

# How can we support educators to develop skills and understandings inclusively?

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Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association, 7 September 2006, Warwick University.

## **Introduction**

Through this paper we wish to convey to you the ontological and embodied values which give meaning to our lives; the passion we have for our work and the commitment we feel to working inclusively with each other, our colleagues in the authority, other professionals and schools. We believe that as members of the Inclusion Support Service our lived and living values of inclusivity are brought into all aspects of our work; the way that we relate to each other, and with other educators with whom we work, as well as forming the living standards of judgement that we use to account to ourselves and others for our educational influences in our own learning, the learning of others and in the learning of social formations.

We want to share this chapter of our journey that answers our question, ‘How can we support educators to develop skills and understandings inclusively?’, in a way that shows you what we see and what we feel. We did not know what was ahead of us: we were sometimes surprised by what we found; it is a journey that takes us to places we did not know existed, and we wish to communicate the excitement as well as the intellectual rigour we are seeking to develop. The way we are going to do this is to outline the context in which we are working and then to focus on what we are doing, how we are doing it and the influence we are having with teachers in a workshop on creativity and finally show you how these values are expressed beyond us as our living, inclusional standards of judgement. In doing this we see ourselves contributing to the new epistemology called for by Schon (1995).

The representation of evidence in this paper is multimedia. We have become increasingly concerned about the way the form of evidence drives practice; put bluntly, ‘you get what you look for’. We are looking to find forms of evidence that will support us in developing our practice beyond the confines of ‘checklists’, ‘bullet points’ and the inappropriate use of statistics. These traditional forms of evidence do not serve to communicate progress fully in a dynamic sense even in the apparently straightforward intellectual domains, let alone in the complex world of human educational endeavour where the cognitive, affective and physical domains are recognised to be inextricably interwoven.

We take Whitehead and McNiff’s point:

*“Our values need to be seen as in lived relation with others. For them to make sense, the values themselves need to be understood as real-life practices, not as abstract concepts.”*

(Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p.58)

and Sinclair's

*"... that pedagogy works at viseral and sensual levels, as well as intellectual and imaginative, activating appetites and desire."*

(Sinclair, 2005, p.91)

Through presenting this paper as a multimedia artifact we wish to contribute to the development of a form of evidence which communicates what we value and enables us to be publicly accountable.

The need to develop processes and procedures that enable us to move between research, practice and policy in a meaningful way has been clearly identified by Furlong and Oancea (2005). Practitioner based research, inclusion and emotional literacy are key concerns for educators in schools and local authorities as can be seen from the recent strategies and directives emanating from the DFES; for instance the SEAL (Social Emotional Aspects of Learning) materials issued by the DFES for primary schools in 2005, and the work on the implementation of The UNESCO Salamanca Statement 1994.

Through our work to develop and implement the Local Authority's EDP (Education Development Plan) strand on the Action Research Project – learners and learning, we have moved from understanding these as discrete activities with points of connection to distinct facets of developing an educational culture which is inclusional (Rayner 2006).

Through this paper we do not intend to give a definition of inclusional/inclusionality/ inclusionally or inclusive/ inclusion as if their meanings can be communicated through propositions that have become separated from the process of creating the meanings through practice. We shall give evidence of what our current understandings are in a way that invites you to join with us to co-create further understandings and in this way we are seeking to give living meaning to an inclusional way of being. By **inclusional/inclusionality** we are working with Rayner's (2006) ideas where he describes inclusionality as a 'relationally dynamic awareness of space and boundaries that are connective, reflective and co-creative'. By **inclusive/inclusion** we are thinking of the Salamanca statement 1994 where it refers to an inclusive environment which includes all.

In leading on the Education Development Plan Action Research strand, we have been working 'to build the capacity of schools regarding inclusive practice through Action Research'. We have sought to do this by working within our spheres of influence with our colleagues in the education authority, educators in schools and the local universities. We are focusing in this paper on the time we worked together to run a workshop on creativity where you can see us working together to support educators to develop skills and understandings inclusionally.

Throughout the paper we use 'my~our' and i~we' in the same way as was used by Whitehead and Huxtable.

