Christine Jones' successful confirmation report (Transfer Report) for PhD registration.

Title - How Do I Promote Inclusion by Living My Values and Developing Standards of Judgement to which I Hold Myself Accountable (Working title of Thesis)

This paper is submitted as part of the process of confirming my PhD registration

Introduction

I am a practitioner-researcher enquiring into my practice. At present, I am a Statutory Special Educational Needs (SEN) manager working within the Education Inclusion Service. At the time of my enquiry, significant changes are taking place which are having a huge impact on the public sector and consequently, Local Authority Children's Services in which I work. In 2010, the Coalition Government came into being, and since then we have seen the introduction of schools becoming Academies and Free Schools developing, with responsibilities being placed more with schools than Local Authorities. In the world of Special Educational Needs, a world in which I have spent my career, the biggest changes within the last thirty years are being introduced by the government and these are to take place over the next few years.

The Local Authority in which I work is making a financial cut of thirty million pounds over the next three years. Subsequently, this is having an impact on the Children's Services and Education Inclusion Service of which I am a part with a significant reorganisation taking place over the coming year. It is within these national and local changes that I am undertaking my enquiry.

This paper clarifies my research to date and it has been organised in line with the guidance on the university's PhD Confirmation Event:

- Aims of my Enquiry
- Literature Review
- Methodology
- Interim Findings and Outcomes
- Proposed Structure of Thesis
- Bibliography
- Appendices

Aims of My Enquiry

In this section, I articulate the aims of my study and how they have evolved. In doing so, I believe that I am demonstrating that I am developing the ability to "conceptualise a project for the generation of new knowledge…"
The aims of my study are:

- To research into my practice to improve my practice by adopting a living theory methodology.
- To offer an original contribution to educational knowledge by reflecting on my values and developing living standards of judgement of living empowerment.

- To determine the impact of living empowerment on me, my team and ultimately, the children and young people with special educational needs within the authority.

To understand the context of my research and how it has evolved, I have felt it necessary to describe and explain my own unique experiences which have brought me to where I am at present. I have included these descriptions and reflections in the appendices. I have reflected on my values by looking at my young life and the influences of home, school and the church (Appendix A), my early teaching career (Appendix B) and then my work as a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) (Appendix C).

In 2009, I completed my Master's dissertation entitled, 'How Do I Improve My Practice as an Inclusion Officer?' This was a significant step for me, because, in conducting my research, I was introduced to and adopted a living theory methodology whereby practitioners inquire into how they can improve their practice and question whether they live their values in their practice. In my present enquiry, I have adopted a living theory methodology.

It is through a reflection on my values that I have come to realise the strength of the value of empowerment throughout my life, how much it means to me, and how it has impacted on my life. It is a force that I see in my personal and professional life – the idea of being empowered, empowering others and indeed self-empowerment. The idea of empowerment, for me, is very much entwined with how I view relationships; how I relate to others and how others relate to me.

The word 'empowerment' is a term that has different meanings to different people depending on their life experiences. At this point, I would just like to clarify what **I** mean by empowerment. I do not see empowerment as giving power to the other or being given power by the other; there is no exchanging of power. Why? It is because, I believe, the power is already within the individual, whether it be their motivation, their passion, their knowledge, skills or talents. To me, empowering the other is about recognising and respecting the qualities, passions and attributes of the other and then **enabling** the release of these energies; conversely, for me to be empowered by the other is for the other to show an awareness of my passions and to **enable** the release of that energy. Self-empowerment, in my view, is very much to do with the energy within the individual and a demonstration of the release of that energy. Empowerment, for **me,** is associated with respect, regard, trust, faith in the other and self. It involves creating spaces for the other to grow; it involves risk-taking and creating a no blame culture. A more in-depth discussion on empowerment can be found in the next section in my literature review.

I believe that I have a unique contribution to make to the generation of new knowledge on empowerment as I research my practice to improve my practice. Through adopting a living theory approach, whereby I am reflecting on my values and evaluating whether I am living my values in my practice, I believe that my research and practice on empowerment is unique. I am researching into how my manager empowers me (Appendix D) and the impact this has on me, my team and ultimately the children and young people with special educational needs within the authority. I am looking at how I empower my team and the impact this has on my practice, their practice and ultimately the impact on children and young people with special educational needs within the authority. I believe my research in empowerment to be unique as through my reading to date, little interest has been taken about the impact of being empowered from the view of the person who is being empowered in the workplace and the impact that has on the practice of the individual.

Literature Review

In this section, I discuss the existing literature in the area. I look specifically at the literature on empowerment and briefly at the literature on servant leadership to examine how it equates to my perception of leading in line with my idea of empowerment.

From a young age, I have been very mindful of the concept of empowerment; the idea of me being empowered by others and conversely, the idea of me empowering others. It is a concept which has lived with me all of my life, personal and professional, and a concept, for me, that has and is a living practice based on a living value.

Empowerment is a term that was first used in the seventeenth century and used, legally, to mean to invest with authority, to authorise. Gradually, the term became more generalised to mean 'to enable or permit.' The modern use of the term is very much bound with the Civil Rights Movement which sought political empowerment for its followers. Indeed in the 20th century, there have been many examples of political empowerment led by such people as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Nelson Mandela, Vaclav Havel and Lech Walensa. The term has also been taken up by the women's movement.

The Concise Oxford dictionary states that to empower means to "authorise, license, give power to, make able." Reviewing definitions of empowerment reveal commonality but also diversity. Rapport (1984) states that empowerment may easily be defined by its absence but that it is difficult to define in action as it takes on different forms in different people and contexts. Zimmerman (1984) is of the view that a single definition of empowerment may present it as prescriptive and formulaic which may contradict the very concept of empowerment. Page and Czuba (1999), however, believe that a common understanding of empowerment is necessary and postulate a general definition that empowerment is a multi-dimensional social process which enables people to gain control over their own lives; that it fosters power in people to use in their own lives, their communities and in their society, by taking up issues that they believe to be pertinent.

Narayan (2002) highlights the fact that many definitions point to enhancing the quality of one's life through having power and control over decisions and resources; also that most definitions look at the inequalities of entire social groups rather than focus on individual characteristics. Terms associated with empowerment include self-power, self reliance, own choice, independence, own decision-making. The definitions are embedded in local value and belief systems; empowerment is of intrinsic value and also has instrumental value. Empowerment may be viewed as the expansion of freedom of choice and action. This is very much in line with the thinking of Sen (1985, 1999), who has highlighted the importance of substantive freedoms and the individual freedom to choose and achieve different outcomes.

Wikipedia (2012), the free dictionary states that, "Empowerment refers to increasing the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender or economic strength of individuals and communities". I particularly like its description of the process of empowerment which states that empowerment is, "The process which enables individuals/groups to fully access personal/collective power, authority and influence, and to employ that strength when engaging with other people, institutions or society… It encourages people to gain the skills and knowledge that will allow them to overcome obstacles in life or work environment and ultimately, help them develop within themselves or in society". I like this description because

it focuses on the individual having the ownership and the power to develop their own capabilities in a way that they wish to, rather than power be thrust upon them by someone else; it is about the individual being **enabled** to use their power.

Empowering people is very much central to the philosophy of Buddhism which takes as its stance that individuals have the power and capacity within themselves to overcome suffering and to become stronger because of it. The philosophy is based on the belief that individuals have tremendous reserves of compassion, creative energy, wisdom and courage. In Buddhism, the relationship between a mentor and disciple is fundamental to the development of the human being. The mentor reminds and reassures the disciple of the capacity within them of the potential for growth and the recognition of unrealised possibilities. The mentor provides inspiration to the disciple not merely through teaching but by their own way of being. The empowerment of others is the focus of a mentor's life; a mentor helps them to perceive their own weaknesses and address them with courage. (SGI Quarterly, 2010)

Self Empowerment

What then is Self Empowerment? Simply, self-empowerment means to take charge of your own life whether it be personally or professionally. Jordaan (2012) refers to empowerment as gaining knowledge and understanding, and thus, self-empowerment as gaining knowledge and understanding of self. He describes the characteristics of empowerment as: having decision making power of your own; having access to information and resources; having a range of options determined by yourself; having the ability to exercise assertiveness; having a belief in self; having the ability to learn new skills; having the ability to change others perceptions; involving in the growth process and changes; increasing one's positive self-image. He explains that to be self-empowered you have to have the personal knowledge and belief in self to perform the above and the following qualities need to be demonstrated: self-knowledge; self-appreciation; vision; power of purpose; commitment; contribution. Fomularo (2002) describes the cycle of self-empowerment whereby the individual has a dream or a vision which is fuelled by passion, but to enable the individual to achieve their vision, tools such as principles, character, morals, virtues, personality, values and ethics need to be in place.

When I think of self-empowerment, I think of Randy Pausch, who was a professor at Carnegie Mellon University. He was a father of three children and was suffering from pancreatic cancer. With only a few months to live, he gave his last lecture on September 18th, 2007, to an audience of four hundred people which was entitled, 'Achieving Your Childhood Dreams' and focussed on how to live your life. In his conclusion he states, "If you live properly, the dreams will come to you."

Here is the link to the video clip which lasts for ten minutes:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=BODHsU3hDo4

I find this video inspirational in that this is a man with only a few months to live who has decided to take control of what life he has left; he has chosen that the time he has left will be fun and that he is going to enjoy himself. Besides passing on the message of how to live life to his audience he explains at the end that he is passing this message on to his own children who will see it when they are older. Randy Pausch is demonstrating all the qualities of self-empowerment as described above and is taking his life into his own hands.

Empowerment at Work

Scarnati's (2001:110) view of empowerment at work is that, "Every organisation is rich in talent, and the value of the gold we mine is in the team of people we lead. Like the letters of the alphabet, what is important is the manner in which individuals join together to empower each other mutually as a meaningful team. Team work and empowerment are essential elements of quality." Liu, Chiu and Fellows (2007: 570) define work empowerment as being multi-dimensional in nature, involving the delegation of power by managers and then involving the perception and internalisation of this power by the individuals. Work empowerment is described by Conger and Kanungo (1988) as a relational construct and a motivational construct. As a relational construct, work empowerment is about the influences of managerial practices on employee participation. Subordinates are given authority and responsibility through the manager relinquishing his power to the subordinates. Consequently, subordinates feel a sense of ownership and control over their jobs.

Empowerment may be equated to delegation, the difference being that empowerment gives continuous authority whilst delegation gives temporary authority. As a motivational construct, the perception of the employee with regard to their sense of power, control and ownership is considered. Employees are motivated which encourages self-determination (Deci *et al.,* 1989) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Van Oudtshoorn and Thomas (1995:25, 26) who investigate empowerment and its relevance to management and organisations, similarly suggest that there are two aspects to becoming empowered, the first is concerned with the objective, whereby consideration is given to what we are authorised or given permission to do, and the second is concerned with our own personal perception of the power that we have been given. They further explain that the two may not necessarily match, as the individual's understanding of them being empowered may be greater than that they have been given, thus they may be seen as overstepping the mark. Conversely, if their sense of empowerment is not as great as that which they have been given, they may be perceived as not pulling their weight or not making the contribution which is expected of them. They explain that we are neither empowered nor disempowered; that we are all a part of a variety of groups; the family, work and social groups, and therefore, we may be objectively and subjectively differently empowered. It is their view that even in a business organisation, the individual is not completely empowered and not completely disempowered; that we are all empowered to some extent and all to a different extent. In their distinction between empowerment and disempowerment, they state, that as babies, we are completely empowered but as we get older, we learn to be more cautious and consequently may disempower ourselves; the more we learn to play it safe, the more we disempower ourselves. They provide us the characteristics associated with the states of empowerment and disempowerment in Table 1 below (p.27)

Table 1 States of empowerment and disempowerment	
Associated with empowerment	**Associated with disempowerment**
Accepting of responsibility	Avoiding taking responsibility
Being active	Being passive
Boldness	Timidity
Creative	Conventional
Energetic	Lethargic
Enjoys life	Gets little joy out of life

Happy	Depressed and miserable
Healthy	Many health problems
Imaginative	Dull and unimaginative
Independent	Dependent
Individualistic	Conforming
Innovative	Sticks to routines
Interesting	Dull and boring
Motivated	Unmotivated
Prepared to take risks	Reluctant to take risks
Observant	Unobservant
Satisfied with job	Frustrated in job
Sensitive to subtleties	Not sensitive to subtleties
Uses full potential as a human being	Uses only a fraction of potential
Uses intelligence to the full	Does not use intelligence to the full

It may be obvious that the characteristics of empowerment as provided by Van Oudtshoorn and Thomas above, are the characteristics that may be sought by business organisations and conversely, the characteristics of disempowerment are not conducive to the rapidly changing and competitive business world.

Empowerment may be seen as strengthening of the individual's perception of their own effectiveness. Whetton and Cameron (1984) view empowerment as a motivational factor to enhance self-efficacy thus enabling power to produce effects. From this it may be deduced that people who have power are more likely to be effective and that their performance may be increased.

Carson and King (2005) state that empowerment focuses on delegation and power passing from higher organisational levels to lower ones. Forrester (2000) describes empowerment as giving employees the independence to make decisions and commitments instead of just suggesting them. Pardo del Val and Lloyd (2002) define empowerment as the involvement of employees in the decision-making process whereby members are invited to be responsible for the quality of their tasks and encouraged to think strategically. In this context, managers reward employees for satisfying customers and improving the functioning of the organisation.

Greasley et al (2005) draw on some of the literature, which identifies two aspects to empowerment; firstly, the perspective and perception of the individual who is being empowered and, secondly, the role of managers. With regard to the individual perspective, Thomas and Velthouse (1990) defined empowerment as increased intrinsic task motivation; they developed a cognitive model of empowerment and identified four cognitions for worker empowerment: sense of impact; competence; meaningfulness and choice. Lee and Koh (2001) who give a similar meaning of empowerment identify four dimensions as describing the psychological state of the subordinate: meaningfulness; competence; self-determination; impact.

With regard to the role of management, the dynamic relationship of the leader with employees is often cited as crucial. It is argued that the leader is responsible for creating a common goal which is communicated and shared and that the leader should monitor the

extent to which the employee feels empowered (Honold, 1997; Johnson, 1994). The leader may also have an influence in the development of the team by focussing on strategies that encourage self-management and group decision autonomy. Dainty et al (2002) postulate that if the organisation encourages effective team work, then leaders should focus on empowering teams. Training in the form of communication development may be regarded as essential if the employee is to be effective and engaged in this participative and facilitative approach (Pastor,1996).

Greasley *et al* (2005) also point to the benefits of empowerment; that whilst it may be beneficial to the organisation, it may also be beneficial to the individual as there may be reduced conflict and ambiguity in their role as they have greater control, thus there is less emotional strain on the employee (Nykodym *et al,* 1994); also, that employees have greater motivation, job satisfaction and loyalty (Mullins and Peacock, 1991). Greasley *et al* (2005) highlight the fact that one of the criticisms of the empowerment literature is that there appears to be a lack of interest in the employee perspective; that it is likely that the perspective of empowerment from a manager's point of view may be quite different from that of an employee's point of view.

What type of organisational culture promotes empowerment?

Van Oudtshoorn and Thomas (1995:30) allude to the work of Harrison and Stokes (1991) who identify that a culture of an organisation can promote empowerment or disempowerment. They describe four different types of cultures: power, role, achievement and support. The power organisation is hierarchical with obedience being the chief virtue rather than individuals being encouraged to take on responsibility and to use their initiative. In the role culture, employers have to abide by a system of structures and procedures which dictate how things should be done, and these are the overriding factors. Both these cultures can be seen to be disempowering. The achievement culture engages the individual who experiences considerable satisfaction as the rewards are not only financial, and they are perceived as being equal contributors to the success of the company. Finally, the support culture is very much based on mutual trust whereby the individual is valued:

> A support culture fosters warmth and even love, not just driving enthusiasm. People like to come to work in the morning, not only because they like work, but because they care for the people they work with. Because they feel cared for, they are more human in their   interactions with others; customers, suppliers, the public and their fellow workers (p.7)

Unlike the power and role cultures, the achievement and support cultures are empowering. Thus, Van Oudtshoorn (p30) concludes that to create an empowered workforce, the following is required:

- Having organisational structures in place which facilitate empowerment;
- Creating an organisational culture of self-organised learners;
- A non-authoritarian approach to manager-subordinate relations in the company.

