

## Sequence 4 The Future

This section of the thesis is written for the *other*: the person that I am not. It is written so that the *other*, the person that I wish at times I was, may be able to clearly understand what I believe are some of the implications for the *other*. I wish at times I was the *other* and that I could benefit from being the *other* within my own life. I think that I would then be able to always make things better: I think that I might not make so many mistakes in my life.

This sequence offers a form of a conclusion to the explanations I have given throughout this thesis of the nature of the educational influences I have within the spaces and relationships of my personal and professional life as an educator. It is not an ending, but rather a beginning and starting point for what comes next. I offer these explanations as a way of accounting for the nature of my life. The explanations centre around three original contributions:

1. living educational space;
2. living myself through others;
3. life-story.

Within this final sequence I wish to conclude this thesis in summarising the significance of the insights these three contributions offer. I want to clarify that *living myself through others* is my own life-affirming energy and contributes to my own living educational theory. These three contributions are not mutually exclusive; they are connected and joined up and I will refer to them throughout as I conclude the nature of my understanding of them.

#### 4.1 Living educational space

My hope is not to show people the way or impart some great wisdom through this thesis: but rather it is about sharing my own story with others and from this being able to instigate discussion and dialogue about the nature and importance of teacher-research and living educational theory. I am aware of what I believe I have learned from interacting with others through their writings and through the dialogues that I have had with them, but perhaps my own limited vanity and lack of self-belief creeps in and I don't want to accept that others can learn from what I have written. However, I am drawn to one conversation with an AST at Bitterne Park who I asked about the movement of the school to heavily focus on *learning* rather than *teaching*:

'...I think it was your good self....I don't think we'd have got there and so quickly and I don't think it would have been articulated so clearly...I don't recall in any of the meetings I've been a part of anybody but yourself commenting that we needed to focus on learning...I quite categorically think it's you Simon...' (Conversation with AST, July 2006)

Sometimes I allow myself a smile when others recognise my influence. I believe that my account is a personal autobiographical account of one person's journey. It is not a finished story but simply the beginning of something much bigger: a lifetime of action-reflection, a lifetime of 'living life as inquiry' (Marshall, 1999).

I argue within this thesis that recognising and understanding the nature of the living educational space is important in improving the education of myself and others. I explain in chapter 1.5 what I mean by living educational space and its importance within my living educational theory. This thesis accounts for how I have embarked upon understanding my own place within this living educational space and then established the conditions to enable others to consider their own places within their living educational space (Chapter 3.6). I argue within this thesis that it is important for an individual to understand themselves before trying to understand others (Sequence 2). Through this thesis I have provided accounts of how I improved the quality of the living educational space within my classroom, my department, and through a teacher-research group to influence the work across a whole school.

Within this thesis I argue the need for others to recognise the living educational space and to recognise their contribution towards establishing this (Chapter 3.6). I argue that others need to take the responsibility for improving the quality of the living educational space they are part of recognising that they can influence, change and

improve the quality of it. Through doing this I argue that individuals can recognise the value of the contribution that they can make to this space.

I argue that through recognising the living educational space a creative dialogue is able to take place from which something new and exciting can emerge; where improvements in the quality of learning can take place (Sequence 2 & 3). For me, it was the establishing of a teacher-research group within my school that provided opportunities for individuals to explore their own living educational spaces.

In this thesis I have provided the evidence to support my belief that understanding living educational space promotes a dialogical and relationally dynamic awareness of educational relationships and through this the quality of the education that takes place can be enhanced (Chapter 1.5, 1.6, 2.4, 3.2, 3.6).

## 4.2 Living myself through others

Through this thesis I am arguing that practitioners need to reflect upon and account for their own living educational theory as a way of improving the quality of the living educational space that they inhabit. My actions through this thesis have been about establishing the conditions for this to happen. For me, I have explained, clarified and demonstrated the original relationally dynamic standard of judgement of *living myself through others* and how I strive to live my life by this standard. This standard guides my practice and through it I am able to live out my life fully to be the person that I want to be. This standard is my life-affirming energy that I carry with me and contributes to my own living educational theory.