*“In working and researching together we are aware of our shared commitment to respecting the individual identity and integrity of the other while recognizing that we are engaged in a process of co-creating knowledge in interconnecting and branching channels of communication with each other and with others. Hence, following Murray (who first used we~i in personal correspondence), we use i~we to communicate a relationship in which an individual’s identity co-exists with a social relationship to the other(s).”*

(Whitehead and Huxtable, 2006)

Because we are engaged in a self-study of knowledge-creation in the process of researching my~our educational influences in my~our professional practice, a living theory approach to action research appears appropriate as the form of research in which the individual practitioner generates explanations for their educational influences in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations (Whitehead, 2006).

The action research approach used in the enquiry will follow the model of Thinking Actively in a Social Context (TASC), developed by Wallace (2001) as it is being commonly used throughout our authority by educators to give a form to their own enquiry processes and that of their pupils from nursery to secondary.

## **Context**

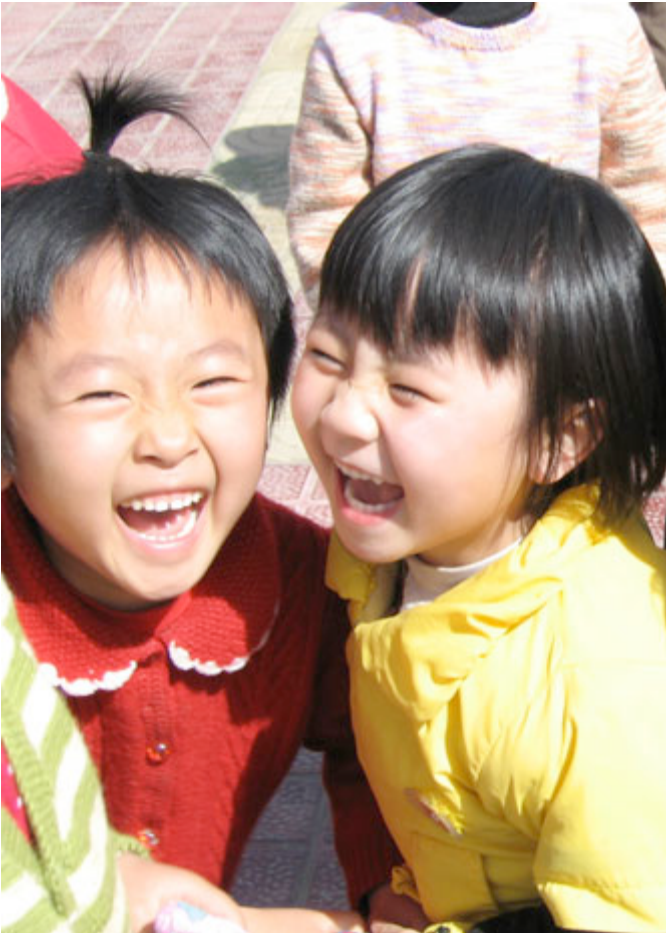
We work for Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority. Chris is currently the Inclusion Officer leading on, amongst other things, the Inclusion Quality Mark. Marie is a senior educational psychologist who co-ordinates the APEX (Able Pupils Extending Opportunities) and, amongst other things, the Widening Learning and Thinking strategies.

We are committed to contributing to an inclusive learning community and bringing inclusion values more fully into our work to contribute to the realisation of the vision of the authority expressed in the Children and Young People’s Plan 2005 – 2009:

*“We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this.”*

We could show you a picture of our local children that carries for us that sense of inclusionality that we have penned above, but we do not understand our work to be parochial and instead choose to offer you one which connects us overtly with these values that are shared internationally across cultures from a presentation at Ningxia Teachers University:

*“On a visit to Ningxia Teachers University in China in May 2006 I gave two lectures with Professor Jean McNiff. One on Living Theory Action Research in China: A World View and another on Educational Action Research in Ningxia Teachers University: Possible Futures. We ended both lectures with the following photograph to reinforce our ideas about relational forms of accountability that included love, spontaneity and pleasure.” (Whitehead 2006)*



To provide evidence of our inclusional educational values being lived requires a form beyond text which conveys only a shadow of what we are trying to communicate and respond to the challenge that Eisner (2005) describes:

*“One of the basic questions that scholars are now raising is how we perform the magical feat of transforming the contents of our consciousness into a public form that others can understand” .*

(Eisner, 2005)

We are accountable to ourselves and others for improving our practice but the form of evidence we are required to provide to OFSTED and other inspecting bodies does not enable us to focus on what we value as educators. ‘Standards’ as denoted by SATs and

exam results are still the priority for OFSTED; a school can meet the criteria on the five outcomes in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda: be healthy; be safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being, and still receive 'a notice to improve'. The enthusiasm, passion and pride that a school community evokes and the consequent outcomes for children and young people can be experienced by those who visit a school, but how to provide evidence that can contribute to the judgement of an effective school presents a challenge that as yet has gone unanswered.

What we mean when we say we can experience such a culture of a school is illustrated by Chris:

*"I see and feel these expressions of joy when I visit schools as a mentor and assessor for the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark. I recently interviewed a teacher and he was responding to my questions. He then said, 'I am really happy at this school, but you're not here to listen to that', to which I responded, 'That is exactly why I am here. That is what I want to know about. Please tell me about it'. He gave me a number of examples where he felt he had an influence – seeing children achieve when it was felt they weren't able to, purely by him taking a risk and believing in himself and the children whom he taught. When I interviewed two teaching assistants at a school, they told me about the support they had had from the head teacher at a time when they were feeling very low and felt they were losing the battle in supporting some pupils with behavioural difficulties. They explained that it was through the head teacher supporting them that they were eventually able to successfully support these pupils. These pupils are still included in the schools. Parents have told me that their children's schools have done more than they could ever expect schools to do to include their children whether the children have a learning difficulty, a behavioural difficulty or a physical difficulty. Pupils have told me how well they are doing at their school, how they could never have done it without the hard work and commitment of their teachers. They have told me how proud they are to wear their school uniform. Caretakers have spoken to me about the pride they feel for their school in keeping it clean and tidy. The emotions demonstrated in these schools are palpable. The values that people hold are living in these schools."*

It is values such as these that we wish to form as living standards of judgement to be held publicly accountable to; test scores and statistics can be clearly seen as inappropriate in that context.

Through this paper we are aware of a desire to contribute to the development of objective evidence of those living educational values that are our passion. However, we are also aware of being open to criticism that our subjective judgements reduce the objective value of our evidence. To strengthen our objectivity from the ground of our subjective judgements, we use Popper's (1975) insight that objectivity is strengthened through the use of mutual rational control by critical discussion:

*"The words objective and subjective are philosophical terms heavily burdened with a heritage of contradictory usages and of inclusive and interminable discussions."*

*My use of the terms objective and subjective is not unlike Kant's. He uses the word objective to indicate that scientific knowledge should be justifiable, independently of anybody's whim: if something is valid, he writes, for anybody in possession of his reason, then its grounds are objective and sufficient.*

*Now I hold that scientific theories are never fully justifiable or verifiable, but that they are nevertheless testable. I shall therefore say that objectivity of scientific statements lies in the fact that they can be inter-subjectively tested. The word, subjective, is applied by Kant to our feelings of conviction (of varying degrees). I have since generalised this formulation; for inter-subjective testing is merely a very important aspect of the more general idea of inter-subjective criticism, or in other words, of the idea of mutual rational control by critical discussion."*

(Popper, 1975, p.44)

The significance of our enquiry in the context of educational research can be related to Snow's point of the need to bring the personal practical knowledge of educators into the public domain

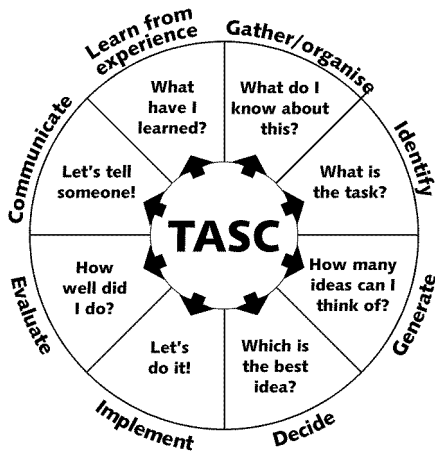
*"The reflections of skilled practitioners deserve to be systematised so that personal knowledge can become publicly accessible and subject to analysis."*

(Snow, 2001, p.9)

## **Background**

Chris takes up the story of our workshop on creativity. The account is framed by the TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) wheel (Wallace 2001) as a framework familiar to educators writing an action research account and supporting their pupils through the same processes of enquiry.