Blanchard, K et al (2010:12) describe empowerment in a way which very much equates to my view of being empowered and empowering others:

> True empowerment is not giving people power, people already have plenty of power, in the wealth of their knowledge and motivation, to do their jobs magnificently. We define empowerment as letting this people power out… real empowerment has at its core a sense of ownership.

I, too, believe that empowerment is not about giving people power; rather it is about enabling people to demonstrate the power that is already within them whether that be their motivation, their talents, their passions. I do believe that my manager has the same understanding of empowerment as I do, as expressed in the many discussions we have had. In Appendix E, a thirty minute video–clip can be accessed whereby we discuss our views on empowerment. Perhaps this is why I feel that my workplace is such an exciting place to be: I am being empowered by my manager in that he is enabling me to use my knowledge and enthusiasm to do my job, and as a manger I am enabling my team to use their talents, knowledge and motivation to do theirs.

<u>Servant Leadership</u>

It is through thinking of my role as a manager and how I wish to empower my team that I have started to reflect on the type of manager/leader that I am. I am drawn to the idea of Servant Leadership. But what does this mean? Is it a contradiction in terms? How can a person be a servant and a leader? When I first heard the term 'Servant Leadership', I felt off-put by the word, 'servant'. I equated the word, 'servant' with being servile. I did not perceive the concept of Servant Leadership as being of an equal relationship between the manager/leader and the team/person that is being managed. The word 'servant' seems to imply subservience and this, certainly as a manager, is not what I was about – the idea of me being subservient to my team or conversely, they being subservient to me, did not fit with the person I am or the manager that I am. I do not align myself with the idea of power relationships. In my relationship with others, whether I am a manager, a friend or a mother, I am about respecting the other for who they are; I see us as different with differing strengths and weaknesses, differing gifts and talents. Whatever, we all have something to give and to offer.

As a manager, I am about empowering my team, releasing the talent within, enabling them to be the best that that they could be. As I enquired further into Servant Leadership, I came to see leadership as not necessarily taking charge or being the dominant person, rather it fitted in with my idea of empowerment, that is, being an enabler. Also, I began to question the idea of being a servant. What is the leader a servant of? Is the leader a servant to the needs of others or rather is the leader a servant of a cause? If being a servant to the needs of others, what are those needs? Do I identify those needs or does the individual identify their needs? A servant leader could also be a servant to a cause. I am reminded of the words of Lilla Watson (1985), quoted in an email, (August 2nd, 2010) by a colleague responding to practitioner-researchers discussing Servant Leadership:

> If you've come to help us, we don't need your help.
> But if you've come because your liberation is bound up
> With ours, then let us work together.

Thus, more and more, I was beginning to see Servant Leadership as working with others, sharing with others, having a vision and sharing goals; everyone using their talents, sharing

information and learning from mistakes (McGee-Cooper and Trammell (2002). I like the way that Covey (1997: xi) equates Servant Leadership with empowerment:

> You've got to produce more for less and with greater speed than you've ever done before. The only way you can do that in a sustained way is through the empowerment of people. And the only way you get empowerment is through high-trust cultures and through the empowerment philosophy that turns bosses into servants and coaches…Leaders are learning that this kind of empowerment, which is what Servant Leadership represents, is one of *the* key principles that, based on practice, not talk, will be the deciding point between an organisation's enduring success or its eventual extinction.

The concept of Servant leadership dates back to the 4th century BC. Chanakya (1992:72) writes:

> The king (leader) shall consider as good, not what pleases himself but what pleases his subjects (followers)…the king (leader) is a paid servant and enjoys the resources of the state together with the people.

The concept of Servant Leadership can also be found in the New Testament, (Luke 22:26), "But ye (shall) not (be) so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve". In fact, throughout the New Testament we read about the works and actions of Jesus who very much comes across as one who is wanting to serve his people. An example of this is when Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. This is a humble act demonstrating Jesus' love and compassion. Also, Islam texts refer to the leader of a people being their servant.

Alan Rayner, previously a lecturer at Bath University and responding in an email to practitioner-researchers discussing Servant Leadership (email 3rd August, 2010) draws the distinction between 'leading with servility' which he equates with doing what is bidden, and 'leading with humility' which he equates with responding receptively and reflectively to need. He is of the opinion that Servant Leadership refers to the latter rather than the former. Also, that servility serves totalitarianism and hierarchy whether from top down or bottom up, however, he feels that humility does not. He continues that there is no absolute 'top' or 'bottom' in natural inclusional geometry, rather that there is only radial and tangential; 'figural' and 'transfigural'; local and non-local. He attaches the following poem, which he has written and clarifies his views:

<u>Humility of the Valley</u>

Life doesn't strive
To secure its foundation
Upon the rocky serrations of the High-minded
Where Men build castles in the air
To furnish that false sense of superiority
Which comes from the pretence
Of overlooking all around
To the edge of infinity

Life thrives

In the seclusion of the valleys
Where dampness accumulates
In the earthy humidity
Of humility
Warmly tucked in
To the bed of sea and land
Rich with variety
Exuding
Intruding
Out and into the cosiness
Of each lovingly enveloped
In the other's influence

Wisdom cannot be found
On peaks of adaptive fitness
Running with Red Queens
But only in that radiant depth
That reaches everywhere
Through the heart of somewhere.

Robert Greenleaf (1970) coined the phrase, Servant Leadership in his essay, 'The Servant as Leader'. He says:

> The servant-leader *is* servant first…It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve *first.* Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is *leader* first perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possessions… The leader-first and the servant-first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature…the difference manifests itself in the care taken by the servant-first to make sure that the other people's highest priority needs are being served. The best test, and difficult to administer, is: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, *while being served,* become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? *And* what is the effect of the least privileged in society? Will they benefit or at least not be further deprived?

Servant Leadership may be associated with the participative management style whereby the servant leader encourages, supports and enables those with whom he works. Spears (2004) has identified ten characteristics or attributes of a servant leader:

- Listening
- Empathy
- Healing
- Awareness
- Persuasion
- Conceptualisation
- Foresight
- Stewardship
- Commitment to the growth of people

- Building community

These characteristics should not be perceived as a way to behave; rather they serve as a means of reflection in one's personal development.

At this point in my enquiry, I believe that there are many factors about Servant Leadership which I find appealing which aligns with my idea of empowerment. But, as with empowerment, these factors are borne out of the values I hold and the way that I perceive relationships. My next step is enquire further into different styles of management and leadership and then to articulate my own unique style based on the values I hold.

In this section, I discuss the methodology which I have adopted, the ethical issues which are being addressed and how the proposed methodology has evolved.

Methodology

In conducting my research, I have adopted a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008a). In adopting a living theory methodology, I use a living theory approach to action research. Crotty (2012) is one of the latest practitioner-researcher's to be awarded a PhD using this methodology. By 'living theory' I refer to the explanation that an individual gives for the educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations.

Action research is based on change-action and is cyclical in nature. It involves stages of action and research, followed by action. It involves the identification of a problem, collecting information, analyzing, planning actions and implementing and monitoring outcomes. It was originally developed by Lewin (1946) and further developed by Schon (1983), Carr and Kemmis (1986), Whitehead (1989) and others.

A typical action research cycle may be represented as follows:

ACTION-OBSERVATION-REFLECTION-CHANGE-PLANNING-ACTION

A living theory methodology describes how the enquiry is carried out as I work towards the development of my living theory. In adopting this methodology, I, as a practitioner, create my own theories and offer my own explanations for what I do in my practice. In researching my practice, I reflect on my values which are embodied in my educational practice (Whitehead, 1989, 2003) and enquire as to whether I am living my values in my practice. My values then become living standards of judgement (Laidlaw, 1996) on which I judge what I do.

The living theory methodology focuses on the 'I' and in asking the question, 'How do I improve my practice? ', I am asking if I am living my values in my practice. If I am not living my values in my practice, I may experience myself as a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 1989). And indeed, if this were to be the case, I would ask, what I am going to do about it? The living theory approach to my self-study emphasises the importance of asking, researching and answering questions of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

In conducting this self-study, I have adopted a living theory methodology because I want to research into my practice and to improve my practice. I want to produce explanations for what I am doing and why I am doing it. I want to generate new knowledge about my practice. This approach is very different from that of social science research whereby researchers generate new knowledge and explanations about the actions of other people. Social science researchers tend to stand on the outside of the research and generate theories about other people.

McNiff (2010) traces the development of research back to beginning of scientific enquiry when research became to be based on rationality. To understand the context of the research I am undertaking in adopting a living theory approach, I summarise this development as described by McNiff.

Empirical research was the first kind of rational research to emerge. At that time, the natural world was being researched and researchers would relate stories about what was happening based on their experiments and observations. The methodology used remains popular to this day.

Interpretive research started to develop in the nineteenth century and researchers started to research people. It was the beginning of qualitative research rather than quantitative research and questions were posed about the behaviour of people. New theories were developed as to why and how people behaved as they did. Disciplines such as psychology and sociology began to appear. Theories were being developed but individual differences were not being considered; rather, people were being looked at as a whole and statements were being made as to how people should live and how the lives of people should be judged.

Critical research started to develop in the 1920's. Questions started to arise as to how economic, political, cultural and historical forces could impact on people's lives. Discussions took place as to how people could improve their lives and what action needed to be taken. However, whilst researchers talked about taking action, they never actually took action themselves. As McNiff emphasizes, with these different types of research, it was the researcher who told the story, owned the theory and offered explanations about what other people did. Also, as far as critical theory was concerned, the researchers suggested the actions that people should take thus creating an imbalance in power between the person researching and the person/people being researched.

It was then that action research and social activity theories began to emerge when people began to explain what they were doing and what actions they were taking. McNiff, however, points out that it was still the researcher that put forward the theory and practitioners would apply the researcher's theory and this is the situation for much traditional research today.

It was in the 1970's that Jack Whitehead began to question 'the rationality and justice of traditional forms of theory' (p.56) and started to develop a shift from outsider to insider research whereby practitioners started to tell their own stories of their practice and offer explanations of their practice. Explanations were postulated based on the evidence of their research. Thus researchers started to generate their own living theories of their practice and started asking, 'How do I improve what I am doing? How do I improve my practice?' Mc Niff concludes that practitioners, in conducting their research and generating their living theories, 'need to ensure that they communicate their ideas in ways that stand as high quality research and not just personal opinion.' (p.57).

For me, adopting a living theory methodology aligns with my ontological and epistemological perspectives. As explained in my Master's dissertation:

> My ontological assumptions are that I see myself as a part of other people's lives and they, a part of my life; I do not see myself as separate, as an observer or an outsider as would be more the action research approach of the social sciences, whereby descriptions and explanations are offered for what others are doing. Likewise, my epistemological assumptions are that I see knowledge as something which the individual creates for themselves and with others; I see myself as a part of knowledge creation.
>
> (Jones, 2009:36)

And:

> The methodology I use is strongly influenced by my ontological and epistemological assumptions (Hitchcock and Hughes, 1995). In conducting my research I see myself as a part of the world and interacting with others and thus creating new knowledge individually and together. As explained previously and to clarify here, there are fundamental differences between the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of a living theory and a social science methodology. The ontological assumptions of the interpretive action researcher put the researcher as separate from the practitioners they are studying. The assumption of living theory researchers is that the individual decides how they are going to conduct their research and how they should live their lives in negotiation with like-minded people (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).
>
> (Jones, 2009:37)

For me, a living theory methodology gives the researcher, who is also the practitioner, the ownership of the research; it is the practitioner-researcher's theory; it is the practitioner-researcher's explanation; it is the practitioner-researcher who is creating new knowledge. Unlike social science research whereby the researcher owns the theory and explanations for what other people do; the researcher is perceived as superior to the objects or the people that are being researched.

My Values and Living Standards of Judgement

At this point, I would like to emphasise that my values are fundamental to my enquiry; they are fundamental to a living theory approach. My enquiry has been borne out of the values I hold. As explained in my section on my aims of my enquiry, I began my enquiry by reflecting into my values and asking what my values were, where they had they come from and how had they developed. This led me to looking at my childhood and the influences of home, school and the church and then looking beyond at my early years in teaching. I began to see the values with which I had been brought up and how these values became embedded within me. I have seen me living these values in my teaching career and working within the Local Authority as an Inclusion Officer, a Senior Inclusion Officer and now a SEN Manager.

It is these values which drive what I do and what has always driven me in my career, that is, to do the best I can for children and young people. It is these values which dictate how I

relate to people, and why I relate to people in the way that I do. I see that the evolvement of my concept of empowerment is derived from the values that I hold, those values of trust, love, hope, regard and respect of the other, the recognition that we all have something to give. It is these values that are at the core of my being. These values become living standards of judgement on which I judge my practice.

My standards of judgement are the criteria on which I judge my practice. I am of the same view of Sullivan (2006) and Lomax (1994) who refer to the criteria of generalisability and replicability which is usually used to judge traditional types of research. These criteria cannot possibly be employed to the type of research I am doing. My research is to do with **my** learning as I reflect on **my** practice. These standards of judgement, in line with my ontological values, are the foundation of **my** research.

At this point it is worth reflecting on Cresswell's (2007:53-58) descriptions of five qualitative research approaches which include narrative research, phenomenological research, grounded theory research, ethnographic research and case study research. Whitehead (2008b) addresses each of these and describes the similarities and differences between these and living theory. This is clearly explained in my Master's dissertation:

> Whilst living theory has similarities to each of them, the fundamental difference between them all is that a living theory is a researcher's unique explanation of their educational influences in their own learning, the learning of others and the learning of social formations. Regarding narrative research, Whitehead states that whilst all living theories are narrative, not all narratives are living theories. The purpose of a living theory is not to give a description of universal essence as in phenomenological research; it is not to give abstract generalizations as in grounded theory research, it does not focus on a culture group as in ethnographic research and is not constrained by a bounded system as in case study research.
>
> (Jones, 2009:38)

The point here is that it is not necessary to adopt either one or the other of these approaches. Rather the researcher can draw insights from each of these approaches in the development of their own living theory.

It is through adopting this approach, that I am able to apply my own 'methodological inventiveness' (Dadds and Hart, 2001). By this, I mean that I am able to develop my own way through my research. This is in line with the view of Dadds and Hart who state:

> Perhaps the most important new insight for us both 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 a practitioner-research (Dadds 1995); that what 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 and Hart, 2001:166)

And:

> No methodology is, or should be cast in stone, if we accept that professional intention should be informing research processes, not pre-set ideas about methods or techniques…

> (Dadds and Hart, 2001:169)

I believe that in my Master's dissertation, I developed my own way through my research, and I believe that this is now evolving in my doctoral research programme as I clarify and evolve my embodied expressions of empowerment as an explanatory principle in my explanation of my educational influence in my professional practice.

Validity

How do I know that when I make a claim to knowledge that it is valid? In other words how do I know that what I describe, descriptive validity, presents a true and accurate picture of what I am describing, and as I move to analyzing and explaining and giving reasons and explanations for my claim, explanatory validity, how do I know that what I am saying is consistent and truthful?   And how do I know that the methods I use are appropriate, suitable and fit for purpose in gathering my data and drawing out my evidence? McNiff (2002) and Whitehead (2008a) argue that both personal and social validity are necessary in practitioners making their claims to knowledge. Thus, with regard to personal validity, as a practitioner, it is I, who sets the criteria for how I conduct my research. It is I, who takes responsibility for what I do. I develop my standards of judgement based on the values I hold. These standards of judgement become the criteria on which I judge my practice. This is very much the view of Polyani (1958) who argues that the individual can decide to understand the world from their own point of view and it is they who can make claims to originality and exercise our own judgements. Having made a personal judgement to the claims I am making, McNiff and Whitehead (2005) suggest the establishment of a Validation Group whereby these claims can be critically scrutinized. The development of my validation group is explained further on.

