writing to parts of the 'field' that readers, reviewers, and examiners might consider relevant and possibly critical. 'What we are trying to achieve with 'close learning' is to facilitate relevant learning/development close to the situation of action – so the 'transfer gap' between 'learning/applying' is minimised. In the optimum position, as in improvisation where 'composing/playing' becomes simultaneous, this gap is eliminated. By definition this involves encouraging students in attempting to use new ideas to inform their behaviour-in-context i.e. in action, and then to learn something about themselves and effective practice from these experiences, both in the now and later in reflection and questioning with their online coach and colleagues.'

While I'm engaged in discussions about this article with my academic colleagues, I am surprised to find that I'm using different standards of judgement to them. In addition to the normal presentation of cognitive knowledge that a 'studies' programme looks for, I also want to see what students are doing or going to do with the newly experienced idea, in terms of *developing a level of skilled performance*, and *applying it in their own practice* in order to improve their own and others' performance. As my intent focuses on *situated performance,* my criteria go beyond the usual requirements of the university, the academic director and the external examiner, to include the kind of tacit and embodied knowing that leads to authentic performance in real life situations.

On reflection, I realize that the experience of using 'close learning' thinking on a development programme with a client in the public sector (discussed earlier in Excerpt 13) has provided a useful contrast with what I'm doing with students on the MA. And here in writing this piece, the need to contrast the MA with the action learning approach helps me clarify what is different and unique about the programme. So back to my research question – 'how can I improve my practice' to build on and exploit these differences to student advantage?

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Excerpt 15: **research:** *from* **improving practice** *to* **responding to context**
Something I found very useful through-out the decade was using sketches and diagrams to explore and clarify how I was thinking about my practice and about the research of

my practice. This was a habit first initiated in the late 60's when I learned about 'critical path networks' at Nanticoke GS and developed over the years through attending workshops as diverse as 'soft systems methodology' (Checkland and Scholes, 1990) and studying ways of mapping/diagramming discussions. I include here two of the diagrams to provide another view on how my thinking was developing over the period. The first diagram created in May, 2006 illustrates how I see the relational and circular nature of educational *influence* within the learning process, from supervisor through coach and student to the student's organisations. The labels indicate my particular interest in creating a 'culture of inquiry' in order to help students access 'marginalised or tacit knowledges', using the tools of multiple ways of knowing, close learning, and embedding/embodying development in the workplace. The focus is very much on the 'how to improve my practice' aspect of the thesis.
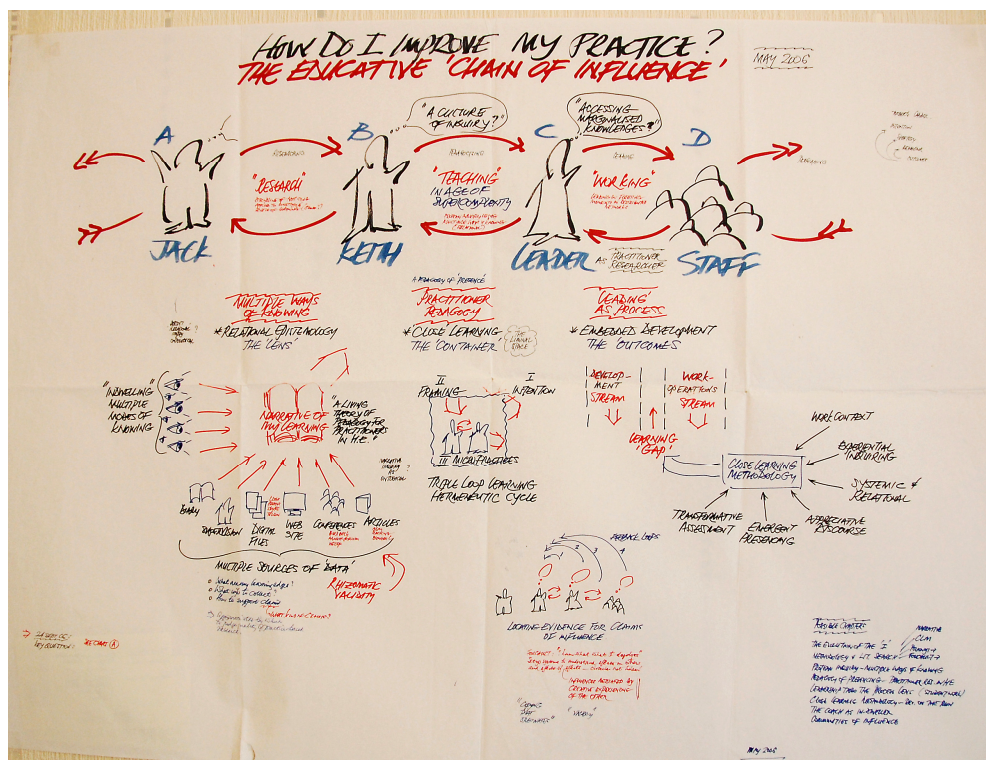