**TASC: Thinking Actively in a Social Context**  
The TASC Problem-solving Wheel



Belle Wallace 2000

### **Gather and organise/ what is already known/the context**

We offered to run a workshop at the Bath & North East Somerset SENCO Conference in June 2006 entitled 'Creative learning: Unlocking Potential'. We knew that the participants would consist of educators in Bath & North East Somerset; mainly special educational needs co-ordinators but also class teachers, headteachers and educators from the local authority.

### **The question/the enquiry**

The question we set ourselves was 'how can we work inclusively with educators during an hour workshop to enable them to extend their own understandings of creative learning, and to contribute to the creation of new understandings which they would wish to explore further in their own schools and classrooms beyond the workshop.'

### **Imagined possibilities and the selection of one**

We had each run workshops on various themes before using powerpoint and activities. We knew that we could make it fun, that participants would go away with activities to use in the classroom and the evaluations would in all probability be good, but we recognised that we would primarily be 'delivering content'. For this workshop we wished to experiment with practice explicitly related to our emerging understandings of inclusivity and we wanted to engage participants in deep, rather than surface learning in a way that would carry the possibility of contributing to a transformation of classrooms for children to learn creatively. A fairly ambitious idea for an hour's workshop but our confidence in each other, if not in ourselves, gave us the courage to take, what felt like, a very big risk.

We would like to give you a taste of our planning as we try to hold our values in focus through all aspects of the way we live and work; as we have said above, we wanted to try to get closer to ‘practicing what we preach’. When we met to plan the workshop we discussed at length how we might run the workshop in an inclusional and creative way; that we would not be the deliverers of received wisdoms, giving strategies drawn from various reputable source which were believed to help promote the creative learning of pupils as participants may be expecting. Instead we evolved a session to engage participants through discussion, questions and activities intended to connect their prior knowledge, stimulate their imaginations and begin to engage them in asking their own questions as to how they could improve their practice to promote creative learning in their pupils. We wanted the educators to be the learners, learning about themselves and influencing their own learning, thus coming up with their own answers and we wanted to provide them with links to current thinking in a way that wouldn’t constrain their own.

We were taking a risk in a very public forum to move from the security of approaches with which we were familiar ; we did not know how it would be received as this was quite a departure from a lot of current workshop practices; neither of us had worked in this way before, we had not run a workshop together and we had to be able to create a safe creative educational environment swiftly with an unknown group to be able to make the most of a one off event.

## **Implementation**

We decided on a plan but wanted it to guide not dictate what we would do so we could respond to the group receptively:

- **DISCUSSION:** Why are you here? What do you want out of this session? (In pairs. Feedback)
- **ACTIVITY:** Pictures – put pictures in order ranging from the most creative to the least creative. (Three groups. Feedback. Why they found the pictures creative/least creative).
- **DISCUSSION:** What creative learning happens in your class? What allows that to happen and why is it important to you?
- **ACTIVITY:** To pass an uncooked egg to each other in as many ways as possible with the group providing suggestions as appropriate. (Whole group. Feedback. How did you feel? What were you thinking?)
- **DISCUSSION:** What further questions do you want to explore to help you improve your practice in developing creative learners in the classroom?

We provided references and a selection of books on creativity at the end for those who wanted to extend their knowledge base further.

We ran the workshop twice. The sessions began by people saying why they had chosen this workshop and what they had wanted from the session. Although the two groups felt



to be different in some respects, the reasons they gave for choosing the workshop appeared to be similar on the face of it. For instance, responses from the first workshop were, for example,

- ‘To learn ways to start children off to be creative.’
- ‘How do we help them find their passion?’
- ‘How do you encourage children to take responsibility for their own learning?’
- ‘How do we get this creativity OUT of them?’
- ‘How can we take risks?’
- ‘I want to give myself permission to be a child – not to put in the restrictions.’

