

Chapter Two

The Emergence of a Methodology

“Research that produces nothing but books will not suffice.”
(Lewin, 1948. p.203.)

In this chapter I describe the process I have engaged in whilst undertaking research into my own practice. I also reflect on how my research methodology has emerged in a relational way with the development of my practice and the creation of an epistemology of inclusional and responsive practice. I describe how I first became engaged with the more traditional research methodologies and through this engagement was able to develop a greater understanding and ownership of my own research process. I also discuss how I became introduced to and interested in action research and how I have needed to develop my own understanding and practice of action research in order to answer my research question ***“How can I improve my practice.”***

When I took the first steps of my doctoral journey they were slightly tentative steps. I had just graduated with a Master of Science Degree from the Department of Social Science at the University of Bath. Throughout the two years of study to gain this qualification I had set about the task of learning as much as I could about research methodology and had the opportunity to explore different research methodologies from both a quantitative and a qualitative perspective. I had undertaken two pieces of research, the first of which required the development of a national survey and involved an understanding of questionnaire design and analysis. I had originally thought that surveys or questionnaires were only useful when surveying very large numbers of people. Although I had chosen for this project to include the whole population of clinical audit leads in NHS Trusts, this was still a small survey of just over 100 participants. I was also influenced at the time by the work of Lindblom and Cohen (1979); in their writing they argue that the survey could well be the best available

tool for social scientists. The information I gathered from this survey was useful but in this instance its use as an in-depth study was fairly limited. What my survey produced was exactly what Colin Robson (1993) predicts in his writing that it would produce “.....*a relatively small amount of information is collected from any one individual.*” (Robson, 1993. p.49). The information I gathered from the survey had just skimmed the surface, it gave me a tantalising glimpse at what was happening in these organisations but I had managed to collect very little detail about individual experience and I wanted to know more. I now wanted to understand how individuals were going about the process of change in their organisations. This “glimpse” was telling me that they were finding it difficult to engage healthcare professionals in a multi-professional and reflective way and it also indicated to me that it appeared to be difficult to demonstrate that any improvement was actually taking place. I wanted to know more about what was affecting them and why they were finding it difficult (Naidoo, 1999). I made the decision to focus in more depth for my second project. In the second project I used the methodology known as grounded theory, where a theory or hypothesis is developed throughout the research inquiry. Grounded theory was developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), Corbin and Strauss (1990) and by Strauss (1987). In grounded theory the researcher does not begin the research with a preconceived theory. The theory emerges from the data the researcher collects.

“Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action.” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998. p. 75).

Through this exploration of research methodology whilst undertaking my Master of Science Degree in Social Research I was able to identify more clearly the way in which I wanted to undertake research for my doctoral

inquiry. I became very interested in action research at this point and in my attempt to discover more about this as a research methodology I found that it seemed to be the most appropriate method for the inquiry I wanted to carry out. What I was particularly interested in is how action research itself appeared to be an emergent methodology that drew on a variety of different sources. I was excited by this as it seemed to have some resonance with the emergent nature of my own practice.

In order to develop an understanding of action research I found it necessary to undertake a review of the history of action research methodology. Ben Cunningham's (1999) PhD thesis contains a review of action research and I found this was also a useful tool to help me with this process. His review indicates that action research was firstly associated with the work of Kurt Lewin and located within the traditions of social science. Lewin's work identified the way in which change can be better achieved when workers are involved directly in that change.

(Lewin.1946). Stephen Corey (1953) had identified that action research could be a means by which teachers in schools could improve their practice. At this time action research was still a process that was externally initiated and was also often externally undertaken and in this respect is different to the self initiated action research we think of today. Action research then became popular within educational settings in the UK through the work of Lawrence Stenhouse. (Stenhouse.1975). Stenhouse was encouraging the involvement of teachers in the research of their own practice but this still used external observation. It was not until the work of John Elliot and Clem Adelman (1976) and Elliott (1978) and (1991) that we see a move towards teachers researching their own practice. As I was becoming more interested in researching my own practice I was also becoming clearer about action research being a methodology that would help me to do this.