In validating my claim to knowledge, I adopt Habermas' (1976) four criteria for social validity. These criteria relate to the communication between speaker and hearer:

- The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression, so that speaker and hearer can understand one another;
- The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true proposition…so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker;
- The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker;
- The speaker must choose an utterance that is right…and can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognized normative background;

> (Habermas, 1976:2-3)

Whitehead applies these criteria to all forms of communication including written text, and simplifies the above stating that what is being said must be:

- Comprehensible, in that a form of language is used that is commonly understood by all;
- Truthful, in that all recognize these as true accounts and not fabrications:

- Sincere, so that all parties can trust what the other says;
- Appropriate for the context, while recognizing the unspoken cultural norms in which their discourses are embedded.

(Whitehead and McNiff, 2006:102)

Methods

Action reflection Cycles

In adopting a living theory methodology, I use action reflection cycles as advocated by Whitehead and McNiff (2006:4-8):

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?
- What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?
- How do I explain my educational influences in learning?
- How do I show that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How do I show the potential significance of my research?
- How do I show the implications of my research?
- How do I evaluate the evidence-based account of my learning?
- How do I modify my concerns , ideas and practices in the light of my evaluation?

Papers that I have written and presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conferences demonstrate how I have used the cycle above, as I have enquired and asked the question, 'How do I improve my practice?' Refer to Appendices F and G where I include two of these papers. Throughout my thesis, I use these cycles to express my concerns, to explain why I am concerned and what I have done to address my concerns.

Narrative Enquiry

Throughout my self-study, I have gathered data through narrative enquiry as advocated by McNiff (2007) and Clandinin and Connelly (1999, 2000) and Clandinin (2007). By this I mean that I tell stories; I relate stories about my past, about my childhood, my teaching experiences and my roles since joining the local authority. When telling my stories, I reflect on my experiences and what I have learnt. These stories with my reflections demonstrate the personal, practical knowledge (Connelly and Clandinin,1988) I have gained and they demonstrate my embodied knowledge (Whitehead, 2003). It is in telling my stories and reflecting on them that I have furthered my understanding of who I am and why I do what I do. I am furthering my understanding of the type of manager that I am, why relationships are important to me and why my concept of empowerment has been a thread throughout my life and is so significant in how I relate to others within my role as SEN manager now.

Video

Video has been used extensively in gathering data. Through using video, I have been able to reflect on my practice (Farren and Whitehead, 2006). The following extract from my Master's dissertation demonstrates the value I place on using video in gathering evidence of my practice:

> Using video has given me another dimension in which to reflect on my practice in a way no other form could achieve. As I watch the video clips, I am looking for evidence of my inclusional way of being and my recognition of the inclusional way of others, in the way that I relate to them, in the way that they relate to me, in the way that we relate to each other demonstrating qualities of genuineness, honesty, care, trust, loyalty and respect. I show the video clips to colleagues and ask them if they can see this evidence of which I am seeking. I ask whether the video clips demonstrate and communicate my living values.
>
> (Jones, 2009:44)

Throughout this enquiry, I use video to gather data of my relationship with others, to demonstrate my style of management and to capture those moments when I believe I am being empowered or that I am empowering others. Sometimes video images capture moments of conversations I am having with colleagues. As I look at the video footage, I carefully select those video-clips which provide the evidence I am looking for when I see that I am living my values in my practice. I then reflect on those video-clips and ask, 'What am I learning from what I am seeing in this clip? Is what I am seeing helping me to move on in my practice? Is it helping me to improve my practice?' As with narrative enquiry, I tell my story and reflect on my story, so with video-clips, I show the image and reflect on the image. I then write about what my reflections. I believe that the video images coupled with the text give another dimension to the evidence I am trying to show. I would like to refer to this process as video enquiry.

Validation Group

Throughout my enquiry I discuss my work at Conversation Café. This group started a number of years ago when my colleague and I invited a group of people together within the Local Authority to share together the different projects we were doing. Jack Whitehead, who was then at Bath University, starting attending the group and throughout this time, people within the community and fellow national and international researchers have attended the sessions. Seven years on, we now meet once a week at 8 0' clock in the morning and over croissants and coffee, we discuss our values, our concerns and what drives us to do what we do. We take our writings to this group and discuss how our writings can be improved and whether they demonstrate us living our values in our practice.

I have found the support of this group to be invaluable. Throughout the time I did my Masters dissertation, I discussed my work with this group. Not only does the group give support but also it serves as a Validation Group using Habermas' (1976) criteria for social validity. People within the group also serve as critical friends and, individually, respond to conversations and writings.

Other Methods

In undertaking my research, besides the methods mentioned above, I also use a reflective diary whereby I write about reflections of my practice. I use emails demonstrating evidence of my practice and examples of where my values are evidenced in my practice. Reports which refer to my practice are used and also evaluations of presentations I have given or workshops I have led.

Ethical Considerations

My ethical considerations are in line with my ontological stance in that whatever I do, I endeavour to have a regard and respect of the other. Thus, in undertaking my research, first and foremost, is that I have regard and respect of the wishes of those who may be involved in my research. I have considered the ethical implications of my research and have referred to Liverpool Hope University's web page on research for guidance. I have completed the university's Research Ethics Clearance Form which clearly explains the details of my proposed research study, the risk and ethical procedures of my study, and the confidentiality and anonymity of my data. The details of this form have been approved by the university's Research Ethics Sub-Committee. I have also used the British Educational Research (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research, 2011.

My enquiry is a qualitative, reflective self-study of my practice. Thus, the main participant is me, however, people who are involved with me in my work form part of the study as we collaborate, reflect on my practice and discuss empowerment and the relationships we have between us.

Voluntary informed consent is paramount. Any participants in my research have been and will be fully informed of the aims of my research and the need for their involvement. Video has been much used in my research. Permission has been sought beforehand for the video camera to be used. Any video-clips used in my research are shown to any participants involved and their permission is sought to use the video-clip. If permission is not granted or the participant feels uncomfortable about their involvement, then the video camera and video-clips are not used. This is the case regarding a participant's involvement in any aspect of my research; their right not to grant permission is respected.

Participants have been informed of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. They will not be made to feel uncomfortable about this and their wish will be respected. I understand that if someone wishes to withdraw from my research that I need to consider if I have had a part to play in this in the way that I may have behaved towards them or whether I have said something that may have made them feel uncomfortable. If this were to be the case, I may need to consider a different approach which may be more conducive to the participant.

At this point in my inquiry, children, young people and vulnerable adults are not participants in my research, however, I am fully aware of Articles 3 and 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which states that the interests of the child must be paramount and that in line with their age and maturity, children have a right to express their views in all matters that affect them. Thus, I am aware that fully informed consent is required if they are to participate.

Participants are fully aware of their right to confidentiality and anonymity. If participants do not wish to be named then this right is respected. Conversely, if participants wish to be named, this is respected also.

I am fully aware of the legal requirements in relation to the storage and use of personal data as set down by the Data Protection Act (1998) and any subsequent similar acts.

In conducting my research, I am fully aware of my responsibility to protect the reputation and integrity of educational research by ensuring that I conduct my research to the highest

standards. Finally, I am fully aware of my responsibilities to educational professionals, policy makers and the general public and have every intention of making public and communicating my
findings on empowerment through living values, as stated in the BERA Ethical Guidelines:

> Researchers have a responsibility to seek to make public the results of their research for the benefit of educational professionals, policy makers and a wider public understanding of educational policy and practice…

> Educational researchers must endeavour to communicate their findings, and the practical significance of their research, in a clear, straightforward fashion and in language judged appropriate to the intended audience.

Interim Findings and Outcomes

In this section, I discuss my findings obtained so far and how they are influencing the developing enquiry overall.

Through researching and reflecting on my practice, I believe that evidence is emerging whereby I am able to demonstrate that the culture of empowerment is developing within the workplace and is having an impact on me and my team. In conducting my research, I believe that I am contributing to new knowledge on empowerment. Much has been written about empowerment. Empowerment is a term that means different things to different people. The literature on empowerment is extensive but my understanding of empowerment is unique to me due to the experiences I have had and due to the values I hold.

In the workplace, I am being empowered by my manager who is researching his practice as an authentic leader in driving forward a Learning Organisation. We have had many discussions on empowerment and our views of empowerment are in accordance with each other. Being empowered by my manager gives me confidence and takes place within a relationship of trust, openness and honesty whereby my manager encourages my drive and enthusiasm for what I perceive to be in the best interests for vulnerable children and young people. Likewise, I empower my team by recognising the talents that there are in the team. I see the knowledge and experience within the individuals within the team and encourage them to use this energy that is already there within them. My team work hard and go that extra mile to meet the needs of children and young people with special educational needs. I believe that a culture of empowerment is being developed within the development of a Learning Organisation. My research focuses on my practice as a manager empowering my team and being empowered by my manager and being self-empowered when that need arises.

In researching my practice with the focus on living empowerment, I have adopted a living theory methodology whereby practitioners reflect on their values and evaluate whether they are living their values in their practice. I have reflected on my values to try to come to an understanding of the person that I am, to consider why I do what I do. Living my values in my practice is hugely significant to me and I have come to the realisation that this is my driver, not only in my personal life but also in my professional life; to live as according to my values. Also, I now realise that this has always been the case. I am realising also, that my idea of living empowerment is based on nothing else other than the values that I hold and this has always been important to me. Living empowerment, for me, is a higher level value which is

made up of other values such as openness, trust, love, hope, regard and respect for the other. As I reflect on my relationships in my young life, with my pupils when I was a teacher, with my previous head teacher, with SENCOs and now with my team and my manager, empowerment has always been and still is a part of those relationships. For me, living empowerment, built on the values I hold, is becoming a living standard of judgement on which I judge my practice.

Much is written about empowerment in the workplace as demonstrated in the literature review. Much has been written by theorists and researchers who undertake their research in organisations and then give their view of what empowerment is based on the results they have obtained. I have not **adopted** empowerment as a **tool** or a **vehicle** to achieve what I want for the benefit for me, the service, the team and the children and young people in the authority. Rather, it is a reality borne out of the values that **I** hold. This coupled with empowerment as perceived by my manager, and emanating from the values that he holds, combines to create a unique meaning of empowerment and a unique culture of empowerment to the benefit and well-being, I believe, of all stakeholders. Empowerment is a part of quality relationships between one and the other; relationships based on love, hope and trust. To this end, I refer to Liverpool Hope University strategic map for the Faculty of Education 2010-2011 which states:

> The guiding vision and orientation of the Faculty is to develop educational thought and practices which promote education as a humanising influence on each person and on society locally, nationally and internationally

With one of the purposes being:

> To contribute to the development of knowledge and understanding in all fields of education, characterising all work with values arising from hope and love

One of the underpinning themes is to:

> Develop Christian values in the relationships created within the Faculty and with other people and organisations

And another:

> Embedding values-
>
>> Christian values of hope and love
>> Globally sensitive
>> Environmentally sustainable
>> Concern for social justice.

I now believe that my research in empowerment, values and quality relationships will contribute to the vision, purpose and underpinning themes of the faculty of Education.

I have attended seminars at Liverpool Hope University and Bath University where I have presented my research and discussed my aims, methodology, findings and outcomes to date.

I have attended BERA Conferences and presented papers, whereby I have adopted a living theory methodology to demonstrate my work and also my relationships with SENCOs. Refer to Appendices F and G where I include two of these papers.

My research is progressing well. It is giving me the opportunity to research into my practice and to improve my practice. As I reflect on my values, I am seeing that living empowerment is becoming a standard of judgement on which I judge my practice. As I am being empowered by my manager and as I am empowering my team, a culture of empowerment is developing which is influencing our work with children and young people with special educational needs in the local authority.

As stated in my introduction, my research is being conducted at a time of significant political changes in the country. This is impacting on changes nationally and locally. Significant changes are being made within the Local Authority and with regard to Special Educational Needs; the most significant changes are being made since thirty years ago with the Warnock Report and the subsequent 1981 Education Act. Thus, it is an extremely exciting time to undertake my research and these changes will obviously be impacting on my research.

I now need to further explore the literature on management/leadership, the impact of quality relationships and what this means, and also further literature on empowerment. I wish to enquire further into my methodology and I will also continue to collect data to draw out the evidence I need in generating my living educational theory.

Proposed Structure of the Thesis

I would like to complete my thesis within two to three years from now. My proposed structure is based on my research to date, however, as I enquire further, the structure may change.

Abstract.

Introduction.	Why I am doing a PhD. Why I have decided to research in this way as I generate my own living theory. The context in which I am doing my research. A summary of each of the chapters.
Chapter 1	What are my values? How have they developed? Reflection on my early years and the influences of home, school and the church. Reflection on my career.
Chapter 2	Am I a manager or a leader? The value of quality relationships. Empowerment as a Living Value

Chapter 3   My methodology and methods – how I have enquired in generating my living educational theory and the methods I have used. Validity, rigour and ethical considerations to be discussed.

Chapter 4   My stories of living empowerment.
               -stories of my manager empowering me.
               -stories of me, as a manager, empowering my team.
               -stories of self-empowerment.

Chapter 5   Reflection and evaluation of my learning in creating my own living educational theory.

Chapter 6   Conclusion

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<u>APPENDIX A</u>

<u>Early Years</u>

I believe that the person I am now has been very shaped by past experiences. These past experiences have helped to form the values I hold and drive me to do what I do today. Perhaps when you read my story, you will have some idea of the person I was and what I am today.

I had an extremely happy childhood and I always look back with very fond memories. I was brought up in a small industrial town in South Wales. I have one sister who is younger than me. We lived with my parents, my grandfather and my aunty in a terraced Victorian house until I was seventeen. I was born into a Roman Catholic family and the church was just around the corner from where we lived. Next to the church was the Catholic School which I attended. Between my house and the church and school was a graveyard. In fact, it seemed to me, as a child, that I was surrounded by graveyards because at the top of my street was another church which was the Church of England and surrounding that church was a graveyard. Every time I went into town, I had to pass the graveyard.

The house was quite large with enough bedrooms to accommodate us all and downstairs, we had a kitchen, a back room where we lived, a middle room and a front 'best' room which was kept for visitors. We had an outside toilet until my father built an extension at the back of the house which consisted of a toilet and a bathroom. We were very posh – no more going outside in the cold to the toilet and no more baths in the tub in the kitchen. I experienced luxury at a young age!

My father built a garage at the back of the house. I would spend many happy times playing in this garage and it became the headquarters for our gang where we would hold our meetings. It was here that we decided that our gang should have a theme tune and we decided on the 'Z Cars' theme tune. At the beginning of our meetings we would start by marching up and down the lane whistling, humming and singing the theme tune with any 'instrument' we could lay our hands on. The same people used to pass up and down the lane and sometimes they would join in with us. Our gang had a great time, playing hop-scotch and Can- Can which was something like hide and seek but we'd have to get back and touch base before the person who was 'On' could see us.

My parents weren't rich financially. My father was a carpenter by trade but got a job in the steel works because there was more money. Whilst not employed as a carpenter, my father was extremely skilful and would always be making things like wardrobes and building extensions and increasing bedrooms by creating dividers. My mother started work as a dinner lady at my school when my sister started school eventually becoming an administrative officer and manager of a team in the Civil Service. I have always been very proud of my mother's progression through the ranks which was due to pure determination on her behalf. My mother has always been an extremely determined person in every respect and still is! Perhaps that is where I get my determination from.

Besides being an industrial town, it was also a seaside town with a fantastic beach which stretched for about a mile. In summer, I spent my time on the beach; when I was younger, my mother used to take my sister and me to the beach after school. My father was a shift worker and would join us when he could. I have never forgotten the taste of warm, soggy, salty

tomato sandwiches which sometimes we would have for our picnic tea on the beach and which I enjoy to this day. My sister and I loved the Atlantic waves which could be very high and strong at times and could create a strong current. It was quite exhilarating waiting and then going with the next wave! My father taught my sister and me to swim and always taught us to have respect for the sea which we do to this day. Each Spring, we would love to go to the beach and witness the high tides watching the youngsters play 'Chicken' as they ran along the prom getting from one side to the other before the next enormous wave would crash onto the concrete. A few young people lost their lives playing this dangerous game but fortunately I never witnessed such tragedy.