And the second group:

- ‘To be creative: it’s the way I want to be as a teacher and as a school.’
- ‘To give skills to pupils to be creative.’
- ‘To develop skills to be creative themselves.’

However, the first group did not express the same concerns as the second group such as the restrictions of the curriculum, and worrying in case a colleague passed their classroom and wondered what was going on.

Both groups responded to the picture activity by stating that each picture was creative in its own way and that creativity was very much in the eye of the beholder. However, the second group discussed the usefulness of the pictures as provocations for their pupils rather than exploring further their own understandings of creativity.

Both groups responded to the egg activity in very much the same way. In the discussion that followed, when they were asked how they felt, whilst responses were similar, the first group were particularly vocal. Such comments from both groups show how emotionally engaged they were:

- ‘I was petrified.’
- ‘I was really nervous.’
- ‘I felt anxious.’
- ‘I was worried in case the egg fell on the carpet.’
- ‘I was worried in case I dropped the egg on the carpet.’
- ‘I didn’t want to let the group down.’
- ‘I was so relieved when it was over; to come back into the safety and security of the room.’

We discussed that these feelings expressed by us may be how our pupils often feel in the classroom and how these feelings can stifle creativity and become creativity blockers. Whilst this realisation energised the first group, some people in the second group said that they did not want to take risks and liked the feeling of being safe. Whilst we were trying to support them in unlocking their creativity, some people seemed to be more at one with those feelings that stopped creativity and it was this discussion that presented as

challenging for us; an analysis of how we felt is described later. It is the second session that was videoed so it was interesting for us to see how well we managed to express our inclusional values through working with a group where we experienced some tensions.

## Evaluation

You can see from the example of responses to the workshops that we were reasonably successful at engaging participants as creative learners, extending their own skills and understandings of creativity. How far we managed to stimulate their imaginations to carry the possibility of transforming their classrooms afterwards can be seen as follows.

The final discussion focussed on the question that individuals in the group would take away with them as to how they could improve their practice. Most participants actively engaged in beginning to formulate a question that interested them such as, 'How can I question children more appropriately to help to promote creative learning?'

The written comments on the session suggested that participants' experiences of the workshop were positive and reflected their affective as well as their cognitive engagement, for example:

- 'Good to remind ourselves to see things from a child's perspective, therefore to consider creating a relaxed learning environment.'
- 'Enjoyed session. It shared the joys of thinking creatively.'
- 'Engaging. Left me with some good questions! Loved it.'
- 'It made me think of ways I could encourage creativity in my classroom – take more risks.'
- 'Creativity is a fantastic word I could explore forever.'
- 'This session was creative in itself in the way it developed depending on the issues raised by teachers. It went off on different tangents and opened up lots of points for discussion.'

Can we pause again to signal a change in voice? Chris found that she had written an account much as she had done previously but this did not enable us to know whether we had managed to ...*support educators to develop skills and understandings (of creativity) inclusionally*. Jack Whitehead videoed the second workshop and with Chris' and Marie's permission brought a clip to the B&NES Conversation Café. The group felt they could see the energy with which Chris worked and Chris took the suggestion that she might get closer to understanding herself living her values if she responded as she watched herself on the video working inclusionally in the workshop. It is here in the evaluation that we are beginning to extend our own understanding of inclusionality and the pedagogical values it carries. You will see that the language form that Chris used has changed and we would ask you, as you read in the following section, to see if it gets closer to communicating the embodied values and educational theories of Chris and Marie as they were seeking to express in the workshop.

## Communicating to and *with* others and extending our learning of ourselves

The move to communicating *with* rather than simply *to* others at this point is consistent with our developing inclusional pedagogy where we seek to extend our own learning and to co-create new knowledge and understandings with others; to extend our educational influence in our own learning and that of others.