One of the claims that I want to make within this thesis is the need for making teaching a research-based profession that embraces living educational theory. I whole-heartedly embrace the revised teacher standards from the Training and Development Agency (2007) that comment:

‘All teachers should have a professional responsibility to be engaged in effective, sustained and relevant professional development throughout their careers...’ (T.D.A. Professional Standards for Teachers, 2007, p.3)

Part of the originality within this thesis is to demonstrate a sustained form of personalised professional learning through engaging in continuous professional development in the form of accounting for my own living educational theory.

I am also in support of Furlong and Oancea (2005) in their claims to review what constitutes quality within educational research, with the view to establishing a research community that comfortably nurtures, supports and promotes research in a variety of modes to develop personalised professional learning. My desire is to see stories of teacher-research valued in a living way and publicly disseminated in order to account for practice and to then use this resource for impact in order to encapsulate the future of education based on research from within it. What I embrace is the need for teachers to engage within the knowledge production about the profession and contribute towards directing the future of the profession. I see the unintended humour from Gorard and Taylor (2003) in the introduction to the British Educational Research Journal (B.E.R.J.) when they comment that their journal is ‘school-based’ when none of the papers contained are actually written by practicing teachers. I then read with anticipation the first editorial from Hammersley-Fletcher (2008) for Management in Education journal where she calls for an increase in the

number of reflective articles contained within the journal and that it being important to 'listen to the voices of those doing the work that researchers comment upon'.

(Hammersley-Fletcher, 2008, p. 2) My work as a senior leader has been about empowering teachers to be able to account for the embodied knowledge they hold about learning within their classrooms and to enable them to put this into the public domain. This body of collective knowledge exists within my school, about my school that is produced by those who directly contribute to moving the School forward. This coincides with the Editorial in B.E.R.J by Torrance, Sikes, Cooper and Stronach (2005) when they comment:

'...what we are concerned with in educational research is knowledge production...' (Torrance, Sikes, Cooper & Stronach, 2005, p. 137)

I couldn't agree more. However, my argument is that who produces this knowledge is where the debate is. I firmly believe that the voice of teachers who engage in the job of teaching and learning everyday of their lives should be heard within this and that policy should be seeking to enable this to happen more frequently. Furthermore, the arguments of Carr & Kemmis (1986) still ring true in developing the teacher-research movement:

'The reasons why teachers have become researchers vary. Some teachers have become researchers because they are the products of a period of intense intellectual and social ferment: they are committed to a view of themselves that is bound to reflect upon their educational practice; to justify it and transcend its limitations. Others have been drawn into research and evaluation roles as they have been required to debate and justify innovative practices for which they have been responsible. Still others have more or less spontaneously arrived at the general idea of the teacher-researcher simply as a reasonable aspiration for a professional. And some have been enthused by a time of major change in education in which teachers and schools have been offered greater autonomy and responsibility in curriculum matters.' (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 1)

Interviews with members of the Bitterne Park teacher-research group highlighted a number of key points about the provision for teacher-researchers within schools and how they saw their own potential impact on education.

One AST commented in relation to why they became involved:

‘I think it’s given a number of colleagues a real boost and focus...staff get fired up and motivated by it...the whole department gained from one member being involved in it...it really helped get to the core of what learning is about...’ (Conversation with AST, March 2006)

This comment resonated with my own sense of *living myself through others*; of living theories creatively engaging in a relationally dynamic way in order for something new and creative to emerge. On a wider perspective, I have been able to engage with individuals and provide the living educational space for the type of work described above to happen. However, what is significant within this thesis is that I place great value on practitioners learning from other practitioners how to improve their practice.

I asked another member of the group to reflect on her experiences of teacher-research during the M.A. programme; she had researched into creating student-researchers out of one of her teaching groups:

‘...I started off doing the MA programme simply from a purely selfish point of view in that I just want a qualification that could open other doors to different jobs but I’ve actually ended up finding it to be a much more rewarding experience and for the kids as well – I had a conversation with my MA cohort yesterday and they are just singing the praises of the whole programme because it has given them so much from me as a teacher so I just had a really positive time. And all the relationships and the people that I have met and the opportunities that it has given me – I never would have anticipated. Being asked to speak at those conferences and it’s overwhelming really – it’s been a great experience – I’ve thoroughly enjoyed it.’ (Interview, 2006)

This was beginning to remind me of the cycles of research and how I was hearing similar points to the ones made from the Westwood St Thomas teacher research group, accounted for in my M.A. dissertation (Riding, 2003). It also reminded me of my own account of how I became bitten by the bug of research. The key point here perhaps is that teacher-researchers always seem to begin with the aim of getting the qualification but then realise that it is something more, particularly when they begin to realise that the work they are doing is having a direct impact on those that they teach. The movement seems to be a real transformation of practice incorporating a deep shift in the way that they consider and reflect on their practice.