On weekends, we would go to the beach as a family and take my grandfather down. He didn't like the sand, so he would sit in the shelter on the prom. away from the sun and we would take turns to go and see him to make sure he was alright. My mother would buy him an ice cream or take him some sandwiches. As a teenager, I would go to the beach with my friends and as an adult I love walking along the prom. with my family and still do. My father died a few years ago so I go back to see my mother every three or four weeks; we enjoy nothing more than going to a restaurant by the beach for Sunday lunch and then walking along the prom. afterwards.

Although my parents weren't rich, we went on holiday every year, mainly to seaside resorts such as Torquay and Bournemouth. Again we would spend our time on the beach and often finishing the day with fish and chips from the fish shop.

Besides teaching me how to swim, my father taught me how to ride a bike, how to blow bubbles with chewing gum, much to the disgust of my mother, how to whistle which I still enjoy doing to this day, much to the disgust of some of my colleagues yet a pleasure to others, and how to create a tune by tapping my fingers on the table. My mother, on the other, hand taught me how to read and would spend each night with my sister and me doing sums, writing and problem-solving, much to the disgust of my sister but something I loved.

Fairness was something that was instilled into us. This was always at the forefront when decisions were made about my sister and me. Whatever I had, my sister had, or at least the equivalent of, and vice versa. I always knew that I would never be left out, or things given to my sister that I would not know about and she felt this also. This helped to build a lot of trust between us as a family and has taught me the value of being fair and the feeling of trust that comes from that.

My parents invested a lot of time and the money that they had in my sister and me. We were both members of the local swimming club. I was always very competitive and loved swimming in the galas, overarm stroke being my best stroke. I also enjoyed doing back stroke but was not successful with breast stroke even to this day. Again, very happy memories surround my 'swimming' days, always calling into Lily White's Fish Shop on our way home and buying potato fritters.

At the age of seven, I began going to elocution lessons once a week. I've always resented the word 'elocution' which sounds so stuffy and didn't seem to represent the fun that we actually had. I used to go with my cousin and we would learn poems, extracts from Shakespeare and

passages from prose. I really enjoyed these sessions and have never forgotten the first poem I learnt called The Postman:

> Bring me a letter postman
> Bring me a letter do
> Meet me at the garden gate
> I will wait for you…

Twice a year we would be examined and although nervous, I enjoyed performing in front of an examiner. I enjoyed these sessions so much that I continued until I was eighteen and when I went to college, I did Public Speaking exams until I finished college four years later. This definitely stood me in good stead as a teacher and in giving presentations.

My sister and I also went to piano lessons every week. I remember sitting at the piano stool and the music teacher's dog would lie behind me. The music teacher would always be apologising for the smell that emanated from the dog every now and then. I did wonder at first whether it was she or the dog that produced such odours but she assured me it was the dog and I believed her! I still play the piano today – not well- but it does give me pleasure to bang out my repertoire as a means of relaxation.

My school and church stood behind my house with the graveyard in between. I enjoyed school and I enjoyed learning although I do remember being picked on by others throughout my Primary School (Jones, 2009). I say 'picked on' rather than 'bullied' as I never felt a victim; whenever I was picked on, I did not feel intimidated, but rather filled with an energy that I would not be beaten'. Outside of school my friends and I would be picked on by girls who attended another school (Jones, 2009). Stones would be thrown at us and they would shout out, 'Catholic bugs on the wall'. I passed the eleven plus and gained a place at the local grammar school, however, I did not go to the local grammar school because some of those girls would be going there and I really did not look forward to daily confrontations with girls who had it in for us catholics. Instead I went to another school eight miles away which was a catholic school also. Travelling, however, did not agree with me and on the bus in the mornings I used to think of boiled celery and beetroot being served with gravy which is something we frequently had at lunchtime and I usually ended up being sick or extremely nauseous by the time I got to school. I was at that school for a year before I returned to a newly built catholic comprehensive in my home town.

My childhood was filled with love. I had very loving parents and a very loving extended family – my grandfather and aunty with whom we lived and another aunty who lived in Birmingham and was a teacher; she has always been like a second mother to my sister and me, not having had children of her own. I lived in a world of love, caring, sharing and giving. I lived in a very secure, trustful world where I was enabled to grow as a confident individual. This deep feeling of confidence and security within me has enabled me to grow as a confident and secure adult. I also believe that the values I hold today have been very much influenced by my early and formative years. I also believe that the interconnection between my school, church and home and the values and principles they expounded has had a very strong influence on me.

The Church

Being born into a Catholic household, the church has been very significant in my life and has had an influence on the development of my values. As a child and living so close to the church and school, I used to go to mass every morning before going to school. I was not forced to go – it was something I chose to do. Not many people attended that time of the morning but I used to love the peace and tranquillity and even at that young age enjoyed that time as an opportunity to think and reflect. In fact, when I was eleven and moved to another school, I was not able to go to mass in the mornings and I remember being very upset about this and I missed it very much.

I did not like Sundays because I had to go to church twice, to mass in the morning which was fine but also to Benediction in the afternoon. I did not like going to Benediction and did not see the point of it. I remember singing very dreary Latin hymns in the midst of incense which was quite overpowering at times. On these Sunday afternoons I wished I could be elsewhere other than in church.

One of the things I loved about church was singing hymns, other than dreary Latin hymns! We would sing these hymns at home and at school. We all knew them off by heart. Even now when I meet up with my friends we will often end up the evening singing hymns in a very jolly way rather than piously. I particularly liked the month of May, the month of Mary, when we would have a procession in the church and 'crown' Our Lady. I was usually a flower girl and still remember those hymns, 'Oh Mary, we crown thee', - woe betide the attendant who placed the crown on Our Lady's head and did not do it on the word,' crown'- 'Star of the Sea', 'Look down, O Mother Mary'. I also loved the organ which accompanied the hymns. The organ at our church was magnificent and was played beautifully by a teacher at the Infant School. I used to sit and listen to the playing of the organ as parishioners processed out of church after mass. I love listening to organ music to this day.

It was through the church, at a young age, and reinforced at home and school, that I was taught and learnt about peace, justice, faith, love, hope and trust. The teachings of the Gospels which we heard every Sunday, revolved around these fundamental values. As a young child, these were terms with which I easily related backed up by lots of stories in the form of parables, 'The Good Samaritan', 'The Sower and the Seed', 'The Prodical Son'. Hymns that we sung reinforced these values that we were being taught, 'Abide with me', 'Shalom', 'Bind us together, Lord', 'I Watch the Sunrise'.

We would always be praying for peace, and tragedies around the world would be mentioned, whether it would be an earthquake, a war, a famine. We would always be asked to help these people through prayer and giving money. It was at this young age that I perceived people on the other side of the world to be a part of what I was; that we are all in this world together and that we should be supporting each other. I was aware of the work of CAFOD (Christian Aid for Overseas Development) and raising money for the Missioniaries overseas by putting money in the 'little red box'. We were taught about the Ten Commandments, The Beatitudes and learnt the Catechism.

What I want to impress upon here, is that a child, this is the world in which I lived. It was an innocent, protected world in which love, trust, faith, hope, peace and justice was openly discussed, openly demonstrated and openly criticised when it was seen not to be the case.

Secondary school

In this section, I want to focus on my development throughout secondary school and the impact it has had on me in the development of me as a person and my professional career.

I have already stated that I returned to my home town to attend school when a Catholic comprehensive school had been built there. Again, it was very close to my house so I could walk there. After being away from my friends for a year, it was great to be back with them once again and what was even more significant for me at the time was the fact that some of my friends had failed the eleven plus and yet here we were in the same school. Passing or failing the eleven plus made a huge difference to future schooling and future prospects; those that passed the eleven plus went on to grammar school with all the opportunities that that presented with regard to the possibility of Teacher Training College, Polytechnic College or University and those that failed the eleven plus went to secondary modern school whereby there were possibilities for more vocational training, thus passing or failing the eleven plus had huge implications on future prospects.

However, here I was in a comprehensive school where we were altogether, those that had passed the eleven plus and those that had failed, all having the same opportunity to succeed. I remember feeling at the time how pleased I with this state of affairs and I remember feeling that this seemed to be a **fair** system and that there seemed to be **equality of opportunity** for all. These are values which I have lived by all my life – I believe I always strive to be fair and I am always mindful of presenting equality of opportunity for all.

Within each year, there was a four form entry organised as according to ability, perhaps not so fair, but certainly better than being segregated by different types of school because of difference of ability. Pupils had the opportunity to progress to higher streams if they did well and those who did not make progress found themselves moving to lower streams. Over the years, I was fully aware of those pupils, my friends, who progressed to higher streams and eventually went on to higher education and secured professional jobs which they would never have achieved had it not been for the comprehensive system.

I was also fully aware, however, of those pupils in the bottom stream who seemed to remain in that stream throughout the time they were at school; it seemed to me, at the time, that these pupils were never seen in school plays or in school sport teams; the only time we did seem to hear of these pupils was when they were in trouble and being held up as an example of what not to be or being shouted at for misbehaving. One of these pupils was a friend of mine; I was friendly with him because our mothers were friendly and I had grown up with him. I shall call him Martin. Martin was a really lovely boy and I was very fond of him. I always saw the good side of him, the kind, caring side and he came from a very loving home, but at school, Martin was always in trouble. Sometimes, I wondered if he had just got a bad name for himself and, consequently, was picked on by the teachers or whether his behaviour was such that deserved to be constantly reprimanded. I never did know the truth, but I always felt sorry for Martin because I knew that underneath it all, he was a really lovely, innocent human being. Martin grew up to be an alcoholic and fell to his death climbing a drain pipe, for fun, at the side of a high building. I often think of Martin and the sad life, he and, consequently, his family had.

So, in comprehensive school, I was very much aware of those pupils in the lower streams who never seemed to progress and seemed to be anonymous in all the 'good' things in school life. This was to have a huge impact on me in my future career so much so that it influenced my decision to become a Special Educational Needs teacher and determined that these pupils

would not be 'anonymous' and that they would be given every opportunity to participate and 'grow'. This is something I have felt so strongly about all my life; that people should be given the opportunity to participate and be allowed to develop themselves. Giving pupils and people opportunities and seeing them grow has been one of the biggest pleasures of my life and drives me to act and behave the way that I do and have done throughout my career, but more of that later…

Another thing I was very aware of at secondary school was the relationship between pupils and teachers. I had a fantastic relationship with one teacher in particular; he was like a mentor to me always looking out for me making sure that I was alright. However, I was aware of the way that teachers spoke to us as a whole; shouting at us as we walked down the corridor making sure that we were all in line, shouting at pupils if they were late, questioning and challenging pupils unnecessarily. Why? Why did they do this? I found some teachers to be very authoritative and felt that they just needed to speak to us; if we did something out of place, to speak to us about it; it seemed to me that some teachers took this authoritative stance purely because they were able to; they had the control and the power. This was something again that I would be very mindful of in my future career; to treat pupils and people with respect and on an equal basis and to give pupils and people a voice, for them to be instrumental in their own development and future, for them to feel empowered.

APPENDIX B

My Early Teaching Career

I decided at a young age (Jones, 2009) that I wanted to be a teacher and went to a Catholic Teachers' Training College. I went to a Teachers' Training College rather than university because I wanted to be a teacher and wanted to embed myself in the teaching and learning process. I had decided when I was about twelve years of age which Teachers' Training College I wanted to go to and I decided that I wanted to do Infant teacher training. It was after my final teaching practice that I decided I did not want to teach infants. I had been teaching in a school on the Channel Islands where the pupils were from middle- class backgrounds - and it was extremely pleasant. At the end of my teaching practice, I felt dissatisfied. I had the feeling that these children could be taught by anyone and would succeed because of the support they had at home. This is perhaps a naïve assumption to make but that is how I felt at the time. I decided that I wanted to teach challenging, secondary school pupils with special educational needs, then called 'remedial children'. I felt that my training in the basic skills could be applied to secondary school pupils. This idea excited me; I felt that this was an area in which I could make a real difference. Perhaps sub- consciously, I was thinking of Martin and those pupils in the 'bottom stream' at my school who always seemed to be so anonymous and always stayed in the bottom stream.

I did not apply to the Local Education Authority (LEA) as was the procedure at the time as I did not think I would have much chance in getting into a secondary school because of my infant training background so I decided to apply directly to a school of my choice as I felt I could better put my case forward. Within a few months, one of the most challenging schools in the area wanted a 'remedial' teacher. I applied and got the job. I could not believe my luck! I felt, now I could make a difference!

It was an inner city school which stood at the edge of the red light district (Jones, 2009). Rather than summarise, I shall include an extract from my dissertation, which I believe, imparts my determination to make a difference to those pupils in the 'bottom stream' and to ensure that they did not remain anonymous. The content of the extract also reinforces the values I upheld, the values of fairness, justice, equality of opportunity, respect and valuing the other.

> *It had a roll of seven hundred pupils when I began, diminishing to five hundred by the time I left. The classes in each year group were streamed according to ability and I was given the 'bottom' stream – a class of twelve year olds consisting of twenty- two 'remedials' from a variety of different ethnic backgrounds. I had this class almost full-time and was to teach them all subjects. This was the seventies and there was no national curriculum at the time. I was given some text books across a variety of subjects and was told to teach them what I felt was appropriate; that these pupils were 'remedials' and tended not to move out of the 'remedial class. Bullock (1975), Warnock (1978), Golby and Gulliver (1979) and the Hargreaves Report (1984) had all warned of the dangers of an impoverished curriculum brought about by an over emphasis on basic skills work and the isolation of pupils with special educational needs.*
>
> *It was not long before I realised that some pupils should move into the stream above but was told that this was not possible as the class was not doing the same syllabus as*

the rest of the year group, and therefore, would have no knowledge or understanding of the subject matter. This was grossly unfair to me; that pupils I was teaching did not have the opportunity to progress out of the 'remedial' class because of the system that was in place at the school. I decided that this class would do the same syllabus as the rest of the year group. I managed to get a number of books across all subjects from the other classes in the year, differentiated the work and produced worksheets for each member of the class. At the end of the year ten pupils moved into the upper stream…

It was at this early stage of my career that I realised the inequality of opportunity which existed for pupils with special educational needs at the time. This is certainly not a criticism of the school. It is a criticism of the system which existed at the time for pupils with special educational needs. The values which I held at the time and still hold; the values of fairness, justice, equality of opportunity, respect of the other and the valuing of the other were being denied to this group of children. It was this recognition that has driven my career in the teaching of children with special educational needs.

Besides encouraging the pupils to move into the next stream, I would ensure that this 'bottom set' would be included in school plays and concerts. They could sing and they could act. One of my most memorable moments was the form's production of Charles Dickens, 'Christmas Carol'. We rehearsed and rehearsed; it was hard work but it was worth it – to see the pleasure and enjoyment on those children's faces with people clapping in recognition of their achievement is something I'll never forget.

The next extract demonstrates the mutual respect that developed between the pupils and myself merely by giving my time to them, listening to them and demonstrating to them that I liked them.

I taught at this school for seven years. They were the most challenging years of my teaching career and turned out to be the happiest. My learning at this time was significant. What happened in the first few years of teaching at this school were never to repeat themselves again. I shall give an example.

One day, I found a pupil, who I shall name, Peter, lying on the floor in the classroom sniffing gas from a lighter. He then pretended to cut his wrist with a piece of glass. When confronted about these incidents, he laughed each time. His finale was approaching me with the point of a large board protractor, at which I stood my ground, and within a few inches of the point touching me, he burst out laughing and returned to his seat. These were the most frightening experiences I have had in the classroom. Peter was removed from the school about a year later as it was felt he was a danger to himself and others.

I could give many more examples… I realized, at this stage, that I needed to get to know these young people and have a dialogue with them, as I expressed in the previous section. I spent time talking to them, getting to know them; I spent break times and after school talking to them. On Saturdays, I would take a group out in the school bus to a place of interest. Mutual respect developed between us. As they grew, so did I. I learnt that in showing young people that you are genuinely interested in them; showing that you trust and respect them, you get the same back. This was a

huge lesson I learnt and for the rest of my teaching career, I allowed this openness and acceptance of the other in my relationship with children and young people; I feel I have reaped the benefits as a result.