On completion of my Masters Degree in the Department of Social Science I made the decision to continue with my studies and registered as a PhD

student. My reasons for doing this were two fold; firstly I wanted the opportunity to engage in an educational study over a longer period of time and secondly I wanted this study to directly impact on my professional development in order to improve my skills as a facilitator of healthcare improvement. One of the ways of doing this would be to undertake a study of my own practice. At the time I also began to be concerned about the kind of supervision that would be available to me and the kind of expertise that was available in relation to my choice of methodology. Throughout my previous study I had been able to access a wealth of expertise in relation to the more traditional research methods but I had been unable to find very little guidance on grounded theory. Without this kind of expertise available to me throughout the period of my grounded theory project I struggled with the methodology and much of the time I had to rely completely on books. This for me was an unsatisfactory way to learn as I know I need to enter into an educational relationship in order to learn. I was determined that if I was to continue then I needed to find someone to supervise my research who was familiar with action research. In desperation I rang the switchboard at the University and asked the operator to put me through to the member of staff who was known for their expertise in action research, this was a rather unusual method of locating supervision but to my surprise after a moments silence the switchboard operator replied, ***“I think you probably want to talk to Jack Whitehead in the Department of Education, I’m sure he’ll be able to advise you.”*** I spoke to Jack briefly and arranged to meet him to talk further about my proposal for research and whether he would be prepared to be my second supervisor.

I found my first meeting with Jack to be one of the most empowering encounters I have ever experienced. The entry in my research journal reflects this.

“This meeting was fabulous! – for the first time ever at this university I felt my contribution was valued by a member of the academic staff. Jack

helped me to realise how important my work is and that as a practitioner I have an important contribution to make. Jack was also very positive about my research proposal, however, in terms of action research the ‘I’ is missing. He was of course absolutely right because I have just spent the past 2 years removing the ‘I’ from my research – as instructed. I have become the third person, the objective researcher, avoiding research bias. But I know, in my heart that that does not make sense, how can I ever be objective and unbiased. I have a passion for what I am doing and I want people to experience my passion, thank you Jack!

Reading this email now reminds me just how insecure I had become about what I understood the ‘traditional’ research process to be.

My decision to use action inquiry was based on the importance action inquiry places on the process of improving practice. I was also beginning to focus on myself as a practitioner with the intention of studying my own practice in order to improve it and I was not seeking to make generalisations, very much in the way that Marion Dadds (2004) describes. *“Rather, it is seeking new understandings that will enable us to create the most intelligent and informed approach we can to improving our provision for those in our care.”* (Dadds, 2004. p.3.) My focus on my own developing practice and my desire to bring in a more creative approach to my practice was driven by and is still driven by my ontological commitment to my passion for compassion and through my practice to find ways in which I can contribute to an improvement in the experience of people who use our services. I was setting out to develop a better understanding not only of my practice but of the context within which I am a practitioner. Peter Reason and Helen Bradbury’s (2001, p.1) definition of action research adds to this.

“Action research is a participatory, democratic process concerned with developing practical knowing in the pursuit of worthwhile human purposes. It seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions

to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally to the flourishing of individual persons and their communities.”

My research journey has involved a process of inquiry, an inquiry into my own practice, in order to improve my practice and my relationship with the people I am working with. The process of reflective inquiry I have used is that of living theory action inquiry. (Whitehead. 1989).

Living theory action inquiries always start with the researcher asking a question such as *“How can I improve my practice?”* This once again focuses the researcher on the ‘I’ because ‘I’ am researching my own practice. Jack Whitehead’s work places the emphasis on the lived practice of the researcher unlike in the previous tradition of educational research where social scientists come in to the classroom to do research on teachers and pupils. This kind of research is based on psychology and sociology and its results have been traditionally presented in a propositional form. Whitehead (1989. p.42) claims that representing research in the propositional form *“masks the living form”*. The knowledge generated by the researcher about their own practice generates valid descriptions and explanations of educational practice and development and can then become a *“living educational theory”* (Whitehead. 1989). I have taken the idea of living theory and developed it in relation to my own practice and I will refer to this as *‘the living theory of inclusional and responsive practice’*. The development of the methodology used will emerge in this narrative along with the development of my practice.

Although I have been researching my own practice and asking myself the question *“How can I improve my practice?”* this has not been an activity undertaken in isolation. In my day-to-day working life I am engaging with individuals and teams who are asking themselves the same question and so the question develops and becomes *“how can we co-create an*

environment where we can improve what we do?” This process has meant that I have had to develop a way of working with people that is truly responsive to their needs through a relationship of inclusionality, trust and respect. Working in this way also encourages us to consider our lives in a wider context. As we develop relationships that take us beyond the usual boundaries of professions and organisations, these relationships widen and become interconnecting and branching creating networks of communication that can also have an impact on the creation and re-creation of social formations.