Curious about this, I further asked another member of the group if she would talk through her personal reasons for getting involved:

‘...I was a bit stagnant and in a bit of a rut and needed to do something different so I took the opportunity of doing the MA really just to give me something else to do because quite frankly the job was becoming quite repetitive and a little bit easy and I just wasn’t being challenged by anything. So that was the reason why I got involved in the programme.’ (Interview, 2006)

I could connect to this in terms of remembering that I had similar reasons for wanting to get involved in teacher-research. I connect to the links that both this person and the previous person makes, in terms of exploring their own living educational theory, particularly in recognising the living contradiction and desire to explore and find the life-affirming energy to regenerate the spirit. I read this comment and I am reminded of the need to consider the living educational space and to see it as liberating and a place of powerful transformation. I argue that it is the living educational space that needs to respond to the comments of this teacher to inspire and energise them. I believe that it is time to listen to those that are within the profession and allow them the power to direct the future of it.

This was further supported when I invited her to expand on this point:

‘...I suppose I wasn’t giving an awful lot of myself to the kids anymore and I was really just going through the motions and my first action research project was about enhancing creativity within the National Literacy Strategy and was a very personal thing because I had a real issue and have had right since the beginning five years ago .....But on a personal level I wanted to bring more of myself to the job than I used to when I was first starting but I was feeling in the last couple of years that I’ve very much been regurgitating the same resources and the same lessons because it was easy and it was just an easy ride.’ (Interview, 2006)

For me, the challenge of individuals accounting for their own educational influence through accounting for their own living educational theories is the type of activity that can inspire practitioners to focus on their practice again. She commented:

‘...I seemed to consider what I was doing and I found that having to explain myself on a video tape quite daunting but I learned a lot from it about myself...’ (Interview, 2006)

This individual was exploring her own practice through self-reflection and then accounting for this through the explanation of her own living educational theory.

I was curious as to how members of the group felt that their practice had changed as a result of engaging with teacher-research:

‘...I think it definitely changed with the group that I have been targeting, it changed hugely actually because I have become more focussed on the individual children and not just the ones that I’ve been using as my guinea pigs so to speak – it has actually spilled out on the whole of the rest of the group and they have really become my focus group in terms – not necessarily in my planning because that makes it sound like I don’t plan for somebody else and I do but because they are my SAT’s year group as well and I’ve put an awful lot into their lessons and a lot more into the teaching - they have become very much a focus for me and I really hope that the results show that. It has spilled over into my other teaching in that I’m just a little bit more enthusiastic about what I am doing on a day to day basis. I’m not sure that the tangible benefits in terms of results will be the same with the other group but I hope the personal benefits for the children of having a more enthusiastic more focussed teacher will have given additional benefits such as increased confidence perhaps or increased enjoyment of the subject because I may be giving a little bit of myself.’ (Teacher-researcher, 2006)

For me this highlighted again the potential impact of engaging within teacher-research within a school and how the focus on individual projects by teachers could potentially improve teaching and learning across all aspects of practice. The accounting for the nature of an individual’s influence over others through reflection on practice was in this case seeing perceived benefits for teacher and student.