DIAGRAM PREPARED FOR SUPERVISION SESSION IN MAY 2006

In this second diagram prepared some 4 years later in February, 2010, my attention has shifted much more from my practice to the *context* in which my inquiry is taking place (particularly on the left hand side of this diagram); and locating my argument much more centrally within current concerns and ideas in the educational landscape - like helping students navigate through complex educational ecologies (Lee and Rochon, 2009), and finding means of accessing and systematising the rich resources of tacit knowledge possessed by educational practitioners (Farren, 2001). The various processes identified in the earlier diagram are still very much present but these have evolved and been focused: there are now more specific learning outcomes as pictured on the right hand side of the diagram, and more clarity about the educational tools that I'm using and their influence.
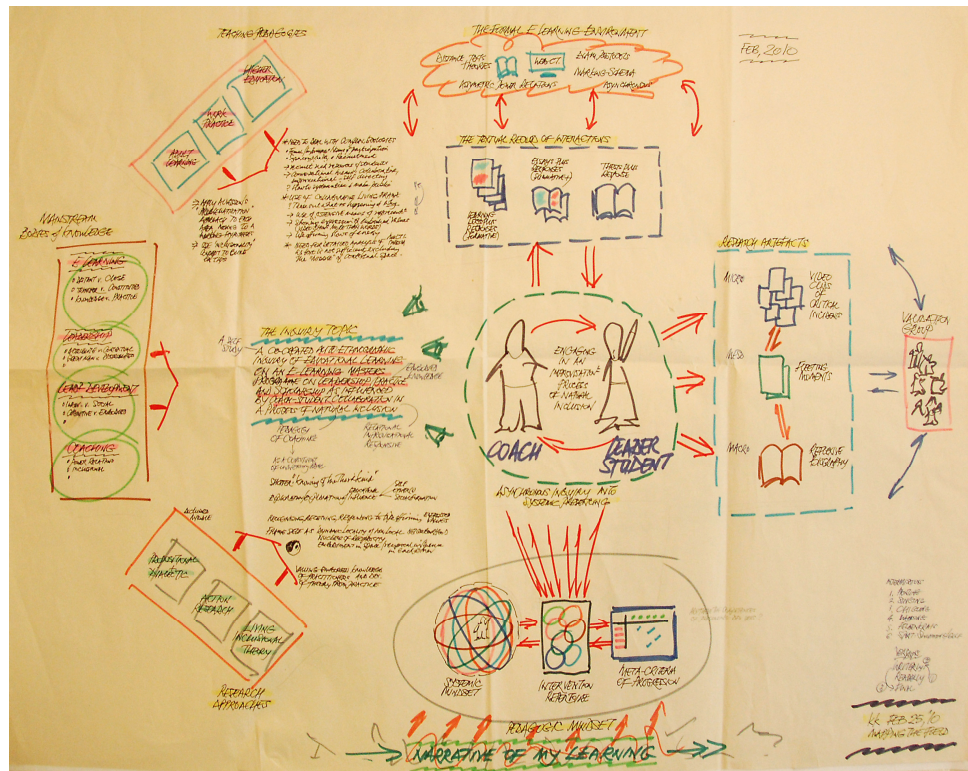
DIAGRAM PREPARED FOR SUPERVISION SESSION IN FEBRUARY, 2010

The two diagrams show in pictorial form how my perspective on the inquiry has developed over the four years, with a marked shift towards the appropriate *contextualization* of the more detailed work I've been doing with students. This 'lifting of my head' has been in response to the need to be much clearer about where in the educational research field, the learnings of my lengthy personal journey might problematise, cast new light, and/or usefully fit within the particular domain I'm working in. The need to make claims of originality and critical judgement, and the need to provide evidence to justify these, has also had a useful effect in encouraging me to look more at the 'what is' as against my usual pre-occupation with 'what might be', as I look at ways of improving my practice.