Having to look critically at my own practice in this way has enabled me to develop a greater understanding of how I practice and what my practice consists of. I am then more able to make decisions as to how I could make improvements to my practice. It has also been important for me to be able to demonstrate that my practice had indeed improved. As part of this process I have, throughout the period of this inquiry, kept a reflective journal. This journal has been an important part of the research process for me both in enabling me to reflect on my practice but also in the act of the writing of the journal I have been able to gain additional clarity as to my practice and my learning. This also spills over into the way I live my life and this has much similarity with the writing of Judi Marshall in her description of “*Living life as inquiry*” (Marshall, 1999, p.6).

“And yet a key theme for me in living life as inquiry is that my learning is enhanced by articulating it to myself, and by opening it to comment by others.”

This also influences the decisions and choices I make as to which stories I include. The stories I have included are ones that have been exceptionally influential in the way that I have learned about myself as a practitioner and have been significant in the way I have been able to improve and develop

not only my practice but in my sense making and understanding of the context within which I practice.

“It also involves seeking to pay attention to the ‘stories’ I tell about myself and the world and recognising that these are all constructions, influenced by my purposes and perspectives and by social discourses which shape meanings and lives.” (Marshall, 1999, p.3).

I work very closely with my husband Shaun and over the past couple of years we have undertaken many projects together. Throughout this inquiry Shaun has supported me by taking on the role of critical friend. This has happened by way of critical conversations about work we have undertaken together and a reflection on each others work and ways we may wish to change what we are doing in order to make improvements to our practice. As we have grown up together in the world of Theatre in Education and Theatre for Development this is a process we have learnt to engage in as it is a routine part of our day-to-day practice. Notes from these critical conversations have also been entered in my reflective journal and on occasion, where it was possible, we have also video taped these conversations.

I have also been part of a wider group of action researchers at the University of Bath in the Department of Education. This group of reflective practitioners have also contributed to my overall validation process. An early entry in my journal describes my feelings following my first encounter with this group.

“I joined this group this evening for the first time and what an interesting group of people they are. A very mixed group but the one thing they have in common is that they are all engaged in researching their own practice. Some are very experienced in this and in writing and

sharing their writing. I was able to contribute to the debate, much to my surprise and they were happy with my contribution. Later in the session I did get a little lost and slightly confused by the language they were using in their critique of each others writing.....Jack has asked me to bring some of my writing to next weeks meeting. I am incredibly anxious about this but I want to be able to share my writing with this group as I would really value their comments.”

The anxiety I was feeling about sharing my writing was further displayed in a conversation recorded in the entry in my journal following the next weeks meeting.

Me: *Erm....I’m afraid I’ve failed miserably, I have been so busy this week, such a heavy work load at the moment, I just haven’t had time to write a thing, so I have failed I’m afraid.*

Jack: (Laughing) *You’ve failed – I love it you’ve failed – what on earth do you mean you’ve failed?*

Moira: *What do you mean you have failed; it’s not about that, nobody fails here!*

Me: *Well what I mean is...I’m actually not sure what you were expecting from me....I wasn’t really sure where to start...what to write about. I’m right at the beginning of my research...I don’t know anything yet!*

Moira: *Of course you know things – You have so much experience – You are an expert in what you do.*

Me: *I suppose it’s more to do with how I write about what I do. I’m not sure how to reflect that in my writing.*

Moira: *Ahhh....how to satisfy the academics! Look you have just read this paper of mine and you said it spoke to you – now you may have read*

it as an interesting ramble from me – because it is in narrative form – when actually it is a very rigorous piece of academic writing.

At this point we were joined by a late comer to the group who I had not met before and Jack asked me to introduce myself and to talk a little about me, my work and my research.

Jack: *Marian, I wish I had recorded you then. Going back to what you said earlier about not knowing very much! You have just given us a beautiful account of what you do, how you are going to research it and what your inquiry involves.*

When I read these early entries in my journal I am reminded how difficult I found writing about my practice in this way. I initially felt very threatened by this process. This was because of my earlier experience of writing academic research and the reaction from the academy to this kind of writing. It was also around this time that I made the decision to transfer from the department of social science into the department of education and Jack became my official supervisor.

My relationship with the action research group on a Monday evening has been an essential part of my research process. As I began to engage in the process of writing my thesis I have been able to share my writing with this group for their input and comments. This has been particularly useful as I have begun to focus my attention on to the synthesis of complexity theory and creativity in my work. The group has also been a very useful group in which to test out new ideas particularly with the development of characters as part of the devising process for pieces of theatre.