I was curious as to the potential impact of teacher-researchers engaging within communities of research and how these communities could potentially help and support teacher-researchers:

‘...My main source of help has been one particular member of the group and I think that she and I are very similar people, very similar professionals, we are both quite focussed....But we do share very similar professional values and very similar drives for high achievement and ambition within the classroom. I think that because we both have quite a lot of professional respect for each other in the capacity, we know each other quite well as

teachers now we support each other and she has given me an awful lot in terms of encouragement of what I have been doing and almost like a competitive edge – we both have this. I think that is really healthy. We bring out the best in each other with a slightly competitive edge but we are equally very supportive of each other. That kind of mentoring relationship has been really valuable because I think if I was left to my own devices as a researcher I probably would not have had the impetus to keep going in the same way whereas when you are accountable to somebody else and you are consciously wanting to show them what you have been producing and have their feedback and have their encouragement that really drives you forward. If it was just me on my own in my classroom I don't think I would have applied myself as hard because I would have had nobody to account to other than myself.' (Interview, 2006)

I think this is similar to one of the ways that I describe my relationship with my wife, as a co-researcher. This supports the sense of needing that significant other to lean on for support and guidance as you progress through your research. I am again reminded of the sense of 'being worthy' and the need to feel this in relation to that significant other. It further supports the need to establish communities of enquiry to provide the required accountability and validation in order to support teacher-researchers through their work.

I asked another member of the group about her views on research prior to engaging within this group of teacher-researchers and how she saw the benefits of it within her own work:

'...To be fair the only real experience of doing research in a traditional sense was during my degree really –what I did do was called a project and I was one of two people on my course in this particular class doing Romany linguistics and I had to research the disappearance of a vowel sound in Latvia or somewhere but it basically meant long hours trapped in the library with the journal of the Gipsy Law Society 1897 or something. I did enjoy it but it wasn't the most inspiring of research because it didn't actually have any impact on anything and it gave me my credits and I did quite well but in the grand scheme of things it was useless but with this there are real genuine benefits for myself but also for real people, real children who it actually does matter to and that's the difference I think. I think that it is just as valid if not more valid to be a teacher researching in a classroom with children who you have close contact with on a daily basis because you can actually start to see

that it is making a difference to those children and I think a lot of traditional research is valuable but its not often that the researchers get to actually apply the findings and I think that is the difference. So you've got the government driving new strategies and new initiatives etc but its us that have to put it into practice and its us that then sees the loopholes in the system and see the gaps in the research.' (Interview, 2006)

These comments reflect a tension between the perceptions of 'traditional research' and 'practitioner research'. However, I sense from the above comments a frustration of wanting to see and feel action and impact from research that is immediately useful and practical to everyday practice; research for a personal purpose. I argue within this thesis for the engagement with action research cycles that are focused on actions and having impact on practice and learning.

I was particularly interested in finding out what the teacher-researchers thought about the way that we had set the assessment process for the M.A., using a flexible method that enabled a teacher-researcher to submit their assessment in formats other than writing a traditional essay:

'...It's more accessible for the reader I think. So even though the language that I'm using hopefully is as sophisticated as it would be in a traditional essay I hope that because it is structured in a different way that it will be more accessible and people will be prepared to sit and read it a little bit more it is broken down into smaller sections.' (Teacher-researcher, 2006)

I would further add that the value of the work being on the web and being accessible form their means that the dissemination of the work is much easier for other practitioners to engage with.

Through my reflections it has been my intention to encourage others to embrace their own sense of 'personal mastery' (Senge, 1990, p. 173) within their practice as I myself have embraced this. I believe that these experiences from these teachers have enabled them to be able to live and breathe and embrace their own living educational visions alongside my own. I believe that their experiences have enabled them to clarify their own values as they live them each day in their classrooms. During an interview with a member of teacher-research community at Bitterne Park, she commented about my practice and my influence on her:

'I don't think we have ever had an official meeting until today on this level but certainly we have had lots of discussions especially when we have been in the computer rooms and it is just that extra pair of eyes and it is almost

someone else saying to you – you are doing really well – well done – I don't think often in teaching that happens.' (Interview, May 2006)

This is part of my own living educational theory that I have attempted to promote within my practice: of recognising the positives within others and embracing appreciative inquiry. Alongside this, by these teachers engaging in teacher-research they have been able to increase their own levels of motivation through understanding and embracing their own personal mastery: by regaining the sense of control over what happens within their classrooms. These teachers no longer feel that things are being 'done to them', but rather that they have control over the learning that takes place and their professionalism is allowed to live. This member of the group further commented during her interview about my practice and character:

'...and you are someone who is very positive and someone who is very approachable and I know that if I was pulling my hair out and at the moment I feel that things are quite calm but if they weren't I know that I could knock on your door and you would be all ears and very helpful and very calming and reassuring and look at something in balance and weigh up what was going well and what was not going so well and then point me in the right direction.'  
(Interview, May 2006)

This again supports my views on schools, education and approaches to the job: getting the results whilst remembering my own belief in the positives of humanity.