As my relationship grew with these children and our mutual respect developed, I started to empower them by giving them responsibilities. I decided that on Friday afternoons, if we had had a 'good' week, they could organize a party, bringing in food, reorganizing the classroom, and organizing the entertainment. One thing they asked of me though, was for me to leave the classroom as each week they wanted to surprise me. I agreed to this, initially, standing outside the classroom and as the weeks went by, moving further away from the classroom. It was a huge risk! But not once was I disappointed. At the end of the time they had to prepare the party, I would go back to the classroom and knock the door. They would open the door and to see the pleasure on their faces, again, was something I shall never forget. We ate, drank, we sung and acted. Each week was a celebration and at the end of the party, they would clear everything up and go home happily. We had certainly come a long way, no moreso than me!

Being at this school taught me the richness of ethnic and religious diversity as demonstrated in the next extract. Its impact has had a strong influence in my development as a person in my relationship with others and has had a significant impact on my career. It has reinforced for me the value of respecting the other, the importance of demonstrating this and living this in my personal and professional life.

> *It was a school that was rich in diversity. I realise now how fortunate I was to teach in such a school. The school consisted of a mix of pupils from various ethnic backgrounds, but mainly British White, Indian and West Indian. There was a mix of religions also, but mainly Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and Islam. All the pupils spoke English but for many of the Indian pupils, English was their second language with their first language being spoken at home. The main Indian languages that were spoken were Urdu, Punjabi, Gujarati and Hindi. The Indian pupils were second generation immigrants with many of the girls at a young age being engaged to boys in India which had been arranged by their parents. We celebrated a variety of festivals, for example, Diwali which is celebrated by Hindus and Sikhs. It symbolises the triumph of good over evil and is the celebration of light. Christmas was always great fun with a group of teachers and pupils going from door to door in the 'red light district' singing carols and raising money for the school and charity.*

The next secondary school in which I taught was very different from the fist but nevertheless very influential with regard to my need to empower children and young people and to give them a voice. At this school I saw the development of the 'whole school approach'. The following extract (Jones, 2009) describes the background to this:

> *It was a large comprehensive with a sixth form, the number of pupils on roll being one thousand two hundred. The pupils were mainly white and many were from naval families. After a few years at this school, in 1987, reorganisation of the four secondary schools in the area took place. This presented an opportunity to restructure the school and this had a significant impact on pupils with special educational needs and the special needs department. It was decided that rather than having streamed classes as according to ability, that a whole school approach would be developed whereby all classes would consist of pupils of mixed abilities. It was decided that*

there would be no special classes for pupils with special educational needs and that there would be no provision to withdraw pupils during lesson time. Special needs teachers would plan with subject teachers and support pupils in the class. At the time, this was called 'the whole school approach'. It meant that pupils with special educational needs would have as much access to the curriculum as all other pupils; that pupils with learning difficulties would be the responsibility of subject teachers and that their needs should be considered when subject teachers planned their syllabus. For the first time, pupils with special educational needs were a part of a normal mainstream classroom; they were not being integrated, they were being included. It was an approach, which I felt, liberated pupils with special educational needs.

I was delighted to be a part of this and the following extract (Jones, 2009) describes this:

For me, it certainly was the right approach. The hierarchical system of streaming disappeared and as long as the curriculum was differentiated and appropriate support and provision was in place, then I could see no reason why pupils with special educational needs could not thrive within this system.

The Whole School Approach became the focus of my dissertation, as I was doing a Diploma in Professional Studies in Education (Special Educational Needs). I presented a questionnaire to the staff and pupils. The following comment was typical of what pupils told me:

I much prefer it this year. I'm with my friends and they help me with my work. I'm not called names any more. Last year I was called all sorts of names like 'thicko', 'remedial'. This year people don't call me any names. I'm much happier.
(Jones, 1988:82)

It was the development of this approach and seeing C&YP with special educational needs being perceived on a more equal footing that I also experienced the nature of the inclusion rather than the integration of C&YP as I had experienced at my previous school and initially at this school.

APPENDIX C

Being a Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)

I did not work for a number of years as I had two young boys but then returned to work part-time, firstly working as a specialist support teacher in the suburb of a large city, working in a number of schools and teaching children with statements on a 1-1 basis. I then became a SENCO, working part-time in a primary school, very near to where I lived and very near to where my two boys attended school, so it was very convenient. I was not required to take a class but to take groups and to focus on the coordination of special educational needs (SEN) and all that that entailed.

Being a SENCO was a significant step for me as I was not only a teacher, teaching small groups, but also I had the responsibility of driving forward special educational needs in the school. As a SENCO, I was required to develop the knowledge and understanding needed for coordinating special educational needs in the school (TTA,1998). The key areas of SEN coordination described were:

- Strategic direction and development of SEN provision in the school
- Teaching and learning
- Leading and managing staff
- Efficient and effective deployment of staff and resources

The following skills and attributes were considered essential to the role:

- Leadership skills, attributes and professional competence
- Decision-making skills – the ability to solve problems and make decisions
- Communication skills – the ability to make points clearly and to listen to and understand the views of others
- Self-management – the ability to plan time effectively and to organise oneself well
- Attributes:

  - Personal impact and presence;
  - Adaptability to changing circumstances and new ideas;
  - Energy, vigour and perseverance;
  - Self – confidence;
  - Enthusiasm;
  - Intellectual ability;
  - Reliability and integrity
  - Commitment

Taking on the role excited me because I was not only teaching but now taking a lead on the strategic development of SEN in a school. The head teacher was more than happy about this and virtually gave me a free reign to develop SEN as I saw fit. I certainly felt I was knowledgeable about SEN and believed I had the skills and attributes to do the job. However, for the first time in my career, I was required to take on a leadership and management role.

When I started at the school, I had the responsibility of managing three teaching assistants (TAs) and this rose to nine in a short space of time. These TAs were my team and were very

talented and qualified and coming from other professions. Most were parents of children in the school, so the job 'suited' them whilst their children were growing up.

I was determined from the start to build up a good team and to develop a good relationship with the team. I had very strong views on the management of TAs in school. I had observed TAs in other schools when they were working with children. I remember speaking to one TA who was working with a pupil outside the classroom. I asked her what she was doing, why she was doing it and what the needs of the child were. She replied that she was doing what the teacher had asked her to do and assumed that the child had literacy difficulties, however, she had never seen the child's statement of special educational needs which would explain his needs and the provision required to meet these needs, and also she had never seen the child's individual education plan (IEP) which would explain his short term, SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timely) targets. I asked her if she would like to see the child's statement and IEP and she said that she would as it would give her a better understanding of the child. So, here was a person doing a job she had been asked to do with little understanding of why she was doing it. The more TAs I spoke to, the more I realised that this was the case with many of them; that they were doing a job they had been asked to with no involvement in the planning and very often not knowing what they would be doing until they arrived in the classroom.

From the start at this school, I wanted the TAs to be and to feel empowered. I set up monthly TA meetings which gave the TAs opportunities to air their views. There was always an agenda and I chaired these meetings. At the meetings, I would update the TAs with any issues regarding pupils, they would discuss any issues that they had and we would put plans in place for any future developments. It was quite a challenge, initially, to set up these meetings as teachers were very reluctant to let the TAs out of the classroom as they were supporting pupils, and the TAs were reluctant to have meetings during their breaktimes and lunchtimes as they were not paid at these times, however, we did eventually come up with a compromise. These meetings were valued by us all, TAs and me. I became fully aware of any issues and successes in their work and they became fully aware of my vision for SEN in the school and how that was developing, and moreso, discussions revolved around how we could work best to together.

I encouraged TAs to take the initiative and to use their talents. I have never forgotten the time when one of the TAs was working with a pupil with speech and language difficulties. The class was doing a project on Egypt and at the end of term they had to do a presentation to the class on an aspect of the project in which they were interested. The boy who I shall call Tim was horrified at the thought of doing a presentation in front of the class. It was decided that he would do a presentation for the TA and me. The presentation was exemplary. Over the weeks, the TA worked with Tim, and capitalising on skills in art and building models, he built the Aswan Dam which he presented at the presentation describing its importance at the time. The TA had helped to prepare him for this task and it was due to her insight into Tim and her hard work, besides his, that he was successful.

Planning between teachers and TAs was a bit of a hit and miss but we set up a system whereby teachers and TAs were timetabled to meet during assembly times and this proved to be very successful in that TAs knew exactly what they were doing the week prior to the lessons taking place. Also, they had an opportunity to have an input into the planning so they had an opportunity to express their ideas. I gave the each TA a file on the pupils they supported and the statement of each child and the IEPs were in the folder.

I set up a system whereby all TAs had performance reviews as this was not in place when I joined the school. The TAs really valued the opportunity to discuss how well they were doing and what they needed to do to improve. I very much encouraged training in the interventions they were working on with the pupils and gaining further knowledge of the various types of special educational needs and encouraged them to undertake further qualifications which they took.

I do believe that I had a very good relationship with the TAs, so much so, and seven years later that we still meet up every term and catch up with our news and reminisce about the great times we had. I know how much I valued them and I know how much they valued me as a leader/manager.

Just as I empowered the TAS, the head teacher also empowered me. As already stated, he was very happy for me to do whatever I felt necessary to improve SEN at the school and to improve outcomes for pupils. He readily admitted that he knew very little about special needs and was happy for me to lead the way. Outcomes for pupils were at the core of what I did, introducing synthetic phonics to improve literacy and introducing the use of P scales which precede level one in the National Curriculum, to determine the level at which the pupils were working. At the time, the term 'W' was used meaning working towards level one. How depressing at each annual review for parents to hear that their children were still on 'W'. P levels 1-8 precede level 1, so at least parents can see, that whilst their children may not be at level one, they can see progress being made through the P scales.

It was at this time that the revised SEN Code of Practice (2001) was introduced and there was a huge disappointment amongst SENCOs when a specific allocation of release time to do coordination work was not stated. The amount of time given to SENCOs to do their coordination work was very haphazard and still is, some getting full time release from teaching whilst others have a full time table of teaching and are meant to do their coordination in their spare time.

A big shift occurred whilst I was at this school in the referrals to special schools that were made. When I first joined the school, if a pupil had considerable difficulties in literacy, a referral would be made to the local special school for children with moderate learning difficulties. By the time I left this school, fewer and fewer referrals were being made with the expectation that these pupils could be taught in mainstream school.

It was after a very good Ofsted that I became a member of the school's leadership team with the enhanced responsibility of embedding SEN into the infrastructure of the school.

APPENDIX D

Being and Feeling Empowered by my Manager

A few months after I joined the Local Authority, my new manager was appointed. Little did I realise then what the impact of his leadership would have on me. From the very beginning, I felt empowered by Nigel in that he has shown a confidence in me and has always supported me. I would like to give a number of examples of how Nigel has empowered me. My examples and Nigel's reflections in italics and recorded in our written reflections, Mutual Influences (2012)

Example 1

When I first joined the authority I was on a temporary fixed term contract for a year as an Inclusion Officer. I had left my permanent post as a teacher in the authority to take up this position as it excited me even though there was a high risk that the post would end after the year. Not long after I took up this position, Nigel joined the authority and at the end of the year, the post was made permanent. That gave me a lot of confidence in Nigel and I began to trust him as I felt that he valued me. He could have easily ended the contract but he chose not to.

Nigel's reflection on this is as follows:

When I first started working with Chris, she was in a temporary post as an Inclusion Officer; her role was to progress the inclusion strategy. Immediately, I could see that Chris was passionate about her work and about inclusion. On that basis, the first job I did was to make that post permanent; how could I not have someone with such passion and virtuous values working alongside me?

Nigel's support and confidence in enabling me to pursue my enthusiasm and motivation has been consistent.

Example 2

My job description stated that I had to develop a kite mark for inclusion in the authority. This involved researching kite marks in other authorities, establishing one for Bath and North East Somerset and developing a process whereby schools could achieve the award. In the development of the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark, there have been many times when I have felt anxious and yet Nigel has always been there to allay my fears and to give me support.

Nigel's reflection on this is as follows:

One of the first pieces of work Chris led on, and one that I hold dear to my heart, was to figure out how we would promote inclusion in our schools. Chris investigated various 'quality marks' for recognising inclusive schools. The depth of her research was fantastic; she was absolutely determined to get it right. Indeed, determination is one of Chris' talents; digging deep to understand and then making it happen.

Example 3

Nigel has always known how committed I feel to this initiative and when we were invited to attend the launch of the Manchester Standard which was its inclusion kitemark, Nigel enthusiastically agreed that we should go. I particularly wanted to attend this event as Mel Ainscow of Manchester University who was part of the team which developed the Index for Inclusion (2002) had worked with Manchester Local Authority to develop the Manchester Standard. I wanted to find out exactly what the Manchester Standard entailed, how it compared to the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark and if we could learn anything from it. Attending the event was a great success and gave me greater confidence in how I was developing our Inclusion Quality Mark. It also shifted forward my relationship with Nigel as my trust in him grew. I felt that he was putting his trust in me and thus empowering me because he could perceive how enthusiastic I was about what I was doing.

Nigel's reflection on this is as follows:

We both went to Manchester to see what they were doing in terms of recognising inclusion in schools. As always, I enjoyed a day out of the office and meeting new people and Chris was determined to learn and improve her practice. Eventually, Chris decided to proceed with a particular Inclusion Quality Mark (IQM). I'm not sure how Chris actually saw my role in all this but my intention was to be supportive of Chris and empower her to make the decision; to release the undoubted talent she has in this area. I believe now that I fully trusted Chris to do the 'right thing' as I knew her values and motivation were in the right place. The direction of travel was the right one and I did not need to be directive or make the decision for her as I knew the decision she would make would be the right one. The learning for me was that if, as a leader and manager, I have 'good' people around me (i.e. those with the right values and moral purpose) then they are highly unlikely to make the wrong decisions; my job is to empower them, monitor and nudge when necessary and to psychologically 'hold' her so that she would never fail.

Example 4

Nigel has supported me in furthering my career and under his leadership, I have become a Senior Inclusion Officer and now a SEN manager. I have always been a part of managers' team and he has always been my line manager. This has given me a tremendous feeling of being empowered. Nigel has also supported me in my professional development and this too has given me the feeling of being empowered. When I did my MA, he was extremely encouraging throughout. When I was stuck and could not progress with my writing, he wrote about me and it gave me the breakthrough I needed to progress. When I had my first paper accepted for the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference in 2006, Nigel immediately said he would come to support me. Since then, we have attended every year with us both putting in papers and presenting at these conferences.

Since becoming a manager, I continue to feel empowered by him. How can I not when he writes the following of me:

Chris has gone from strength to strength and is now deservedly SEN Manager where she shows the same determination and talent for building relationships as she always has in the past.

Development of the 'essence' between Chris and me

More than any of the other person I work with, Chris and I discuss our values openly and frequently; we do so in depth and we do so in a way that always brings us back to why we do things, our moral purpose. I truly know and believe that Chris is passionate about addressing inequality and is especially dedicated to addressing any issues relating to children and young people who may be vulnerable. It is in her very being. Although we talk about our values a lot, Chris would not need to say a word for me to recognise the intensity of feeling she has in this area. I know that I can not only work with Chris, whose values align with mine, but I know that I can have an intense trusting relationship with her. I know that what ever Chris does and what ever I encourage her to do, it will be done with the right intentions; I know that she will never fail herself or me. It is not as though there has had to be a lot of testing out of our relationship; it is full of trust, openness and honesty and has been from the start. I know what Chris thinks and she knows what I think; there is an 'essence' between us where we don't have to keep checking with each other what we would do, we just know. We do check with each other, but this feels more like a check that the environment around us, which is rapidly changing, can support what we are doing and the way we are doing it.

Those who know Chris will recognise that she is always cheerful and positive; she is determined to get things done and will not allow little things to get in her way. This is a rare and highly prized talent and makes my life as a manager so much easier. Chris is always open to new ideas and it is easy for me to try to empower her. I monitor her 'presence' in the work she does, her work level, her mood and when I sense there might be something wrong I'm usually greeted with the answer 'No, I'm fine' and its true. Chris loves her job; she recognises that there are difficulties in the role and is ready to tackle them but overall she really is 'fine'.