Narrative has also played a significant role in this process. My decision to use narrative as a means of communicating my research is for me very important.

Firstly it places an emphasis on and contributes to the importance I place on my own emerging identity; part of that emerging identity is the recognition of myself as a storyteller. There has been much vigorous debate about the use of narrative in research and Philips (1993) expresses caution and argues a need for narrative to be made “epistemically respectable.” He expresses concern that no matter how good and credible the story is it ***“tells me nothing – absolutely nothing – about whether it is true or false.”*** (Philips,1993. p. 8). Jane O’Dea (1994) counters that argument in the following way.

“....the fact that we are speaking here of “research” stories does tell us something. They tell us that the incidences described actually occurred. And while we have all heard of researchers faking the data in order to get a better, more reliable result, it is not their choice of research method that brings this about but the fact that they are dishonest researchers.”
(O’Dea, 1994. p. 96.)

In the telling of my story, the story of my learning, I have made a great effort to address these issues. I have done this by sharing my practice and my reflections in as open a way as is possible. The creation of a DVD of my developing practice has played a significant part in this process and contributes to the data used for my narrative.

The telling of stories is not solely for the purpose of entertainment but rather as Jane O’ Dea goes on to describe,

“... to encourage practitioners to reflect deeply and discerningly on their teaching practice, to see it from a variety of perspectives, to uncover and bring to conscious awareness of the multiple levels of presuppositions that inform their perceptions and which determine (often unconsciously) their interpretation of particular situations.”
(O’Dea, 2002. p.96).

Although in this instance she is talking about teachers using narrative to reflect on their practice I feel it is just as important for me in reflecting on my practice as a facilitator.

Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin also write about the importance of narrative in research. They use the metaphor of a landscape to capture the complex context within which teachers work.

“We view the landscape as narratively constructed: as having a history with moral, emotional and aesthetic dimensions. We see it as storied. To enter a professional knowledge landscape is to enter a place of story.” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999. p.2).

I use narrative in several different ways in my practice; I have used narrative to communicate research using a process grounded in the theories and practice of theatre-in-education. Theatre-in-education is traditionally located in schools as a method of enhancing the learning process. I have used this process to develop character and narrative to communicate research findings, particularly within my work to improve services for people with dementia. I have also used a process of collective storytelling within the clinical groups themselves as a way of sharing lives and experiences from different perspectives and as a way of collecting research data. Using stories in this way is similar to what Connelly and Clandinin (1999) refer to as *“Stories to live by”*. They use this phrase to describe how the link between knowledge, context and identity can be understood narratively. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999. p.4.)

Stories are also recognised as holding potential for contributing to both social and cultural change. Cornelia Hoogland writing about the importance of story within an ecological educational environment expresses this in the following way:

“Stories conjoin emotions and intellect. Facts are presented in the context of feelings. The act of organizing stories necessitates reflection; students need to consider what happens and how they feel about events. To tell a story is to create connections. Embodied connections. Stories embody lived experience – they are meant to move us. Stories are not just so much talk, they are talk in action. They are what head-talk becomes when it is joined to the body, or what ideas become when they are fused to lived experience. If we want students to care about the environment, we need to ensure that our curriculum is designed to elicit such responses. Descriptive language – facts and information – can achieve certain educational goals. Facts can move people emotionally, but often they do not. However, when facts are presented in the context of feelings – as stories – they engage people aesthetically. They appeal to people’s emotions and imaginations as well as to their intellect. Facts alone (disembodied knowledge) separate students from the educational goal of creating a caring relationship between people and nature. Stories (embodied facts) can help to achieve such a relationship. (Hoogland,2003. p.216.)

My experience of stories, both in writing my own and in encouraging others to tell theirs is a similar one. The similarity is in the power of reflection-in-action in the telling of a story and in the power of communicating the emotional impact along with the facts. The telling of stories in the project “Breaking down the Walls of Silence” (Chapter 6) I believe, powerfully illustrates this. McNiff (2000) p246 also emphasises the importance of our stories in generating theory particularly within organisations. These stories, like my own, describe the stories of people’s practice and can demonstrate clear evidence of the development of learning.

My use of narrative within my research should not however be seen through the lens of empirical research. This story is an account of my learning and although it may be useful for others to read it is important to note that I am not claiming that what I have undertaken is in any way generalisable or replicable.