For me this thesis enters the debate that is emerging throughout education with regards to where the source of power over the production of knowledge lies. I believe that knowledge production about the profession needs the voice of practitioners well-supported within it. I believe that a greater synthesis needs to exist between researchers and practitioners in order to produce that knowledge. Three years ago, the emergence and then consequent withdrawing of the Best Practice Research Scholarships (B.P.R.S.) in England was frustrating. On the one hand the scholarships provided outstanding independence for teachers to be able to have freedom over their research practice and account for their own educational influence. However, on the other hand, once this process was underway, the rug was pulled from under the feet of the profession just at the point when the voice from within the profession could really have been heard. Furlong (2003) argues for the need to address the issues surrounding the production of knowledge within education and refers specifically to his evaluation of the B.P.R.S scheme:

‘What we felt we were witnessing in our evaluation of the BPRS scheme was a sophisticated form of ‘knowledge transfer’ (though we came to recognise that the term itself is seriously inadequate). By working collaboratively with teachers in their own and other schools and with those in H.E., and by deploying research skills themselves, teachers were able to use research based knowledge in the development of their own practice.

But knowledge transfer of this sort cannot happen alone; it still needs a professional research community. We found the research communities were essential in two ways. They were necessary in the support of projects: providing readings, helping in research designs etc. In essence, professional researchers had to be prepared to ‘give away’ their skills to classroom teachers. They were also essential in that projects themselves needed to be informed by high quality research.’ (Furlong, 2003, p. 17)

His arguments call for the greater understanding of how educational research can impact on practice and be more accessible. My argument is that there is still a need to further promote and support the work of teacher-researchers to account for their own learning within their own institutions as this is the greatest way to utilise research to directly impact on practice and consequently on learning. There is a need to assess the contribution of this work through living standards of judgement that are responsive to the material produced and do not necessarily require or demand that the work produced is following a traditional academic framework.

Sebba (2004) further supports the use of knowledge production from within the profession commenting:

‘A great emphasis is needed on improvement driven by users rather than by the suppliers (researchers and funders) of research.’ (Sebba, 2004, p. 42)

Sebba (2004) further argues for the need to provide positive experiences for practitioners in order to support the development of an evidence-informed profession. This is further supported through the arguments of Snow (2001) in her presidential address to AERA, where she commented:

‘The...challenge is to enhance the value of personal knowledge and personal experience for practice. Good teachers possess a wealth of knowledge about teaching that cannot currently be drawn upon effectively in the preparation of novice teachers or in debates about practice. The challenge here is not to ignore or downplay this personal knowledge, but to elevate it. The knowledge resources of excellent teachers constitute a rich resource, but one that is

largely untapped because we have no procedures for systematizing it. Systematizing would require procedures for accumulating such knowledge and making it public, for connecting it to bodies of knowledge established through other methods, and for vetting it for correctness and consistency. If we had agreed-upon procedures for transforming knowledge based on personal experiences of practice into 'public' knowledge, analogous to the way a researcher's private knowledge is made public through peer-review and publication, the advantages would be great. For one, such knowledge might help us avoid drawing far-reaching conclusions about instructional practices from experimental studies carried out in rarefied settings. Such systematized knowledge would certainly enrich the research-based knowledge being increasingly introduced into teacher preparation programs. And having standards for the systematization of personal knowledge would provide a basis for rejecting personal anecdotes as a basis for either policy or practice.' (Snow, 2001, p. 9)

I would argue that through my own work I have attempted to do this through the establishment of a community of enquiry within my School and Local Authority that draws on a multi-generational model of knowledge production through bringing together practitioners, researchers, students and local authorities. By multi-generational I mean people who are working at different non-hierarchical levels of knowledge production and who have at the heart of their work the intention to make things better for others. I am arguing that I have helped contribute to this debate through the way that I have enabled teachers to account for their learning and practice. I have done this through engaging them in debate and dialogue about their practice and then been able to offer this work for assessment through Bath Spa University. However, disappointingly is the fact that the B.P.R.S. scholarships dried up.