These also offer a useful artifact of my newer framing of 'presencing developmental possibilities' identified in the Introduction. What becomes more obvious here is my intense interest in the practice of 'contextualising', both 'inwards' towards the people involved and 'outwards' towards the situation in view, so acting very much as an artifact/tool for *including* and mediating the 'excluded middle'. Or alternatively using Rayner's concept of natural inclusion, to see this as a tool that allows me to appreciate and respond to the permeable and fluid boundaries that act as interfaces and are inclusive of dynamic local 'figural' neighbourhoods and receptive 'intangible' space (Rayner, 2010).

In the final excerpt in this chapter – Excerpt 20 – I make use of the second diagram to talk through my thinking with Jack Whitehead, about how I now see the thesis, and what steps I feel I need to take to begin bringing closure to the research phase and begin 'writing up' the narrative[7].

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[7] What was I thinking when I wrote this sentence – as if there was *any* chance at all of 'bringing closure' to the 'research' phase when I still had the whole 'writing' phase to work through!

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I had been wondering for some time how I might better understand, present, and validate the *tacit* aspects of the educational process. My own experience suggested these were very important but I was struggling to see how I could capture and demonstrate this to others. In this regard, Jack Whitehead had in the past mentioned on several occasions the potential benefits of using video recording as a means of capturing and presenting information on interactive processes like teaching, and I felt that this might well provide an answer. But I wasn't sure how. So at one of our supervision sessions I asked Jack if he would video our discussion so we could explore how it might add value to what I was doing.

Excerpt 16: **coaching as 'presencing developmental possibilities'?**
The following two short video clips - *presencing developmental possibilities parts 1 and 2 -* are taken from the 70 minute video produced in 2008 and capture in real time the emergence of my original concept of 'presencing developmental possibilities', and how we then explored the potential relevance of this in my inquiry. I review each of these clips in detail in Chapter 3 when I use them to demonstrate aspects of the development of my methodology, and so I include the clips here without commentary just to show how they fit into the trajectory of my patchwork narrative. I suggest you wait till Chapter 3 to view them. However I can say here that my immediate response to viewing and reflecting on this audio-visual material made me an immediate convert to using such methods in my own work, both because of the deeper insights into the communication process they make available and the richer evidence they provide to illustrate and support consequent claims of influencing and knowing.

1. *presencing developmental possibilities part 1*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lZC-DvE7N50

2. *presencing developmental possibilities part 2*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o6PiA7txcuk

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One of the methodological issues I had been having some difficulty with was getting to grips with the several ways in which values or criteria can be used in 'living educational theory' to address questions of 'why' – the axiological, 'what' – the ontological, 'how' – the epistemological, and 'how of how' – the methodological. And further, how these could be written about as 'ontological' or embodied values, as 'standards of judgement', and as 'explanatory principles'. In a series of exchanges with Jack Whitehead throughout the research period, I had been making my own sense of this multiple usage and in the process had been generating a number of possible candidates for 'standards of judgement' which were emerging in my practice. I deal with these questions in great detail in Chapter 3, and so here just note that this has been an active process as I try and get inside my own mediated use of this research-oriented language.

Excerpt 17: embodiment, emergence and standards of judgement

As I indicate in this excerpt from an e mail to Jack during this period: 'At the level of knowing-in-action, I'm using some standards of judgement to decide whether what I'm doing is right or not, and whether others' work deserves praise e.g. my message to a student colleague about the importance of quoting his own local knowledge. These standards can be thought of as values because I decide on their basis, whether or not something is good or bad. But because I'm often not conscious of what standards of judgement I'm using in the moment – they have become streamlined and tacit through many years of evolution and use - they can be thought of as *embodied* values, not theoretical or espoused values: it's right to think that they will inevitably emerge in my practice as I'm pushed this way and that by client challenges – what really counts for me, will out! So, as you say, I identify and clarify the meaning of my embodied values in the course of their emergence through my practice…I can use them to evaluate my own learning and likewise expect others to use them to assess my claims to this learning...