We are claiming that through the following text, images and video clips you can see us supporting educators to develop skills and understandings inclusionally. We would ask you to ask the questions of us that Jack Whitehead offers in, ‘How can I/You create living educational theories from educational action research?’ - Notes for an Ed.D. seminar in the University of Bath on 12 July 2006:

*I usually ask a validation group of my peers to criticise my explanations of my educational influences in terms of the questions*

- *Is my claim comprehensible?*
- *Have I produced sufficient evidence to justify my claims to know my educational influences in learning?*
- *Have I explicated the normative assumptions in my explanation?*
- *Am I being authentic in that my explanation shows in interaction, over time, with others that I am clarifying the meanings of my values in the course of their emergence through what I am doing?’*

Jack Whitehead engaged with Chris’ account as he worked to prepare a keynote (Whitehead 2006) and selected visual images and video clips from the hour session that he felt connected with Chris’ text. While you are reading Chris’ account with Jack’s selection of video clips we ask, ‘Can you see what we see? Can you feel what we feel?’ as we live and work inclusionally.

Chris begins:

*“I am smiling as I watch the video of our Creativity Workshop and I am feeling the joy and pleasure in seeing inclusionality being demonstrated naturally and spontaneously in, between and with my friend and colleague, Marie, and other educators who are participants in the workshop. I am looking at Marie as she is inviting the group to respond to her questioning with her arms open, her eyes scanning the room and including all.”*



*“I feel the joy and pleasure in looking at Marie and me, sitting adjacently and leaning forward and smiling as we engage with the participants in discussing creativity, being creative and creating that moment together and with others”*

(see the 8.2Mb, 1min. 31 sec. video clip from <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/marie/mhchwk1min31.mov> )

*“We move outside the room and as I listen to what I am saying, I feel the flow of energy that I felt at the time and as I always feel when I am working with colleagues, every interaction unique and co-creative. I am listening to the expressive, 'ooh', and the intermittent laughter as the egg is passed around, all apprehensive should the egg fall, all separate, yet one as we share the activity in that moment in time. Silence follows laughter and laughter follows silence; those bursts of energy cutting through the atmosphere of apprehension. There are no barriers here between us; there is no vacuum dividing us; we are flowing as one and as the first task is complete, we clap spontaneously together.”*

(see the 6.8 Mb, 1min 15 sec video clip from <http://www.jackwhitehead.com/marie/cjmhwkegg.mov>)

*“I am still smiling as I watch the video as we move back into the room. The conversation, the questions and answers, the smiles and the laughter; Marie and I sitting adjacently, moving forward in response to comments, hands moving, arms outstretched, openly invitational.”*



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

*I value who I am and what I try to be; I value others for who they are and what they try to be; I value what we are between us and what we try to be. It is through my relationship with others and the generative flow and pleasure of our interaction that I grow and live a life that has meaning for me.”*



We would like to return to the question on which we asked you to focus when we wrote, ‘we would ask you, as you read, to see if it gets closer to communicating the embodied values and educational theories of Chris and Marie as they were seeking to express in the workshop’.

The form of evidence used to validate a claim to knowledge is important and is taxing many in the school system as can be seen in the oft used phrase, ‘we value what we measure, rather than measuring what we value’. We are asking you to consider here how far we have been able to offer you evidence that can be validated, accepted as authentic and of value by ‘authorities’, whether they are the academy or government department, while also communicating those qualities and values that for us are at the core of education and the reason we do what we do.

So far we have sought to explore whether we have communicated with you our growing understandings of what it is for us to support educators developing skills and understandings inclusionally. We have asked you to consider whether we have communicated those values more fully than relying on the traditional text- based report format by using a poetic, aesthetic form with images as well. We have also tried to

provide you with evidence as to our success or otherwise in answering our question, *'how can we work inclusively with educators during an hour workshop to enable them to extend their own understandings of creative learning, and to contribute to the creation of new understandings which they would wish to explore further in their own schools and classrooms beyond the workshop'*.

### ***Our educational influence in our own learning and that of others and in social formations?***

Can we remind you of one of our ambitions we touched on in our introduction:

*We are looking to find forms of evidence that will support us in developing our practice.*

The actual process of creating this artefact has provoked reflection on our skills, understandings and values generatively. The structure of text and narrative (Carter 1993) implies that this has been a sequential discrete event whereas we have weaved back and forth and been inspired to develop our practice by communicating, in person and through email, with many colleagues and each other. It has felt to be a flow form that again connects with another of our intentions:

*We shall give evidence of what our current understandings are in a way that invites you to join with us to co-create further understandings and in this way we are seeking to give living meaning to an inclusional way of being.*

The reflections below are by way of illustration as we move our account into the final part of the TASC process and begin to connect with others and on to engaging in further living theory action research enquiries.