One of the key points that I am arguing for within this thesis is the need to be really clear on the roles that teachers and universities can take in order to be able to effectively work together to improve the quality of education for students. I want the research community to embrace teacher-research and prove Lomax (1998) wrong when she comments:

'There is an element of this [Balkanisation] operating in the UK, where the divide between new paradigm research and traditional scientific research is still detrimental to the former.' (Lomax, 1998, p. 3)

This thesis contributes to this debate in moving forward the new paradigm of teacher-research in terms of its subject matter, presentation, methods and conclusions. It is vital that a clear understanding and rationale is established so that a harmony can be created that allows teachers to drive forward the school improvement and effectiveness debate from within, supported by universities helping to legitimise the professional knowledge produced. McNiff (2003) recognised this argument in her presentation on South African Schools. Essentially this is about making knowledge useable. From the story that I have written about my own experiences relating to this, I hope that others can begin to understand the importance of embracing this stance and of helping to create the conditions that would allow this to occur. I am supporting Bassey (1992) in his claims to justify all research that is conducted systematically and critically as being valuable and worthy. I am particularly advocating the sense of embracing his 'creative research' which I have promoted through my own enquiries and through those of other teacher-researchers that I have helped.

From this, others may learn how to establish, embed and create teacher-research within their schools. Indeed the stance advocated by Cordingley (2004) is somewhere close to the stance I believe in:

'Research or evidence-informed practice has the potential to support teaching and learning precisely because it involves teachers in becoming learners again, and so developing their understanding of how their students feel, and in modelling learning for their students. Hence evidence-informed practice does not merely mean bringing new information about what works to bear on professional practice, it becomes part of an on-going learning process on the part of the practitioner. This does not mean, however, that research and/or evidence-informed practice is an end in itself. Its worth to practitioners still depends upon its capacity to enhance teaching and learning.' (Cordingley, 2004, p. 80)

From my experiences throughout this story, I believe that I have been able to offer the evidence that supports this view. I believe that I have demonstrated that I have once again become a learner and learned alongside firstly my students and secondly staff. From these learning experiences I have been able to improve my practice. For me, this was about embracing the notions of action research. Others, from engaging with this account may well be able to appreciate the value of action research and may well be convinced to engage with it themselves. I further go on to embrace Cordingley (2004) when she comments:

'I want to argue that research and/or evidence-informed practice is, at its heart, a learning process for practitioners which is underpinned by the same pedagogical principles that operate in classroom practice. If practitioners are to use evidence, they need to work together to interpret it and to reflect upon its significance for their own particular context.' (Cordingley, 2004, p. 83)

This is central to my approaches to establishing teacher-research within my School: of being able to build a community of enquiry that is able to collectively move forward with their practice through dialogical experiences that engages with key questions relevant to their own practice.

Others may well begin to appreciate the importance that their own stories and narratives play within their own educational lives and begin to see the links between their professional selves and personal selves. This belief is vital within my own living educational theory that I carry with me each day. Others may well begin to account for themselves through their own stories and begin to value this form of enquiry. I am acknowledging Parker (2002) in his exploration of the impact of school leader's life histories on their leadership and how the two things are linked. Through this, others may well learn how they can make things better from this, for the sense of humanity and those that they educate.

Others may learn about the tremendous difficulty of managing transitions and changes within educational life and begin to clearly understand the importance of recognising this and then doing something to try and smooth the process. From my own story others may be able to recognise the difficulties that I have been through and how I have been able to eventually recognise the difficulties associated with transitions between roles and schools. This has been a very painful process that with hindsight, could have been made easier if I'd known then what I know now.