Throughout this inquiry I have found it important to address the issue of validity in self-study narrative. In an article written by Robert Bullough and Stefinee Pinnegar (2001), the authors argued for the need for self-study researchers to develop a set of guidelines for quality. In response to this, Allan Feldman (2003) argues that in addition to this researchers using self-study also need to address the issue of validity. He concludes his argument by publishing a list of 4 criteria that he believes can increase the validity of self-study, these are:-

- 1. Provide clear and detailed description of how we collect data and make explicit what counts as data in our work. That is, either within the text itself or as an appendix, provide the details of the research methods used.**
- 2. Provide clear and detailed descriptions of how we constructed the representation from our data. It is not always obvious how an artistic representation of research has arisen from the data. It would add to the validity of the representation if readers had some knowledge or insight into the way the researcher transformed data into an artistic representation.**
- 3. Extend triangulation beyond multiple sources of data to include explorations of multiple ways to represent the same self-study. Because one data set can lead to a variety of representations it is important to show why one has been chosen over the others. A danger is in the construction of straw men. However, multiple**

representations that support and challenge one another can add to our reasons to believe and trust the self-study.

4. Provide evidence of the value of the changes in our ways of being teacher educators. As I have discussed, self-study is a moral and political activity. If a self-study were to result in a change in the researcher's way of being a teacher or teacher educator, then there should be some evidence of its value (Northfield & Loughran, 1997). A presentation of this evidence can help to convince readers of the study's validity.

I have attempted throughout my research to apply these principles to my work in order to ensure that I am addressing the issue of validity in what I am doing. I have collected data throughout this period in several ways. In the creative workshops participants have been encouraged to reflect on their experience and their learning and to suggest ways in which their experience may have been enhanced. I have also used a reflective journal to record my experiences and have found this a very useful way of explaining meaning to myself as a way of developing a greater understanding of my practice and how it can improve. I have on many occasions recorded myself in practice throughout this period with a DVD camera. I have also used this as a way of gathering stories from those people who have worked alongside me and contributed to my story.

I believe that in reflecting on and clarifying the meaning of my embodied values and transforming them into living standards of practice from which my practice can be judged I am continually addressing the issue of validity in the self-study of my emergent practice. As I reflect on my practice and ask myself the question *"How can I further develop my practice?"* in a process of spiral learning I am bringing to the forefront these questions as part of my validation process. I am also using multi-media not only for data collection but also as a way to communicate this process and to

further validate claims that I am making in my research. (See DVD. “A never ending story” and Chapter 3, Expressing and clarifying my embodied values through the creation of a DVD.)

The process of this inquiry has enabled me to recognise and understand my motivations as guiding principles. These guiding principles are my embodied values and through my inquiry I have been able to understand what they are, their breadth, why they are important and in what way I now live them in my practice.

In my day to day practice as a facilitator of healthcare improvement I am engaging with teams that are usually quite complex in their make-up. In many cases teams are multi-professional and cross several boundaries e.g. Social care and/or education. Individuals can often be members of more than one team and tension and conflict is a natural phenomenon. This creates difficulty for the traditional organisational management perspective that prefers to encourage harmony and compromise.

These tensions which are the source of organisational anxiety are well recognised in the organisational literature. For example, Stacey, Griffin and Shaw discuss these challenges to current management theory where the dominant discourse sees the role of the manager as one of ***“removing ambiguity and conflict to secure consensus.”*** (Stacey, Griffin and Shaw, 2000).

Douglas Griffin (2002) also argues that conflict is at the heart of Mead’s theory of ethics. ***“Conflict is at the very core of Mead’s theory of ethics. It is through conflict that we are continuously recreating our world and becoming ourselves, that is, our identity.”*** He goes on to quote from Mead. ***“If we were willing to recognize that the environment which surrounds the moral self is but the statement of the conditions under***

which his different conflicting impulses may get their expression, we would perceive that the recognition must come from a new point of view, which comes to consciousness through the conflict. The environment must change pari passu with the consciousness. Moral advance consists not in adapting individual natures to the fixed realities of a moral universe, but in constantly `reconstructing and recreating the world as individuals evolve.`” (Mead, 1908. cited in Griffin, 2002. p.194).

This is very similar to Whitehead’s (1989) notion of ‘I’ as a living contradiction, which is at the core of my living theory methodology. It is in the gap between theory and reality when embodied values are not lived fully that the contradiction occurs. In my experience action research has enabled me as the practitioner to begin to understand these contradictions in my practice order to attempt to resolve them.