And to connect you once again with the beginning of this paper:

*...we use i~we to communicate a relationship in which an individual's identity co-exists with a social relationship to the other(s).*

where we state our intention to contribute to the development of a new epistemology with relationally dynamic standards of judgement of inclusionality.

It surprised me~us looking at the video to see those values of inclusionality being expressed during the workshop. At the time i~we felt a tension running through the session. I~we found it difficult at the time to find a shared focus, to connect the thinking of the individuals and the strands that were emerging in the group and to extend them beyond to a creative space. I~we heard concerns expressed about a shift to risk, a reluctance to explore possibilities beyond the constraints of government imposed initiatives, strategies and agendas and the frustrations with those perceived constraints. I~we felt the tension, not because there was an antithesis between participants or a clash of values, rather the contrary; i~we felt frustrated by my~our inability to help participants

engage as creatively as i~we believed they could have done and wanted to. I~we felt i~we had not kept the space as open and creative as i~we wanted to and i~we had not recognised and responded appropriately to my~our own inclination and that of others to present an argument justifying a position and a desire to impose personal agendas. Through acting and reflecting using video to research and communicate, i~we have understood better the qualities of inclusionality that i~we value and want to see more of and those questions of the nature, ‘how do I...’ rather than ‘how can I...’ have enabled me~us to recognise evidence of those values being lived.

Marie reflects:

*‘Watching the video of the workshop and responding to the question, ‘how do I work inclusionally’, my reflections were as follows:*

*The space between Chris and I feels easy, relaxed and open.  
I can see an unspoken communication between us.  
One takes the lead, then it is taken up by the other without any clash.  
As the hands of one of us are open, the other is quiet  
Our faces are open, relaxed, interested, inviting others to enter that space  
Both Chris and I can be seen looking round the group  
So between us we know that all are included.  
Even if they choose not to speak.  
The conversation flows back and forth across and around the room.  
Chris open arms, embracing  
An energizing confidence,  
Completely in the present.  
Moving with a fluency, an ease, a grace  
Eliciting a response, even from the most constrained.  
Laughter bubbles and occasionally erupts to punctuate when something important is expressed,  
Or to release a tension.  
Each participating, building on anothers offering,  
And contributing their individual views. ‘*

Chris felt that this way of writing also connected with her own way of writing and is yet another example of the flow there is between us.

The reflections we both made independently, as we each watched the video, stands in contrast to the evaluation made during the workshop. We believe that the use of video and image and the incorporation of an aesthetic as well as analytic form of text, communicates far more accurately and objectively, the educational qualities we value being lived, than does the traditional forms of evidence, relying on checklists and statistics alone. We believe that such educational qualities with their relationally dynamic flow-form are constituting living standards of judgement for an epistemology of inclusionality.

## **...and connecting to other enquiries, other work**

We have tried through focusing on our specific experience in the workshop to begin to communicate with you what we are seeking to do when we ask, ‘*How can (do) we support educators to develop skills and understandings inclusionally?*’ This work does not sit in isolation and we wish to remind you:

*In leading on the Education Development Plan Action Research strand we have been working ‘to build the capacity of schools regarding inclusive practice through Action Research’. We have sought to do this by working within our spheres of influence with our colleagues in the education authority, educators in schools and the local universities.*

We have been working with our colleagues in the local authority to extend our skills and understandings of living theory action research through a weekly ‘conversation café’. An example of our colleagues’ commitment to contributing to an inclusive learning community and bringing inclusional values more fully into our work can be seen most clearly in this piece by Nigel Harrisson, Manager of the Inclusion Support Service, which he brought to one of our meetings and which we wish to leave you with to emphasise the importance of sharing our narratives of inclusionality:

*“As an Authority we are experiencing problems with the number of permanent exclusions from schools. We are reportedly the highest excluding Authority in the South West. As a department that focuses on inclusion and as Inclusion Manager myself, I think we need to address this issue as a matter of urgency.*