Chris is best placed to say what she thinks what the essence of our relationship but, in my view, we both trust each other, are open and honest with each other. We do not worry about being embarrassed if we ask silly questions or make silly mistakes; we do not have to watch every word we say to each other, as we know our relationship is based on shared and aligned values and that those are the important bits. Although there is a power relationship, as I am her line manager, this is rarely evident in what we do and that really pleases me. Empowerment for me is not delegation and is not based on power relationships but is one of an authentic relationship between us.

APPENDIX E

Reflection on Video of Nigel and Me Discussing Empowerment

After identifying the key theme of empowerment when reflecting on my values through looking back on my development in my early years and my teaching career, and consequently, reviewing some of the literature on empowerment, Nigel and I decided to have a discussion on empowerment and to video it. Our intention was to understand what we each meant by empowerment and our influences on each other. Here is a link to a video clip of one of our discussions which is thirty minutes in length:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IKDvKcJXms

As I reflect on the video clip, my first thought is that Nigel and I are very comfortable within this space and very much at ease with each other. In fact, in the first minute of the video, in setting up the recording, there is much laughter between us which prepares the way for our discussion. I would not feel at ease with many people in a small room with a video camera on us, having to sit reasonably close to someone so that we are both in the frame of the camera, but this is not an issue for me in my discussion with Nigel and I do not believe it is for him either.

It is interesting that Nigel has very much the same idea of empowerment as I do in that we both look for the talent that we have in our teams and support people to develop further. I believe this to be quite significant in that there is an empowerment cycle here; Nigel empowers me and I empower my team. I wonder that if we both had different perceptions of empowerment whether this would be the case.

This video-clip validates for me even further that if Nigel had not enabled/ empowered me throughout the time he has been my manager, I wonder how successful I would have been in the implementation and ultimately the success of initiatives for which I have been responsible, for example, the Inclusion Quality Mark.

Throughout the discussion, the elements of trust, risk-taking and confidence in the other arises within this notion of empowerment and it is a mutual trust, risk-taking and confidence in the other, not a singular sense of trust and confidence on one side or the other. Gradually, Nigel learns to trust me and I learn to trust Nigel; likewise his confidence in me develops and my confidence in him increases. Consequently, as a result of this mutual trust in and confidence of the other, an openness develops between us.

We discuss the issue of risk-taking and that this is a part of the enabling/ empowerment process; that the enabler needs to take risks, because, for example, the person being enabled may not be able to see the task through thus the responsibility lies on the enabler; it certainly is a risk for the enabler. However, it is through taking risks and seeing the enabler being successful that the enabler and the person being enabled become confident. Again, it is a two-way process.

It is significant that we both take the stance that there is no such thing as failure or blame. Our view is that whatever happens, we move on and learn from the experience.

As I reflect on the video, I am affirmed by my desire to enable the releasing of talent within the team. As Nigel speaks, I recall that his enabling of me, has had a huge impact on my professional development and sense of achievement, as I have moved from being an Inclusion Officer to a Senior Inclusion Officer and now a SEN manager. I know that nothing will give me more pleasure than to see individuals in my team 'grow' as I enable them to release their talents.

How Can I Improve My Practice as a Senior Inclusion Officer in contributing to the development of the Knowledge and Skills of Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) through my involvement in the implementation of the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination?

Christine Jones
Senior Inclusion Officer, Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority

A paper presented at the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Conference at Warwick University on 3rd September 2010.

Introduction

This paper contributes to my on-going research as to how I can improve my practice as a Senior Inclusion Officer in the Education Inclusion Service in Bath and North East Somerset. It builds on the significance my Masters dissertation (2009) as an original contribution to educational knowledge, being the first multi-media living theory account to be legitimised at Bath Spa University. It also builds on my involvement as a discussant at the BERA Conference2009 keynote symposium on the creation of a new epistemology for educational knowledge. Furthermore, my involvement in the practitioner-researcher group of the Centre for the Child and Family at Liverpool Hope University.

Furlong and Oancea (2005) raise issues about judging the quality of practice-based research but emphasise that it contributes to theoretical knowledge as well as improving practice. Snow (2001), in her presidential address to AERA, calls for the elevation of personal knowledge in order to enrich research-based knowledge.

In this paper, I focus on an aspect of my work with which I have been involved since November 2008, that of the National Award for SEN Coordination.

Background to the topic

The 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy sets out the Government's vision that all those working with children and young people should have the knowledge and skills to help children and young people achieve the outcomes as stated in the Every Child Matters (2003) agenda.

The government commissioned the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) to develop a framework of nationally accredited training for teachers new to role of Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) which would involve leading the coordination of the provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in schools. This was in response to the Education and Skills Select Committee's Report on Special Educational Needs (2006). The National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination, which came into place in September 2009, is now mandatory for SENCOs new to role. I contributed to the successful bid which has made one of our local universities, Bath Spa University, a provider, and I have been involved in the development of the programme which is at masters level

Foci of Enquiry

My research focuses on:

- how my knowledge base informs educational practice

- my contribution and influence in ensuring that SENCOs have the appropriate skills and knowledge in order that they contribute to improving outcomes for children with SEN and disabilities

- the development of living standards of judgement derived from the values I hold which contribute to the improvement of educational practice.

Theoretical Frame

In my research, I use a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) whereby practitioners create their own educational theories by making explicit the meanings of their embodied educational values as explanatory principles in explanations of their influence. In adopting a living theory methodology, I explore the implications of such questions as, 'How can I improve my practice?' and 'What are the educational influences in my own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations?' In this exploration I generate my own living educational theory as I explain these educational influences in learning in the professional context of special educational needs (Jones, 2009).

Research Methods

My methods include the use of action reflection cycles (Lewin, 1946, Schon,1995, Carr and Kemmis, 1986, Whitehead, 1989). Eisner (1993) explains that the relevance of different forms of representation in research is growing and throughout my research, I use video to reflect on my practice (Farren and Whitehead, 2006, Jones, 2009). The use of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandinin & Murphy, 2009) is used throughout. I draw on Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity and Winter's (1989) six principles in relation to the rigour of my research. My research is further validated by a validation group who meet weekly.

I begin by ordering my action research enquiry into a series of questions (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006).

- What is my concern?
- Why am I concerned?
- What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?
- What can I do about it?
- What will I do about it?
- What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?
- How will I explain my educational influences in learning?
- How do I show that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?
- How do I modify my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my evaluations?

<u>What is my Concern?</u>

My concern is that the needs of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities are met and have the appropriate provision and resources in place in school in order for them to thrive, to achieve the five outcomes (DfES, 2003) and to become confident and well-adjusted adults. In order for their needs to be met and that the appropriate provision and resources are in place, it is essential that the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) has the appropriate and necessary knowledge and skills; I also believe it is essential that SENCOs have the dedication and commitment to use this knowledge and these skills in order to make a difference.

The foundation of my concern follows a career dedicated to doing the best I can in meeting the needs of children and young people with SEN. My career has been spent in the world of special educational needs; this was not accidental or something that I fell into as is very often the case when it comes to special needs. This is not a flippant comment as I have seen so many teachers 'falling' into the role of SENCO because 'there's nobody else to do it', 'nobody wants to do it', 'I had no choice; it is what my head teacher wanted'. I made a deliberate choice when applying for my first teaching job that this is what I wanted to do. I had not had special needs training. I had been infant-trained and my final teaching practice in a middle class school in Jersey made me realise that this was not what I wanted. I decided that I wanted to teach secondary school children with special educational needs and felt that I would be able to apply my training on the teaching of basic skills to this phase of education. Indeed, my first teaching appointment was at a challenging secondary inner-city school teaching children with special educational needs (Jones, 2009).

During my career, I have been a teacher in primary and secondary schools teaching children with special educational needs; I have been a specialist support teacher teaching children with statements for special educational needs across a variety of schools. My final position as a teacher was as a SENCO in a primary school. The status of special educational needs teaching in schools was always low, especially in secondary schools, but I was absolutely dedicated and committed and to demonstrate this I gained a post graduate diploma in Professional Studies in Special Educational Needs and later gained the award of SENCO accreditation after which I became a mentor to SENCOs working towards the award. I believe that my career in special educational needs and as a SENCO has given me the experience, skills, knowledge and understandings to know what SENCOs need to improve outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.

I want SENCOs to have the appropriate training. BUT it is not only about training; it is about having that dedication, commitment and passion to do the best they possibly can.

Why am I concerned?

I am concerned because I do not believe that all SENCOs have always had the appropriate skills, knowledge, experience or training to do a good job. As I have stated above, some have not even wanted the job. I am concerned because I believe that the majority of SENCOs want to be skilled and knowledgeable. I am concerned because children and young people are being badly let down because of the lack of expertise of some SENCOs. I am concerned because wrong messages are being given to parents which results in tensions between them and other professionals. It is unbelievable that a person has been able to be appointed to a role which involves knowing about statutory processes in special educational needs and yet have had no training and quite honestly, is sometimes not even aware of the statutory nature

of the role. I am concerned because I do believe that the majority of SENCOs are committed and dedicated. I want to give them the tools for them to develop, to reflect on their practice, to develop a greater understanding of what they are doing and to modify their practice accordingly.

<u>What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned?</u>

I can describe many experiences to show why I am concerned. When I joined the Local Authority and became an Inclusion Officer a few years ago, I used to attend the SENCO cluster groups in the authority and SENCOs, especially those who had recently been appointed, were desperate to have training to equip them to carry out their role. There had been training in place, but this had discontinued. Hence, there was a big gap as far as I was concerned.

I sit on the statutory SEN Panel where decisions are made as to whether a statutory assessment should be carried out on children and young people with SEN and then, whether a statement of special educational needs should be issued. I see excellent examples of good practice, but sometimes that is not always the case. Pupils on school action plus do not always have an outside agency supporting and monitoring them which is the very reason why a pupil is put on school action plus in the first place. They may have had this support a year or so ago but where is that support now? If it has been recognised by a school that support is needed from an educational psychologist or speech and language therapist or another professional, is it no wonder that the pupil is not making progress?

I see excellent examples of good Individual Education Plans (IEPs), but this is not always the case. Targets are not always SMART. I sometimes see woolly targets such as:

> The pupil will be able to improve his reading

Or

> The pupil will improve his social skills

Reviews of IEPs are held and it may be noted that the pupil has made no progress. Can you wonder why? But then the exact target may be repeated with the same strategy! Frequently, if advice has been given by an external agency, this has not been incorporated into the IEP. Very often, parents are not involved in the reviewing of IEPs or even the pupils themselves. Is it possible for a pupil to work towards a target of which they are not aware?

Teaching assistants (TAs) can be extremely effective, but they need supervision and training. If this is in place pupils with SEN may thrive; if not, it can be detrimental to the pupil. Statistics show that schools have spent a lot of money in recruiting TAs but results have not improved accordingly. Research has shown that frequently pupils with SEN do not have the same access to the class teacher as the other pupils because all too often they are with the TA (IOE, 2009). I attended an annual review of a pupil with SEN but we could not start the meeting because the TA had not arrived. The class teacher was present but she informed us that she was not aware as to how the pupil was progressing on his IEP targets because that was the job of the TA! I have seen TAs running interventions and social skills groups but have not had the appropriate training. Managing teaching assistants is a priority, especially as schools are investing so much in them. SENCOs need to know how TAs are best managed

and how they should be utilised in order for pupils with SEN to have the most appropriate support.

Interventions should be put into place and should be time-limited. So often, pupils are put on an intervention and they stay on that indefinitely. If the intervention is not working then it makes sense to put the pupil on another intervention. Pupils should be assessed at the beginning and end of the intervention to see if progress has been made. Very often, SENCOs tell me that they do not have time to do this, but if this is the case, how do they know what progress has been made?

SENCOs, sometimes, have little knowledge of SEN finance. SENCOs have told me that they may be aware of the matrix funding for those pupils with statements; that they are sometimes aware of the mainstream additional funding(MAF) but, frequently, are unaware of the SEN notional budget. It must be very difficult to undertake provision management if you are not aware of the finances!

These are just some examples I can describe to show why I am concerned.

What can I do about it and what will I do about it?

When I became an Inclusion Officer on joining the Local Authority, I decided to put on training for SENCOs. Each year for the next four years, in collaboration with Bath Spa University, I ran a course for 'New SENCOs and those needing a Refresher' in response to SENCOs who were frustrated with the lack of training in place to develop their skills and knowledge. Each year the course was highly successful with SENCOs stating how much they felt that their skills and knowledge had developed and how this impacted on improving outcomes for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (Jones, 2009). I would like to extract a quote which sums up the success of the course:

> Impact has been large – going from very little to having a greater understanding of
> SEN issues and a clearer picture of the SENCO
> role within that. The key aspects have really focussed the learning to
> be beneficial to my role and more importantly, the learners (children!)
>
> (SENCO on Course, 2007-2008)

SENCOs who attended these courses were dedicated to do the best they possibly could for children with special educational needs. That is why they attended the course. I believe that I enabled them to have the tools and a growing confidence to do their very best and consequently make a difference for the children and young people with SEN. I believe that I encouraged them to reflect on their practice to improve it; I believe that they modified their practice to improve outcomes for children and young people.

In 2006, the former Education and Skills Select Committee had expressed serious concerns about the role, status and training of SENCOs and said it should be strengthened. Hence, the Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators)(England) Regulations, 2008 stated that the Governing Bodies of schools must ensure that a SENCO is a qualified teacher, that the role needed to be defined in relation to the leadership and management of the school and that the actions of the SENCOs needed to be monitored with regard to improving provision for pupils with SEN. Schools were given two years to ensure that their SENCO was a qualified teacher.

The government asked the Teacher Development Agency (TDA) to:

- Identify the knowledge, skills and experience required of those leading and developing SEN and disabilities provision in schools

- Develop a framework of appropriate accredited training and qualifications for those 'new to role' of SENCO, that is, new to role as from September 2008.

The Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009 stated that SENCOs 'new to role' as from September 2008 were required to gain the National Award for SEN Coordination and that the Governing Body will be required to ensure that the person remains as SENCO only if they hold the relevant qualification.

As far as I was concerned, this was not before time and I welcomed wholeheartedly this legislative development which would now ensure that SENCOs would have the training necessary for them to carry out their role which they so desperately wanted to do to the best of their ability. I was anxious to attend one of the Consultation Conferences being held nationally, to discuss the learning outcomes of the training as was being forwarded by the TDA. This was the beginning of my contribution to the implementation of the National Award for SEN Coordination. I contacted my colleague at Bath Spa University and whilst she was very interested, was unable to attend at such short notice, however, I was asked to report back.

When I reflect back, this moment of opportunity could so easily have been missed. The Consultation Conference, apparently, had been advertised for a while, yet I had not seen the flyer or had heard anything about it. I was quite late applying and was told that whilst most of the conferences were full, places were available at the Black Country Museum, West Midlands, and that is where I attended. I was determined to be informed of this initiative from the beginning and I wanted to know what this training comprised. This thirst for information and being fully informed professionally, have always been a driving force within me. We were informed that details about putting in a bid to be a provider for the award would be issued shortly.

After the Conference, I contacted Bath Spa University and my line manager, Nigel Harrisson, and I met with my colleague at the university with whom I had worked for a number of years and we declared our interest in working towards a bid for Bath Spa University to be a provider for the award. A number of meetings followed. There was much concern because details of the award and putting in a bid were later being issued than expected. I emailed the TDA representative a few times and eventually he informed me where to get this information. At the time, it certainly was not made very public. As soon as we had this information a series of meetings were planned in order to get our bid in on time. By now, South Gloucester Local Authority was involved followed by Wiltshire Local Authority.

We were delighted that we were successful in our bid and that Bath Spa University was one of the eleven selected providers with only six beginning the course in September/October 2009.