I believe that this form of action research differs from other research approaches I have used in the past because the research is carried out by practitioners into improving their own practice, into understanding this practice and into improving the conditions in which the practice is carried out. In this first person approach to research my ‘I’ is engaged in asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, ***‘How do I improve what I am doing?’*** In relation to complexity theory the new ‘fractal’ that is brought into the system is the individual enquirer who is reflexively engaged in researching the process of living embodied values more fully in practice. The action inquiry/research process involves individuals or groups of practitioners expressing their concerns when their values are not lived fully in their practice - that is, ‘I’ exist as a living contradiction; imagining ways forward; acting and gathering data to improve practice and to enable a judgement to be made on the effectiveness of actions; evaluating the effectiveness of action in relation to values and

understandings; modifying concerns, plans and actions in the light of the evaluations.

In researching and writing about my own practice and my own learning in this way and sharing the insights I have had within this process with a wider audience, I am hoping to be able to influence the way others approach their own learning. By the development of my own living theory of knowledge I am hoping that others will be able to engage with my learning and in so doing influence their own.

I have also become aware through the process of writing my thesis just how interconnected the various strands of what I do, who I am and how I choose to live my life have become. In the initial stages of writing up I began to map the various sections of my life and found that this could not be undertaken in a linear way and what I created was more akin to a tangled web. Margaret Wheatley also talks about “*webs of interconnections*”.

“Our zeitgeist is a new (and ancient) awareness that we participate in a world of exquisite interconnectedness. We are learning to see systems rather than isolated parts and players. Under rather austere titles of systems thinking or ecological thinking, we are discovering many things worthy of wonder. We can now see the webs of interconnections that weave the world together; we are more aware that we live in relationship, connected to everything else; we are learning that profoundly different processes explain how living systems emerge and change. Many disciplines, in different voices, now speak of the behaviour of networks, the primacy of relationships, the importance of context, and new ways to honor and work with the wholeness of life.”
(Wheatley, 1999. p.158.)

As I continued with this process I was reminded of the day we bought a trampoline for the family and the complex way we had to construct it to be of any practical use.



Journal Entry

I recently bought an outdoor trampoline for the family; it seemed like an excellent idea, something that we could all use for fun and exercise at our own level. When we began to construct it in the garden the similarity of this process and the way in which my work has developed struck me.

At first it seemed a very simple process, a large circle had to be stretched and attached to the frame by a set of very strong springs. We set about our task excited, hurried and certain that it would be up and ready for bouncing within a matter of minutes! That was when the fun really

started! I managed to attach a couple of springs quite easily, as did Shaun and Daniel, but then I couldn't pull the next spring hard enough to hook it on. I sat back to reflect for a moment thinking I had obviously done it wrong. I then noticed that Shaun and Daniel were having the same problem. Each of us had approached the task individually, without communicating; simply focusing on the task, head down, without a sideways glance, eager for the finished product. What was actually required was that we communicate, relate to each other, and then attach each spring separately but in relation to the others. Each new spring was directly related to the others and the tension of each spring immediately affected the performance of the surface of the trampoline. After some debate we agreed a way forward which meant that as each new spring was attached the other 2 adjusted the tension of their springs in order to accommodate the new spring thus improving the overall performance of the bouncing surface. The surface then becomes a taut platform from which to gain creative energy.

Using the trampoline as a metaphor has enabled me to describe the way in which the different aspects of my development are intrinsically linked. Most importantly identifying the relationships and the connectedness of the separate parts and how creative tension is crucial in encouraging emergent behaviour. This is also true of the way I work with people within organisations. I believe that successful organisations are built on relationships and recognition that an organisation is not a machine but a living and complex organism made up of people.

In our society and starting with our education our minds are sharply focussed on results, exams and league tables. This preoccupation does not allow us to grow our creative selves or to fully understand our own identity. When this is combined, in our adult lives, with the machine