But if I wish to influence others, I need to follow certain rules of the game. I need to expose to public judgement the evidence I'm using to make these personal claims of learning and influencing others. And I need to do this in a convincing way which encompasses my whole experience of living, not just those parts that fit with my theory…it's important that I expose the 'I' that is doing this learning and evaluating, in a full sense – both those aspects where things are working and those that are in a sense a negation of that desired story, the contradictions that I create and am exposed to as I try and live a worthwhile life in the real world'.

It's clear from this that as I begin to consider writing up my interim findings, I find myself engaging (yet again) with what I might call the 'languaging' aspects of living educational theory. And what I realize again is that this is not a reified approach where definitions can be understood once and for all and applied in a standard manner. For each researcher this is a dynamic meaning making process where as Garfinkel put it, we need to regard each event as always happening 'for the very first time', and find the language to do justice to this process (Garfinkel, 1967)

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Excerpt 18: **coaching: making 'connections' or revealing 'dynamic continuity'?**

Jack had introduced me quite tentatively and briefly to Alan Rayner's new thinking about space and boundaries as far back as 2005. But it was only in 2010 that I started to look at his ideas more seriously. One of the stimuli for this was the draft of his keynote speech he delivered in Australia that year (Rayner, 2010) which provided a more systematic, concentrated and lucid introduction to his concept of natural inclusion. Once I started to read this I got really attracted to his ideas and quite quickly took the opportunity to exchange some thoughts with him, to check my understanding of what he meant and to get his views on some my ideas to do with my approach to 'systemic presencing'. We seemed to get on the same wavelength quite quickly and very soon I sensed that his ideas, particularly that of '*revealing continuity*' as against '*making connections*', offered a wholly new image for my work with students. The textual record of our several e mail exchanges over a period of several weeks appears in Appendix 18 but the following brief interchange will give you the flavour of our conversation:

'(KK) my coaching work attempts to provide the *dynamic connectivity*…that helps learners heal the ruptures that they conventionally experience as they work with conventional linear logic offerings…This feels to me to be an example of a process of natural inclusion in which my continual 'presencing of developmental opportunities' is a receptive and relationally responsive improvisation to what I tacitly sense the person-in-context (or local neighbourhood[s]) is calling for…(AR) Yes, your approach does sound to me to be 'inclusional at heart'. In terms of language and logic, I'd suggest you might find the phrase 'dynamic continuity' works better than dynamic connectivity to describe what you are seeking to provide…(KK) when I read: 'natural inclusionality treats boundaries as energetic interfacings/influences and space as continuous receptive presence everywhere' and recognises that 'the presence in the gaps' is a source of continuity, not discontinuity, which doesn't stop at boundaries, I shout out 'of course: how could I see it as something that 'eliminates gaps' when they aren't there! How language entraps the unwary mind…(AR) I might add that what especially impresses me is your recognition that what is needed is more by way of REVELATION of what is, has been and always will be PRESENT all along - by way of receptive and transfigural space - than ADDITION of some new connective construct. The treatment of this receptive and transfigural presence as an absence or 'void nothingness' is at the root of the paradoxical inconsistencies of abstract rationality'.

This interchange did two things for me: it confirmed that there seemed to be a resonance between my own explorations of influencing and Alan's ideas about natural inclusion: 'this all makes good inclusional sense to me'. Further, given that our exchange was entirely via e mail without any face to face or telephone contact, it provided further evidence of the educational power of virtual communications of this kind even for complex and difficult topics like this one – we seemed able to engage in a real dialogue without any of the face to face and 'to and fro' of normal comversation.

The main idea I took from this exchange was the one of 'revelation' i.e. that my many different attempts to influence learning and education – which I had seen as seeking to 'make new connections' in the minds of others - could more fruitfully be framed as 'revealing what was always there'. And revealing not to me but to those learners themselves, who could then do something about it. This fitted much better with my idea

of a 'de-centred' practice (White, 1997) where the student's experience and development occupied centre stage, with the facilitator performing the light touch

'from-behind/alongside' role. So this new 'flow-form' way of looking at influence/identity felt like it needed to become another key part of my pedagogic approach.

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CONCLUSIONS - 'recognising the presence'

As I near the end of this 'patchwork' introduction to some of the highlights of my development biography over the past forty or so years, I think I should offer some glimpses of where I felt I'd got to a year and a half ago, before I started to write up the first draft of my thesis. I do this by providing a few patchwork quotes from the e mail note I wrote to Jack Whitehead at that time.