The TDA stated that the award was to be at Masters level and detailed the Learning Outcomes that SENCOs were expected to achieve. There are five strands:

1. Professional Context
   - Statutory and regulatory frameworks and relevant developments at national and local level
   - High incidence SEN and disabilities and how they can affect pupils' participation and learning
   - Using evidence about learning, teaching and assessment in relation to pupils with SEN to inform practice

2. Strategic development of SEN Policy and Procedures
   - Working strategically with senior colleagues and governors
   - Strategic financial planning, budget management and use of resources in line with best value principles
   - Strategies for improving outcomes for pupils with SEN and/or disabilities

3. Coordinating Provision
   - Developing, using, monitoring and evaluating systems
   - Using tools for collecting, analysing and using data
   - Deploying staff and managing resources

4. Leading, Developing and Supporting Colleagues
   - Providing professional direction to the work with others
   - Leadership and development of staff

5. Working in Partnership with Pupils, Families and Other Professionals
   - Drawing on external sources of support and expertise
   - Consulting, engaging and communicating with colleagues, parents and carers and pupils to enhance pupils' learning and achievement

We developed a course which reflected the learning outcomes that SENCOs needed to achieve using national personalities, professionals within our authorities, including ourselves, and lecturers from Bath Spa University, to deliver the programme. Evidence of achieving the learning outcomes would be collated in a portfolio with written fortnightly reflections from the SENCOs included. The masters strand would be met by SENCOs completing assignments involving action research, a case study, reflections on the portfolio and/or a presentation.

Over seventy SENCOs, six from Bath and North East Somerset, as it is a small authority, were registered to begin the course in September 2009 with over twenty experienced SENCOs, five from BANES, beginning the course in January.

What kind of data will I gather to show the situation as it unfolds?

I would now like to highlight some aspects of the course which I believe have had an impact on the development of knowledge and skills of SENCOs and where I had an influence or was influential in some way as a result of my previous experiences. Data is derived from the

feedback of the SENCOs, my reflections and video clips. What is common to all aspects is the quality of relationships demonstrated and the learning that has taken place for all.

I must emphasise that the relationship between the representatives in the three authorities and Bath Spa University has been excellent and based on mutual respect. Each person involved is very experienced and I believe passionate about what they are doing. Each has been hugely committed to the development of the course which has been demonstrated by the amount of time we have all given to it.

The Mentoring Process

It was agreed during the development of the course that SENCOs 'new to role' would have an experienced SENCO as a mentor. We were initially concerned about the professional development of those SENCOs who had recently and successfully completed a previous local course and would not wish to embark further on another course. It was agreed that SENCOs who had recently completed a local course could extend their skills and gain accreditation through being a mentor. Also, experienced SENCOs would be invited to be mentors.

Training has been provided for mentors throughout the year and their commitment has been to meet with the mentees four times during the year. This has been an extremely successful aspect of the course as indicated in the feedback from the mentors and mentees:

> Made me reflect a lot more on my own work. I get a lot of fulfilment from helping SENCOs. SENCOs have really appreciated this.
>
> (Mentor, 2009-2010)

> We must not under-estimate the emotional support we give.
>
> (Mentor, 2009-2010)

> Mentoring sessions have had a very positive impact on relationship with the SENCO in our school federation.
>
> (SENCO on course, 2009-2010)

My experience in this field has demonstrated that the mentoring system is a very good example of good practice with mentors and mentees benefitting. When I completed my SENCO accreditation with Bath and North East Somerset and Bath Spa University, I became a mentor on the course and did this for a number of years. My research into my role as a mentor concluded that there had been a good relationship between the mentees and myself and that I considered this to an important factor as to the success of the mentoring sessions (Jones, 2001). Through further experience of the mentoring system and its success, I would now go as far as saying that the quality of relationship between the mentor and mentee is essential (Brooks et al, 1997).

When I developed the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark, I implemented the mentoring system once again with mentors from the local authority and from those schools who had achieved the award mentoring those schools working towards the award. Once again, feedback from schools indicated how successful this practice is:

Thanks go to you and your team for the superb support and guidance we've received throughout. The verification of quality practice and constructive suggestions for further improvements have been very supportive and well received by the whole school community.

(Email sent 4 March, 2008)

I would now like to show a clip of a colleague of mine who is now a mentor on the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark. I mentored Anthony when his school was working towards the award. Anthony is speaking about the role of the Inclusion Quality Mark mentor

Antony at the Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark Presentation

CD 4. IQMAntonymentor2008.mov

Antony sums up the role of mentor; that they are there to be supportive and not judgemental; that they are critical friends. He refers to the fact that they liked the mentor coming in which is very much a reference to the quality of relationship between the mentor and mentee.

I would now like to show a video clip of me at the recent Bath and North East Somerset Inclusion Quality Mark Recognition Ceremony, 2010 which was held in the Banqueting Room, The Guildhall in Bath. The video clip lasts for 8 minutes 27 seconds. If you move the cursor to 8 minutes 5 seconds you will reach the point where I am commending the mentors for the work that they do. I am saying that I could not do my work without them. This is evidence of the high value I place on mentors.

When the TDA representative visited Bath Spa University to evaluate the course for the National Award for SEN Coordination and after meeting with a number of SENCOs on the course, he commended the mentoring aspect of the course as good practice:

> Availability, responsiveness and knowledge of mentors in support of participants.

As I reflect on this aspect of the course, it affirms for me, yet again, the success of the mentoring process and how valued it is by mentors and mentees alike. I believe that fundamentally, it is the quality of relationships between mentors and mentees that make this system such a success.

Invitation to an Education Consultant to be a keynote speaker on Provision Management

I invited an Education Consultant, to run the afternoon session on Provision Management and Approaches to Individual Planning for pupils with SEN and Disabilities. Feedback from the SENCOs indicated that this session was very successful:

> The session on Provision Management has been most significant in supporting my development as a SENCO

I had previously met the Education Consultant when I attended two Provision Management courses and a course on the Role of SENCO at the Institute of Education, London, in her capacity as a trainer for SENJIT. Following the two Provision Management Courses, I introduced this into the authority and delivered training to Local Authority staff and SENCOs. Following the course on the Role of SENCO, I invited the Education Consultant to be our keynote speaker at our Bath and North East Somerset SENCO Conference, 2007. She, a colleague of mine, and I planned the Conference and it was a huge success as indicated by the evaluations of those who attended:

> Overview of the role of SENCO and the way the role is changing
> was particularly useful in gaining a perspective on the current development.

And:

> The keynote speaker was excellent…

I have always been impressed with her style of delivery, the thorough research she has undertaken regarding her subject, her knowledge of what she is speaking about and her pragmatism. She engages so well with SENCOs when she speaks and consequently, they engage well with her. I knew that she would be a success on our course for SENCOs working towards the National Award. She has been invited to do the same session next year.

Local sessions in Bath and North East Somerset

Whilst four one day sessions involved joint training for all the SENCOs in the three authorities, we decided that two days would focus on local sessions. Whilst we agreed on the content, as according to the learning outcomes set by the TDA, we decided that that each authority would run their own sessions with professionals from their own authority running the sessions.

We decided to cover the following:
- Integrated working
- External Services information
- Statutory assessment processes and paperwork
- Role of SEN governor
- SEN Policy
- Disability Discrimination Act, 2005
- Management of Teaching Assistants and other staff
- Partnership with Parents
- SEN Funding
- Inclusion Friendly strategies and resources for improving outcomes for pupils with SEN and disabilities.

I decided to cover this content over four half days. I approached the various professionals in Bath and North East Somerset whose expertise and knowledge lay in the above areas and all agreed to lead a session. I decided to lead on the Disability Discrimination Act, 2005 which included the development of a Disability Equality Scheme as I had done a lot of training on

this to schools. The feedback we received was excellent. The SENCOs commented on how much they had learnt as a result of these sessions, especially in developing the knowledge and understanding of local personnel and processes. They particularly liked meeting the various professionals within the authority who led the courses. They also said:

> All really useful taught by knowledgeable, approachable staff.

> Overall excellent – have gained a huge amount from these sessions.

> The sessions have all been very useful and informative. It has given me lots of relevant information and resources and has brought up questions for me to follow up…They have provided me with new and important information. I was also able to put resources or information from them into practice

These local sessions, over a period of a couple of months, provided a support system for SENCOs to get to know each other and to discuss their practice; it gave SENCOs a lot of opportunities to reflect on their practice. I believe that this was absolutely essential in the development of their role and in improving their practice.

The representative from the TDA also commented on the success of the local courses in the three authorities and included this in his comments on good practice:

> The content of the LA sessions which participants are finding practical and helpful.

How will l explain my educational influences in learning?

In a living theory methodology, practitioners can create their own educational theories by embodying their educational values in their practice. These values form living standards of judgement by which practitioners can judge and evaluate their practice. I judge my practice according to the values I hold; my standards of judgement are derived from the values I hold.

I would now like to summarise my standards of judgement that derive from the values I hold as demonstrated through my involvement in the National Award for SEN Coordination.

- Being committed to making a difference to children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities

- Being receptive to the needs of SENCOs and enabling them to develop their skills and knowledge

- Working collaboratively with other educators in Children's Services in my authority and other authorities

- Working collaboratively with other educators in Higher Education

- Being able to reflect and value the response of others in working together on the national award

- Developing ways of being able to learn from others, to learn together and to be open to all possibilities.

- Being determined and recognising the value of attending the Consultation Conference

- Persevering in obtaining information about putting in a bid to ensure that Bath Spa University be a provider for the award

- Using previous experiences to implement good practice

- Recognising the qualities of professionals leading on the course

- Recognising the qualities of professionals delivering the course

- Recognising that SENCOs need to have the opportunities to discuss their practice and to reflect on their practice in order to improve.

How will I show that any conclusions I come to are reasonably fair and accurate?

Each week, a group of people working in Bath and North East Somerset Children's Service, meet at Conversation Café to discuss their work and discuss how they can improve their practice. We discuss our values, how we live our values in our work and when we feel our values are being negated in our practice. We take our writings along to this group including any research we have undertaken.

Throughout my research, I have presented my work to this group for their validation. We draw on Habermas' four criteria for social validity. Habermas states that in order to reach an understanding between speaker and hearer the following validity claims must be raised:

- The speaker must choose a comprehensible expression so that speaker and hearer can understand one another
- The speaker must have the intention of communicating a true proposition…so that the hearer can share the knowledge of the speaker
- The speaker must want to express his intentions truthfully so that the hearer can believe the utterance of the speaker
- The speaker must choose an utterance that is right…and can agree with one another in the utterance with respect to a recognised normative background

(Habermas, 1976:2-3)

Whitehead postulates that Habermas' criteria for social validity can be used to judge the validity of writing and reading text, as these are a form of social communication. He thus suggests that the following questions can be asked in relation to these criteria:

- Is the account comprehensible?
- Is the account truthful?
- Is the account sincere?
- Is the account appropriate?

<div align="right">(Whitehead and McNiff, 2006:141)</div>

<u>How do I modify my concerns, ideas and practices in the light of my evaluations?</u>

Action research is ongoing:

> There is no end, and that is the nature of developmental practices, and part of the joy of doing action research. It resists closure. Each ending is a new beginning. Each event carries its own potentials for new creative forms.

<div align="right">(McNiff, 2002)</div>

I have taken this paper to my validation group and there has been much discussion about the knowledge and skills of SENCOs and also the values they hold. Are knowledge and skills enough? What place do the values of SENCOs have in improving outcomes for children and young people? One SENCO on the course, who is a part of the validation group, has now completed her portfolio and has also included a short written reflection about her thoughts on the portfolio and the course. She writes about how the portfolio is full of 'stuff' but does not encapsulate her values and what drives her to be a good SENCO:

> My frustration lies in that what is being assessed in the portfolio is my knowledge of 'stuff' (information, legislation, categorisation procedures, assessment, strategies etc etc). What is not being assessed is my 'embodied knowledge' by this I mean '<u>how</u> and <u>why</u> do I do what I do?' I remember having some conversations with my mentor about what it is like to be a SENCO and what personal qualities and values an effective SENCO should have. I found these conversations really interesting and important but they are not reflected in the portfolio…I do feel that I am better at my job than I was before I started the course. I have acquired a lot of knowledge about the role of the SENCO…What I want to concentrate on now is 'how can I improve my practice as a SENCO?'

I now want to take up these points with my colleagues which the SENCO has made. How can the portfolio be brought alive? How can it be made more meaningful? How are the values of SENCOs reflected and made implicit in the course? And, fundamentally, how can I support SENCOs to improve their practice and to live their values in their practice?

Contribution to Knowledge

This paper is significant in its contribution to the development of a new epistemology for educational knowledge (Schon,1995; BERA symposium, 2009) and to an understanding of the influence of living standards of judgement on the development of educational policy and practice. It makes a contribution to understanding how multi-media narratives (Huxtable, 2009; Jones 2009) can be used to communicate the meanings of embodied expressions of the energy-flowing values that contribute to the educational principles that can explain educational influences in improving practice in relation to special educational needs.

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HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY PRACTICE AS A MANAGER OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS? A CONTINUING ENQUIRY.

A paper presented at the BERA Conference
at Manchester University on 5th September, 2012
by Christine Jones, PhD student at Liverpool Hope University

Background of the Research.

This paper contributes to my continuing enquiry as to how I can improve my practice. It builds on my research undertaken as an Inclusion Officer, a Senior Inclusion Officer and now a Statutory Special Educational Needs Manager in a small local authority. This paper specifically focuses on my work with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs).

Prior to joining the local authority, I was a SENCO at a Primary School and since joining the local authority, I have been in a position through my various roles, to put on training for SENCOs through running courses, organising SENCO conferences and being involved in the National Award for Special Educational Needs Coordination. My involvement with SENCOs has been clearly documented in my Master's dissertation (2009) and further papers (Jones, 2010; Jones, 2011). But what is it that keeps driving me to continue working with SENCOs and to reflect on my work with SENCOs?

As a SENCO, I was dedicated to doing the best I could for the children I taught. Nothing more gave me pleasure and satisfaction than seeing that breakthrough when a child began to read after years of frustration of being unable to. As a SENCO, I knew the importance of a child maintaining his/her confidence/self-esteem; that once a child started to lose his confidence, it was a hard road to get that back again. I knew also that to do my job properly, I needed to understand the legislation and guidance around special educational needs coordination. The coupling of being knowledgeable and dedicated to what I was doing, I believe, enabled me to do my best for the children I taught. As a SENCO, I felt empowered in what I was doing. I now want to enable SENCOs to do the best they can for children and young people (C&YP) with special educational needs (SEN); I want them to feel empowered just as I did when I was a SENCO.

On joining the local authority, one of the tasks I was asked to do was to meet with SENCOs if they had not provided the appropriate paperwork when sending in a request for a statutory assessment for a pupil. When the SEN Panel meets, it is essential that the appropriate paperwork is sent in, in order for Panel to make an informed decision as to whether to agree to carrying out a statutory assessment or not.

I remember ringing a SENCO at one of our primary schools to ask if I could meet with her to discuss the paperwork she had sent in as it did not provide the evidence for panel to make a decision. When I met with her at the school, she was immediately on the defensive. I explained to her that I would go through the paperwork, step by step, and explain, as discussed at panel, as to how the paperwork, in meeting the statutory guidelines, could be

improved. As the meeting progressed, she relaxed more and more and started engaging with me and making comments such as, 'I understand now.' 'I didn't realise that that was needed.' The meeting ended with her thanking me for coming in and how much she appreciated me giving up my time to see her to explain to her how the request could have been improved.

This is the typical response I have had from SENCOs when I have met with them in this capacity – they are very much on the defensive at first but by the end of the meeting they are thanking me for coming in to see them. These meetings were a great source of satisfaction to me because the SENCO, by the end of the meeting, knew that I was there to support them. I felt that I provided them with the tools they needed to do the job they wanted to do so well.

This paper focuses on my practice, my concerns and what I have done about my concerns in my involvement with SENCOs. It responds to Snow (2001) who highlights the significance of personal knowledge being elevated to enrich research- based knowledge and to Furlong and Oancea (2005) who raise issues about judging the quality of practice-based research but emphasise that it contributes to theoretical knowledge as well as improving practice.