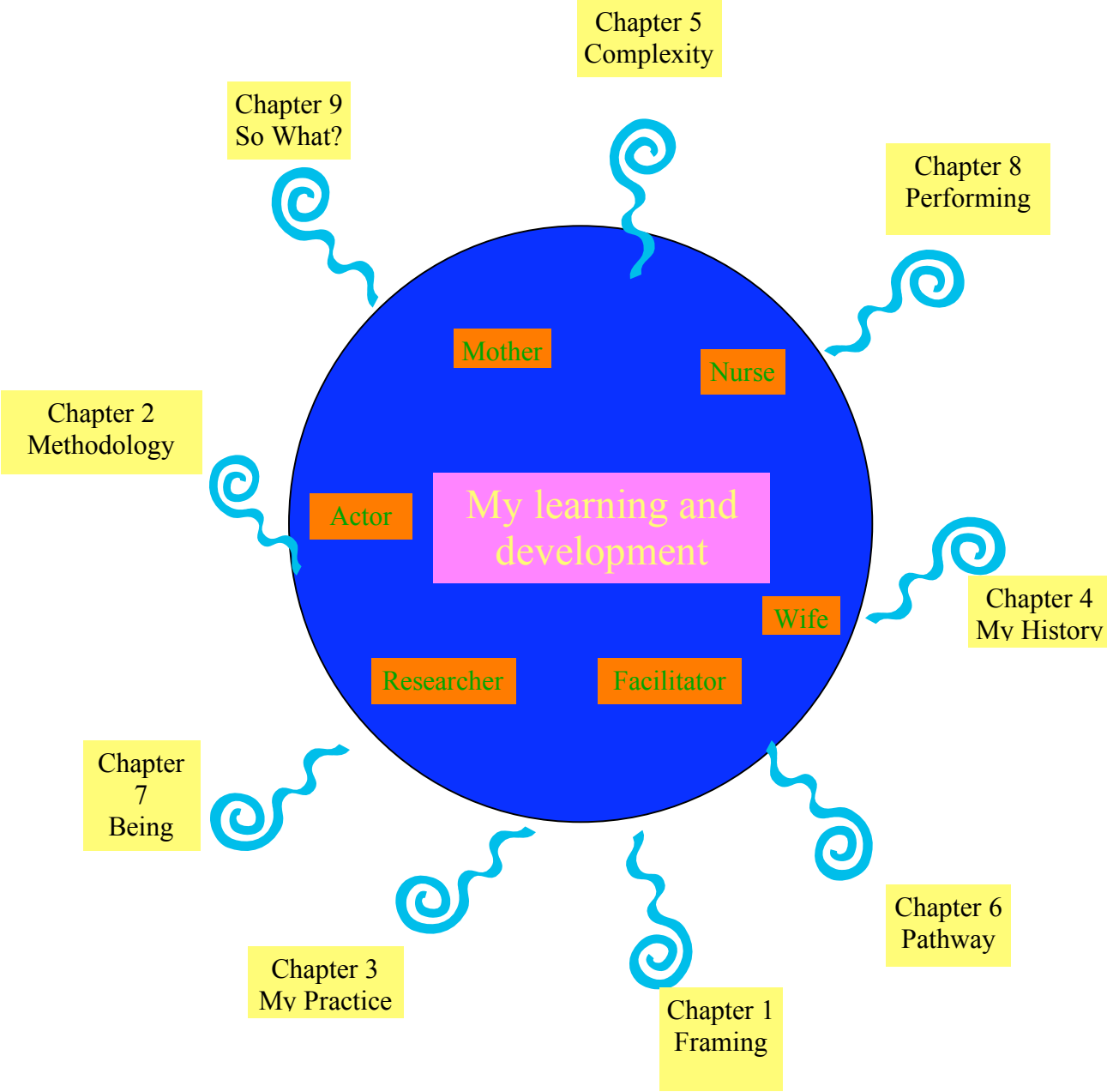
metaphor of organisational life, it is hardly surprising that our creative selves stagnate.

Margaret Wheatley also writes about the importance of what she refers to as the *“Participative universe.”* (Wheatley, 1999. p.68).

“Participation, ownership, subjective data – each of these organizational insights that I gain from quantum physics quickly returns me to a central truth. We live in a universe where relationships are primary. Nothing happens in the quantum world without something encountering something else. Nothing exists independent of its relationships. We are constantly creating the world – evoking it from many potentials – as we participate in all its many interactions. This is a world of process, the process of connecting, where “things” come into temporary existence because of relationship.” (Wheatley, 1999. p.69.)

This also resonates with the web of interconnections in the development of my living theory which has also been formed like the trampoline and uses similar approaches as described in my trampoline metaphor. This is important to bear in mind when reading this thesis as the reader may be inclined to read it in a linear way but in fact a discursive approach would also be a good way to understand the development of my living theory. I have undertaken the setting out of this thesis in a very traditional way, the chapters are numbered 1 to 9 but in fact the chapters could appear in any sequence as each is inextricably linked to all of the others. The complexity of what I do in my practice tied to the complexity of the context in which I undertake this practice is very difficult to reflect in this way. In the following diagram I have attempted to illustrate this complexity through the image of a trampoline – each of my roles interconnecting and expressed as stories in chapters – with the springs of

the trampoline pulling each of the parts together in such a way as to create a tension on the surface which is both dynamic and energetic.