Form the account of my learning and the incorporation of others' voices within this text it is my hope that others may learn of the need to actually support teacher-research in a growing climate where sources of funding for teacher-research are drying up quickly. It is my hope that changes in the way research is funded will be addressed so that teacher-researchers have some element of control over funding to be able to use it to improve their practice and the learning of students. I wonder how much of the vast funding budget given to support academic researchers can actually be accredited to actually improving the learning of any students. I am reminded of the voices within this text: of Karen, of Sophie, of Dan, of Simon, of Toni, of Mark, of

Jack, of the University researcher, and so on. However, from the accounts I have included I can evidence that the stories of the teachers included within this thesis have actually improved the learning of students they have come into contact with: they have actually improved the quality of the living educational space, in however small way that was.

### 4.3 Life story

I am arguing through this thesis that the starting point for an individual in developing their own living educational theory is through understanding and accounting for their own life story that has influenced the educator that they are (Sequence 2). I believe that this is the beginning to understanding and improving practice.

I believe that through individuals gaining a greater insight into their own lives and the meanings attached to events within their own lives, practitioners can recognise their own living values and standards of judgement that they live their lives by and that emerge through their practice.

I make the claim in my abstract, 'I further argue for the need to consider how practitioner accounts are assessed in order to ensure that the future of education is driven forward through the development of teachers as researchers influencing what educational knowledge is and how it is produced.' This journey has essentially been a journey of self-discovery for my own needs. This journey has been one that I have been able to learn a great deal from over the period of time that it has taken. This journey has added to my own growing understanding of my practice as an educator and allowed me to understand my own living educational theory that is emerging over time. I believe that I have been able to embrace Senge's (1990) sense of reflecting on one's thinking whilst acting: being able to reflect on my own practice whilst undertaking the job on a day-to-day basis. This I believe I have done whilst being a teacher, middle-leader and senior-leader. This has enabled me to reflect on and understand in detail what my own values are as an educator and leader and through this understanding I have been able to then articulate these to those that I lead. I am acknowledging that I am the product of my life and I am the educator and leader that I am because of the life that I have lived and the life that I am living.

Through this thesis I have experienced a number of transitions: of place (Chapters 2.8, 3.4); of people (Chapters 1.6, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2); of role (Chapters 2.8, 3.4); of thought (Chapters 3.3, 3.4, 3.5); and of being (Chapters 1.3, 3.7). I have argued for the need to recognise transitions as a positive influence and through sustained reflection being able to see difficult moments to live out my own values more fully within my practice. Through transitions I have been able to articulate and clarify my own living educational theory. For instance, through the following transitions:

- between schools from Westwood St Thomas to Bitterne Park School
- between roles of middle manager to senior leader

- from my father's life to his death from cancer
- from no children to the birth of a daughter
- from being single to marriage
- from the loss of significant others to the discovery of significant others
- from no teacher-research to teacher-research.

I argue within this thesis that these transitions are part of the fabric of life, professional and personal, which I live out every day. I argue that they are not compartmentalised into separate areas of my life, but rather that they are one large fabric from which I reflect on in order to make sense of the world I am part of. From this understanding I seek to improve the quality of the living educational space.

The image below is the image that I want to conclude this thesis with. I am aware of how futile that actually sounds: although it is the writing that is concluded within this space, the process is by no means completed or ended. The multi-dimensional space will simply change. I may not necessarily account for my learning again in such an exclusive and sustained way, but my accounting for myself is something that will continue: it is how I will feel worthy of the life that I have. It has to: that's the job that I do. I can return to the title of this thesis and ask myself: have I contributed to my own and others' learning? I know the answer is 'yes'. This thesis is testament to this. I have attempted to demonstrate how I have learned from the experiences that I have had, and how I have lived through and responded to them as they have emerged within my personal and professional life. Have I made things better for others? I believe that I have and the evidence in this thesis demonstrates this. Have I lived through others? Again, I believe that this thesis demonstrates that I have.

Below is an image taken whilst on holiday in 2005. It is an image of me and my wife. I feel that this image carries with it and communicates my real sense of hope for the future. This is the reason why I want to conclude with it: I feel it communicates my hope for humanity through the engagement that I have within my gaze: I believe that I am fully present within this image. I believe that I am fully living. I look at this image and I can see the connection that I have with my wife: my source of inner strength that I draw on to help me be the person that I am. I look at this image and things don't seem so bad after all. I look at this image and I'm reminded of who I am and why I exist. I look at this image and I plan for the future.



Figure 46: Image of me and Karen in the Maldives, 2005.