*There are practical things that we could possibly do to help the situation, and there are attempts to do so through protocols with schools such as, the managed moves protocol, the levels of exclusion and the hard to place protocol. Having said that, there seems to me, to be a clash of values in the system and scepticism in individuals about schools adhering to the protocols.*

*As well as being the highest excluding Authority, we are also the highest attaining Authority. In some minds, I’m sure, the two are correlated. While there is recognition that we must do ‘something’ about exclusions, there seems to me, to be an unspoken ‘principle’ that if we push too hard we might affect the attainment of the schools and risk the wrath of Head teachers. To have high exclusions seems to be an acceptable ‘evil’.*

*On occasion we feel powerless to influence schools on exclusions and, also importantly, on admission of pupils they perceive they do not want, as it may ‘water down’ their results. Few people seem willing to tackle schools over such issues. Unless they have a statement of SEN, where the LA is the admissions Authority, we have to rely on parents/carers addressing the issues with the schools. Obviously, some feel they are unable to do so, some feel it is pointless as even if they were to get their child admitted, the school has indicated they would be unwelcome anyway.*



*I acknowledge that attainment is important and that the needs of the other pupils must be considered, but we are often left with pupils who we cannot place, whose life chances are diminished and seemingly without the overt backing to force issues. My values also include championing the rights of the 'vulnerable'. In terms of living values, "How do I champion the rights of those who have been excluded and are difficult to include?" "How do I balance that, alongside the rights of those already included, and who also have a right to have a proper education and within a system where there appears to be a similar clash of values?"*

*It is easy being cynical about the inability of schools to include the 'hard to include'. It removes the responsibility from me and places the problem with the school.*

*"Every Child Matters. Even the most disabled or disruptive pupil has a right to be included. "How can I be expected to do my job when schools don't have the same values?" They need to change their values to my values!!!*

*The truth of the matter is that some 'schools' do have different values, different motivations and a passion for attainment that may differ from mine. In my own organisation there are tensions between values such as inclusion and attainment. "Whose values are right?" "Do I have to change my values?" "Do they have to change theirs?" "Do I have to fight others with different values, or can I (as I believe I do), work at the interface between differing values?" "How can I develop my skills to do that job well?" "How will I know I'm getting it right?"*

*(Question: "As a collective of people with no doubt differing values anyway, is it possible to assign values to an organisation?" I'll continue to do so as shorthand. In many cases, I think we do believe that organisations have values).*

*There are some schools who show a passion for what they believe is right, namely ensuring that children and young people, who are capable, fulfil their potential and gain attainments, that will give them a good start for the future they see. Some schools are also passionate about including the hard to include. Even to the point where I have become concerned that they are not balancing the needs of the majority with the needs of the few. This is a difficult challenge, getting the right balance between the rights of the many and the rights of the few.*

*Some schools try very hard to include 'the hard to include'. Even then, sometimes, I think there is more some schools could do, partly because I know there is more that I would do myself were I doing that job. However, again, there needs to be some balance between what schools can reasonably be expected to do and what is really needed to include a child or young person. Only recently there was a case where a child had experienced trauma at the hands of his parents. This resulted in a disturbance in his development, lack of trust of adults (and why not), the testing of boundaries to see if he was safe, and re-testing them because he was safe once before and those who should have protected him let him down. His life was ripped apart, his mind and emotions tortured. The ability to concentrate, behave in a way that allowed and showed trust, to focus on the future,*

*was beyond him at that point. His behaviour was disruptive to the point of stopping others learning effectively. "Is this something the school could or should address?" "Is my passion for inclusion so great that I push for the school to do more at the potential cost to other children?" "If I did, would that not clash with my own values that every child deserves a good education?" I accept that inclusion is a destination and that sometimes there may be detours before getting back on the road to inclusion. Sometimes those detours are long and painful. Without the traumatic disturbance in his development he would, and should be (within my values), educated alongside his peers. Now that will not happen and I feel sad.*

*The passion for championing the rights of all children and young people is a deeply held value that I hope I live. Having the courage to keep championing in the face of challenge is vital to make a difference, but so is having empathy with others and recognising their values and passions. Working at the interface of differing value systems is challenging but also worthwhile and exciting." (Harrison, 2006)*

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