As I am now in the final throws of the assembly of my thesis and reflecting again on the process I have engaged in over the past few years I have been conscious of the growth in both my knowledge and my understanding as I am creating my own living theory of my practice. My theory is a living theory because it is, and I am, in a continual relationship of developing knowledge. My research is focussing on my practice and my research into my practice, the process of asking myself the question ***“How can I improve what I do?”*** will continue even though my thesis will have come to a conclusion. That conclusion will be very much concerned with the living present it will be and can only be, a conclusion for that moment in time, momentarily catching a pause and a reflection on the meaning of what I am undertaking before we all move on again in a continual spiral of knowledge generation in an ensemble of developing practice.

This process of critically reflecting on my practice and engaging with others in an inclusional and responsive way contributes to the pedagogisation of my practice in the way that Freire (1973) describes. It also focuses my practice on building relationships ***“...that are aimed at individual and social transformation.”*** (Laboskey, 2004.) As part of my inquiry I have been asking myself how I can live my values more fully in my practice. This has involved me engaging with others ***“.....in order to seek evidence that changes did indeed represent improvement.”*** (Russell, 2002, pp. 3-4.) For me this is a crucial part of my inquiry, in my day to day work I often engage with people whose opinions and experiences are very rarely

listened to. I wanted to ensure that by developing an inclusional way of relating and responding to those I am engaging with I would be helping them to communicate their voices along with my own. My passion for compassion is rooted in a firm commitment that each one of us is unique and much of my practice involves an exploration not only our uniqueness but also how we engage and respond to each other. I also recognise that this has become one of the ways in which I pedagogise my practice. (Bernstein, 2000).

This emergent process has also had an impact on the methodology I have used resulting in an emergent methodology. I call it an emergent methodology because as I am working in a creative and emergent way I have had to find my own way through both my practice and my methodology. I do not however see this as a weakness in either my practice or my research methodology. In fact I see this very much as a strength because I believe that by allowing myself to be creative I am much more able to allow my epistemological standards of judgement to emerge from what Dadds and Hart refer to as “*Methodological inventiveness.*”

"The importance of methodological inventiveness

Perhaps the most important new insight for both of us has been awareness that, for some practitioner researchers, creating their own unique way through their research may be as important as their self-chosen research focus. We had understood for many years that substantive choice was fundamental to the motivation and effectiveness of practitioner research (Dadds, 1995); that what practitioners chose to research was important to their sense of engagement and purpose. But we had understood far less well that how practitioners chose to research, and their sense of control over this, could be equally important to their

motivation, their sense of identity within the research and their research outcomes." (Dadds & Hart, 2001. p.166).

They go on to describe how the choices that researchers make about methodological approaches should not be *"cast in stone"*. They should instead be informed by practice and as I am claiming that my practice is both creative and emergent my methodology should also be creative and emergent.

"If our aim is to create conditions that facilitate methodological inventiveness, we need to ensure as far as possible that our pedagogical approaches match the message that we seek to communicate. More important than adhering to any specific methodological approach, be it that of traditional social science or traditional action research, may be the willingness and courage of practitioners - and those who support them - to create enquiry approaches that enable new, valid understandings to develop; understandings that empower practitioners to improve their work for the beneficiaries in their care. Practitioner research methodologies are with us to serve professional practices. So what genuinely matters are the purposes of practice which the research seeks to serve, and the integrity with which the practitioner researcher makes methodological choices about ways of achieving those purposes. No methodology is, or should, cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods of techniques". (Dadds & Hart, 2001. p.169).

I believe that by allowing myself to use a creative and inventive approach to the methodology I have used for this inquiry I have been able develop a greater understanding of my practice and the context within which I practice and that this has indeed enabled my practice to improve. I also

believe that this living theory of my practice not only makes a contribution to but also extends the knowledge created by the growing body of living theory thesis. I believe that I do this by showing how an ontological commitment to a passion for compassion can be moved into a living epistemological standard of judgement which holds my inclusional and responsive practice to account.

In the following chapter I will show how as a consequence of being able to take a more inventive approach to this inquiry I have created a DVD of my practice that uses an alternative form to communicate my practice.