Excerpt 19: natural inclusion and a 'pedagogy of presencing'

Since the brief but encouraging interchange of e mails with Alan Rayner last week, I've been engaged in the process of 'indwelling' - exploring, experimenting and implicitly embodying various aspects of Alan Rayner's new concept/value of natural inclusion, which I see as his own 'punctuation' (to use a Batesonian term) of the evolutionary process…in particular my 'becoming-in-relationship' view of ontology and the multi-frame 'systemic presencing' model that has informed my way of working with student learning logs…

In talking to Alan about how I now saw my coaching role, I used the term 'offering dynamic connectivity'. And I suppose what I was thinking when I wrote to him was about helping people 'close the gap' between one thing and another, like 'theory' and 'practice' or 'development' and 'performance'. He pointed out that this implied 'rupture' between the two, and a more inclusional phrase would be *dynamic continuity* where the apparent presence of absence between so-called 'discrete' objects, is *not* mistaken as an absence of presence…So instead of describing what I do as, in a sense, 'importing' new knowledge to close a gap, I'm now thinking that what I do can now be framed as *revealing presence*…what I'm doing is helping the person (and myself) notice something that could have always been there i.e. a previously marginalised, subjugated and unnoticed aspect of *continuity*, that relates his/her 'figure' to his/her local neighbourhood…

Because in the online space of e learning, I cannot myself see/hear/feel what is in the student's situation, any questions, challenges, and proposals have to be co-creative and improvisational in intent: he/she has offered me some kind of clue, I have responded, hopefully in a receptive and responsive way, and he/she will then offer some kind of tentative 'closure' by their next move in the 'conversational triplet' (Barnett-Pearce, 1989). And then we continue in the dance…

Alan has made the point that I should be careful not to isolate the 'being' from the 'becoming' and instead view the process as one where we can "*understand the 'present' as a dynamic inclusion of 'past' in the coming of 'future'*" (Rayner, 2010). This view definitely resonates with my understanding of the presencing process, and so I'm now thinking that I could see my 'rooting in the present' as an inclusional process in the sense that is relational, responsive, and improvisatory, and that my 'complex self' and those of others I'm working with, are being formed at the same time as we presence

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Excerpt 20: **'anticipating the approach of a hidden truth'…?**
As a final commentary on this narrative I offer a video clip from the last supervision session I had with Jack Whitehead in 2010, just before I started the writing up process. To set the scene for this discussion, I offered him my view of where I'd got to with my research since our last supervision session, using the second diagram that I presented earlier in this chapter in Excerpt 15. As I finished my opening statement, he said right away, gesturing to the diagram, 'you've got your thesis'; and he then went further: that the 'contextualisation' of my work that I had just offered him 'is a transformation in the nature of your understanding of what you're doing'. I too feel in the way it captures my energized and animated manner, that it offers a good benchmark of where I was at the time, both in terms of thinking and feeling, and I include it here to give you a richer and more personal impression of what this thesis is about.

Because of the size limits on videos uploaded to You Tube (which I've used to get feedback from others), I offer this clip in two parts. In the first part you will notice that I begin by showing Jack a diagram I'd presented to him and other PhD students some 4 years earlier, and then speak to an updated version of the diagram which captures further developments in my thinking (note: both of these diagrams appear earlier in Excerpt 15). In this first part - *presenting the thesis, part 1* - I concentrate on summarizing my process of working and researching my working - to identify amongst other things the learning/development 'artifacts' being produced and the 'tools' I've constructed to support the learning process. I also start addressing components on the left hand side of the diagram concerned with the context in which students and I are working.

KK presents thesis – part 1

3. *presenting the thesis, part 1*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmEBdldG5c4

In the second part - *presenting the thesis, part 2* - I continue to explicate my reading of the context and how I'm planning to adopt a 'problematising' approach to clarify the

niche I want to focus the thesis on. I also then talk in more depth about the need for the research to capture, present, and validate what is actually going in the educational process and the critical contribution that students make to this. This then leads on to the advantages that multi-media methods of data capture can bring, showing us much more about what was said and how, than the words alone[8]. I also begin to wonder whether higher education institutions might with some advantage begin to think about coaching not as a 'nice to have' but as a critical resource for developing situated practices.

KK presents thesis – part 2

4. *presenting the thesis, part 2*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7a9ur5nZUk

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

I hope you've enjoyed and found useful what amounts to a 'quick canter' through many of the highlights of my forty year development journey. And I hope this 'patchwork' narrative excerpted from the twenty appendices, has given you a sense of how I've been influenced regarding what Polanyi refers to as '…the act of discovery appears personal and indeterminate. It starts with the solitary intimations of a problem of bits and pieces here and there which seem to offer clues to something hidden. They look like fragments of a yet unknown coherent whole. This tentative vision must turn into a personal obsession…'. I also hope that you're now better informed about the evolving contexts I've worked in, the question that I've slowly been revealing to myself, and the progress I've made in getting towards an answer of sorts…and that you will also 'recognise that presence' that has been guiding me (Polanyi, 1983).

I believe this chapter, and the more detailed appendices that support it, offers you a taster of most of the ideas that have influenced my own development and that of my facilitative practice, and which I will use to inform my arguments. In looking back at the narrative I believe it provides evidence of several significant transformations of sense of self, focus, and nature of my knowing that I've undergone over this period. One move which may not be all that obvious from the material in this chapter, is how I've changed my focus from a desire to 'change the system' through e.g. consulting work and 'large group interventions' – so a *consultancy* role; to a perspective where I'd

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[8] recently in a Skype discussion with a student, Peter, I made a jokey play on Polanyi's 'we know more than we can say', saying that when we use video 'we not only know more than we can say - we can also *show* more than we know', the video revealing much that is hidden from conscious awareness.

reduced my ambition to focus on influencing the thinking of small groups of managers in e.g. group coaching and 'action learning sets' – so a *facilitation* role; to finally a realization that the only person I could influence was myself, and a further 'retreat' to first person ethnography – so a self improvement and *research* role. Regarding my own approach to knowing, I believe these changes in focus and role have been accompanied by three parallel transformations in my epistemology, as follows:

1. *From 'systems' to 'systemic' where I've moved from seeking 'the facts' and propositional explanations to ones where the influence of human interaction looms larger and there is a need to explore the 'social facts' of personal meaning and motivation before an understanding can be formed and validated*
2. *From 'systemic' to 'social constructionist' where the power of language to construct realities, and the influence of power relations and dialectics on the particular meanings warranted within the social discourse, is recognized*
3. *From 'social constructionist' to 'embodied practice' where I've become much more committed to the tacit and ontological dimensions of meaning making seeking explanations in the relational and inclusional patterns of practice within local contexts in the moment*

Following Rayner (2010), I do not see any of these shifts as taking place between discrete phases with clear boundaries, but as a useful punctuation of how my thinking and becoming has evolved over the period. And also following Torbert's Leadership Development Framework (Torbert and Associates, 2004), I see them as being different aspects of a nested 'Russian doll' concept of knowing where all kinds of knowing are relevant and available.

In looking back I also realize that there is one very significant gap in the coverage of my formative experiences in this chapter, and that is the fact that I've not commented on any of my explorations and learnings from a range of *embodied practices* like shiatsu, playing golf, t'ai chi/chi gung, swimming, portrait painting, Feldenkrais, choral singing, and so on. With the goal in each of these being the development of *embodied skills*, I've not felt the need to *write* about any of them, and so effectively their 'voice' has been mute here in this 'text' dominated narrative. However, you will soon find that their 'voice' has been anything but quiet in my lived theorizing and practice over the decades. This influence will become more evident as you progress through future chapters, and I'll 'pull in' relevant explanatory material when appropriate.

So in summary, I seem to have been able to improve my focus and get closer to the issue I've been pursuing all these years, in a specific area of practice: *coaching on an online higher education degree devoted to improving a situated practice.* I've largely followed my own path to this point and one important question now must be – how does this fit into the research field(s) that it is a part of? In the next chapter I will position more clearly the particular question I've chosen to pursue in greater depth, in its context, and show how it relates to the various 'fields' it conjoins. Following Alvesson and Deetz's lead (2000), I will also then seek to problematise many of the conventional ideas and approaches located in these conjoining fields that seem to be regarded as 'mainstream', in order to seek a more defined problem space for my inquiry.