Focus of the Enquiry

The focus of my enquiry is to develop my understanding of my practice and how I can improve my practice as I work with SENCOs in the development of their skills and knowledge. I am looking at my contribution and influence in working with SENCOs. What am I doing to support SENCOs in the development of their skills and knowledge? As I work with SENCOs, I reflect on my values and the development of living standards of judgement to which I hold myself accountable.

Theoretical Framework

In conducting my research, I have adopted a living theory methodology (Whitehead, 2008) whereby practitioners ask the question, 'How do I improve my practice?' and, 'What are the educational influences in my learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of social formations?' (Whitehead, 2005). In adopting a living theory methodology, practitioners develop their own living theories. In developing my own living theory, I look at the values I hold and reflect on how I am living my values in my practice.

Research Methods
Throughout my research, my methods include the use of action reflection cycles (Lewin, 1946; Carr and Kemmis, 1986; Whitehead, 1989; Schon, 1995). Empathetic resonance with video (Farren and Whitehead, 2006; Jones, 2009; Whitehead, 2012) is used to clarify the meanings of values-based explanatory principles. The use of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999; Clandidin & Murphy, 2009) is used throughout. Habermas' (1976) four criteria of social validity and Winter's (1989) six principles in relation to the rigour of my research are used with validation groups.

In conducting my action research enquiry, I present and respond to the following questions (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006)

- What is my concern and why am I concerned?
- What experiences can I describe to show why I am concerned and what actions have I taken?

- How do I evaluate my educational influences in learning?
- How do I demonstrate the validity of the account of my educational influences in learning?

What is My Concern and Why Am I Concerned?

Most of my career has been dedicated to the teaching of children with special educational needs (SEN) and just over a year ago, I was appointed as a Manager of the Statutory Special Educational Needs Service in a small local authority.

As a manager of special educational needs, it is my job to ensure that:

> The SEN team is effectively organised and managed to enable the authority to meet its statutory responsibilities for children and young people with special educational needs. This involves the identification of special educational needs and arrangements of appropriate provision within allocated budgets.
>
> (Job Description, March 2011)

My concern is and always has been that C&YP with special educational needs are identified. Once having been identified, that their needs are met and that appropriate provision is put in place to meet their needs. My concerns stem from my fundamental values of social justice and fairness. As a pupil growing up in a 'streamed' system in a comprehensive school, I was fully aware of the 'invisibility' of those in the lower streams in school plays, choirs and other school events. It seemed very unfair to me at the time and I have spent my career giving these children the 'visibility' and recognition to which they are entitled.

When I first started teaching, meeting the needs of C&YP with SEN and putting the appropriate provision in place was quite a challenge as the teaching of C&YP with SEN was of very low status and the expectations of the achievement of these children was low. This was before the Warnock Report, 1978 and the Education Act 1981, with no statutory processes in place and no Code of Practice on Special Educational Needs. However, I was driven to do the best I could for these children and legislation and guidance throughout the years has supported this (Education Act1981; Education Act1996; Disability Discrimination Act1995; Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001; Every Child Matters, 2003; Removing Barriers to Achievement, 2004; Children Act 2004; Disability Discrimination Act 2005).

As a manager of special educational needs within the authority, I am removed from direct contact with children but I am in a position whereby decisions have to be made as to whether a statutory assessment should be carried out on a child or young person, and following this, whether a child or young person requires a statement of special educational needs:

> The special educational needs of the great majority of children should be met effectively within mainstream settings through *Early Years Action* and *Early Years Action Plus* or *School Action* and *School Action Plus,* without the local education authority needing to make a statutory assessment. In a very small number of cases the LEA will need to make a statutory assessment of special educational needs and then consider whether or not to issue a statement
>
> (DfES, 2001,7:1)

A statement of special educational needs specifies a child's needs and the provision that needs to be in place to meet the child's needs. A statement of SEN is statutory; it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to check that the provision is place and to monitor this over time.

At school, it is the responsibility of the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to ensure that a child's needs are identified and that the appropriate provision is put in place. As stated above, most pupils' needs can be met at School Action or School Action Plus and it is the responsibility of the SENCO to ensure this. It may be agreed, however, that the pupil's needs cannot be met at School Action Plus and the SENCO, in cooperation with parents and external agencies, may decide to put in a request for a statutory assessment. If the ultimate consequence of carrying out a statutory assessment is that a statement of SEN is agreed, the SENCO needs to ensure that the provision, as described in the statement, is in place. Thus, in carrying out the duties of a SENCO in meeting the needs of C&YP with SEN and ensuring that the appropriate provision is place, the SENCO has to be skilful and knowledgeable. My concern is that SENCOs have the appropriate training to ensure that they have the skills and knowledge to carry out their duties.

Experiences I Describe to Show why I am Concerned and Actions I Have Taken

In 2009, the Teacher's Development Agency (TDA) introduced the award for National Special Educational Needs Coordination. The award is mandatory for SENCOs who are 'new' to role and SENCOs need to gain the award within three years of being appointed. The award is at Master's level which needs to be accredited by a university whereby it has been agreed with the TDA that they be providers of the award.

After having provided training locally for SENCOs, I welcomed the introduction of this award (Jones, 2010). Since the beginning, I have worked closely with our local university. My manager also met university representatives and it was agreed that we, as a local authority would work in partnership with the university in developing and delivering this award. We later formed a further partnership with two other local authorities and our local university was successful in its bid to become a provider. Many of my experiences to show why I am concerned centre around the National Award for SEN Coordination. The following examples highlight these and also describe some of the actions I have taken.

Example One

For the last three years, The TDA (Teaching Development Agency), now called TA (Teaching Agency) has provided funding whereby SENCOs who have applied can be funded to do the course. Each year, new SENCOs wishing to complete the award register with their chosen provider and each year, providers have had to inform the TDA of projected numbers in advance; funding has been issued to providers based on these projected numbers. Initially, the TDA stated that funding would be in place for three years and there has been much concern as to what would happen after that. On 30th April, 2012, the TA issued a letter to all providers stating that there would be funding for 1000 places nationally for 2012/2013; that prospective applicants would have to register with the DFE (Department for Education) and that places would be allocated on a first come, first served basis. Applicants would also need to state with which provider they wished to study and providers would be informed by 22nd June as to what their allocation would be. There are a number of concerns with this new

approach. Of considerable concern is the fact that the TA are only funding 1000 places which has now risen to 1,500 places because of demand. If this is a mandatory award, it is essential that all SENCOs 'new to role' achieve it; if they do not achieve the award within the three years, the governors of the school can remove them from post. Therefore, there will be some SENCOs doing the award who are not being funded by the TA to do the course and therefore, funding will have to come from elsewhere. Secondly, there are issues for providers. There has to be a certain amount of applicants to make the course viable. If places have been allocated on a first come, first served basis, the provider would not know until 22nd June if their course is viable and it is only then that that the provider would be able to allocate places to SENCOs who have not been funded by the TA but by another funding route. Schools also, could have issues with this approach. If the award is mandatory and their SENCO is not funded by the TA, then the school would possibly have to provide funding. Surely, this is not fair; that some SENCOs are funded by the DfE and some are funded by their schools. What is of concern now is what the situation will be for 2013/2014.Concerns regarding funding have been expressed over the time the award has been in place and these concerns have been expressed by me and others in national and local forums.

Example Two

As stated, this award has been in place for three years. Many SENCOs have now achieved the award, however, there are some who have been in post for three years and have been registered on the training for three years, yet have not yet completed all the work required. As far as the university is concerned, if the work is not in by the required date, the SENCOs will be informed that they have failed the course. It is not so simple, though, for us as a local authority. If SENCOs fail the course, it means that we could have SENCOs in our schools who have not achieved the mandatory award and, therefore, should not be in post.

Constant reminders have been sent to them throughout the course with particular emphasis this year in notifying them of the need to complete all work. The representatives of the three local authorities who are partners with the university recently decided that a letter should be sent to the head teacher and to the chair of governors informing them of the deadlines for their SENCO. A copy of the Education (Special Educational Needs Coordinators) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2009, was included to remind governors that the school would be in breach of the regulations should the SENCO not have gained the qualification within three years:

> I wish to advise you that if your school's SENCO started this course in 2009, is still your SENCO, and does not submit all the elements (assignments and a portfolio) by 30th September 2012, they will not meet the statutory requirements of the role.

As well as sending this letter to the head teacher and Chair of governors, a letter was also sent to the SENCO informing them that the head teacher and Chair of governors would be informed of the situation:

> As this is a mandatory award, I, on behalf of xxx Local Authority, will be contacting your head teacher and Chair of governors to inform them of the timescales you are now working towards to complete the award by 30th September 2012.

Since sending out these letters, I have heard from one SENCO who is also a head teacher explaining that she had, very reluctantly, withdrawn from the course and she had appointed a SENCO in her place:

> In September, XX is taking on our SENCO role again – she was the SENCO when I arrived in 2005 so she does not need to do the course- she is interested in doing the course for experienced SENCOs but not this academic year.
>
> Thank you for allowing me to do the course in the first place – and I am sorry that I was unsuccessful – it does not sit comfortably with me to give up on anything, however, it was the best decision in the circumstances.

<div align="right">(Email from SENCO,18th July 2012)</div>

Another SENCO has contacted me informing me that although she was a SENCO when she began the course, she is not the SENCO at present as the school was federated with another school and the SENCO post was advertised. She wished to remain a part-time SENCO but the post was for a full-time SENCO so she did not apply. She is eager to complete the award, as she would like to apply for a post as a SENCO, and schools, in their advertisements, are now stating that the acquisition of the award is desirable if not essential:

> Sadly, I will not be resuming the SENCO role on my return as the school federated with XX School in XX and subsequently, restructured all senior leadership roles, with the SENCO role becoming a full time 'Inclusion Leader' role across the Federation. Unfortunately, I was unable to apply for this role due to my imminent maternity leave and need to work part time.
>
> It is however, my intention to complete the outstanding Portfolio and assignment in time for the September 30th deadline, so I can apply for other SENCO positions in the local authority.

<div align="right">(Email from SENCO 19th July, 2012)</div>

Example Three

A SENCO within our authority who was undertaking the training, and has now achieved the award, had expressed concerns on handing in her portfolio that she felt that whilst her knowledge of SEN had improved and that she was now better at her job, she did not feel that the course was assessing her 'embodied knowledge', that is, how and why she was doing what she was doing. Also, that the course did not encapsulate her values and what drives her to be a good SENCO.

> My frustration lies in that what is being assessed in the portfolio is my knowledge of 'stuff' (information, legislation, categorisation procedures, assessment, strategies etc etc). What is not being assessed is my 'embodied knowledge' by this I mean 'how and why do I do what I do?' I remember having some conversations with my mentor about what it is like to be a SENCO and what personal qualities and values an effective SENCO should have. I found these conversations really interesting and important but they are not reflected in the portfolio…I do feel that I am better at my job than I was before I started the course. I have acquired a lot of knowledge about

the role of the SENCO…What I want to concentrate on now is 'how can I improve my practice as a SENCO?'

I do believe that this SENCO made a very good point and I have raised these concerns myself previously (Jones, 2010).

> How can the portfolio be brought alive? How can it be made more meaningful? How are the values of SENCOs reflected and made implicit in the course?

I know this SENCO well as she attends Conversation Café (Weekly meetings held to discuss our writings and described further below) and had expressed these concerns over time. Kate is a very reflective person and has very clear views about who she is and what she wants to achieve. The following video clip will give you some idea of the person that Kate is when she expresses the values she likes to live by and what really matters to her in the sense of giving meaning and purpose to her life:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=cDcggqIb7J4

The university tutor, at the time, discussed Kate's concerns with me and responded to her stating that perhaps she could express her 'embodied knowledge' when she did her assignment. And this, in fact, is what she did. In the abstract of her assignment, she states:

> This piece of reflective writing is a case study of the 'embodied knowledge' I use when I am working in partnership with the parents of pupils with Special Educational Needs. It is presented in the form of a letter to my tutor for the Masters strand of the National Award in SEN Coordination. In the letter I explain what I mean by 'embodied knowledge' and then go on to describe the different kinds of knowledge I have and which I draw from when I am working in partnership with the parents of the pupils in the school where I am a SENCO.

After reading the SENCO's assignment, the university tutor asked if I would second mark it and in an email sent to me, he said, 'As for me, I love it.' I agreed with him stating:

> It is quite unique, refreshing, very reflective and a fabulous example of living educational theory.
>
> (Email from me to tutor 7th May, 2011)

This year, the title of one of the assignments the SENCOs will be expected to do which is being considered is called 'The SENCO that I am.' This title will really encourage SENCOs and give them the opportunity, to not only to look at the big picture of SEN Coordination, but also, those aspects which the above SENCO desperately wanted to include as part of the course, that is, the values of the SENCOs ; what drives them to do what they do; what their personal qualities are which contribute to them being a good SENCO.

Many discussions have taken place about the evidence included in the portfolio. As the SENCO states, "what is being assessed in the portfolio is my knowledge of stuff…" This was very much the case initially. SENCOs would complete their portfolios with photocopied evidence of the work they were doing, for example, minutes of a meeting, an Annual Review report. There has been much concern about this as it says nothing about the SENCO

themselves. Now, SENCOs are expected to 'engage' with that evidence and give a brief reflection as to how the content of that piece of evidence has had an impact, or otherwise, on their practice.

Example Four

In order to do the National Award for SEN Coordination, a SENCO has to be in post in that role. This is understandable as to complete all the work required, evidence has to be included which only a SENCO could produce. However, since this training has been in place, I have had numerous phone calls from teachers expressing interest in finding out more about special educational needs and making enquiries about training within the authority. Head teachers have also made enquiries about aspiring SENCOs and the training available for those teachers who are interested in becoming SENCOs in the future.

I have previously detailed the course which I led in the authority for 'New SENCOs and Those Needing a Refresher' (Jones, 2010; Jones, 2011) which was run prior to the National Award for SEN Coordination. This course covered all a SENCO needed to know to fulfil his/her role. Whilst the course was primarily for SENCOs, aspiring SENCOs or those teachers interested in learning more about the SENCO role, could enrol on the course. At present, there is a gap in the market, so to speak, as there is not a course in this authority whereby 'interested' teachers could enrol.

As a result of this, I have recently been in discussions with a Senior Lecturer at our local university which is a provider of the National Award for SEN Coordination. The university is also concerned about this gap. It was agreed that there was possibly enough interest being expressed whereby it would be worth the university investigating the possibility of developing a suitable course. At present, the university is looking into the feasibility of running such a course.

Example Five

As stated above, funding was initially guaranteed for three years only. At the time, a different government was in place, however, when the Coalition Government came into power, it was agreed that the award should continue. However, concern does lie in the future of the course. At present, it is mandatory and it is hoped that this will continue to be the case. I raise this issue at local and national forums.

Example Six

Since the course began, the three authorities have worked closely with the university as partners, as was agreed in the bid. We are all highly committed to ensuring that the training that is provided on the course is appropriate to meet the needs of SENCOs and we are constantly reviewing this. We meet regularly to plan the year and to plan the sessions, inviting local and national speakers to lead the various sessions. This year, I led the session on Statutory Processes. I was concerned about getting the right messages across to SENCOs in order that they could improve their practice. I discussed this with the representatives of the two other authorities and also my SEN team. It was agreed that the following messages should be conveyed:

- Requests for statutory assessments could not be fast-tracked.

- Outside agencies needed to be involved if pupils are at school action plus.
- Targets set for pupils on school action and school action plus need to be 'additional to and different from'.
- Before putting in a request, recommendations of outside agencies need to be incorporated into the individual education plan (IEP) of the pupil and need to be monitored over time.
- Parental requests for statutory assessments do not make the process quicker, in fact, they hinder it.
- If the school wholeheartedly supports the parental request, why doesn't the school put in the request?

If SENCOs improve in their practice, it has a big knock-on effect for the local authorities in that local authority officers are able to do their jobs better also, improve their practices and be more succinct in their decision making within the statutory timescales which need to be adhered to. Also, it ensures that children and young people's needs are being identified appropriately and provision being put in place.

Evaluations of the session demonstrate that the session was successful:

Excellent discussion on legality of time-scales and expectations

Useful but wish this was earlier in the course as it would have made SENCO role less stressful.

Very clear and informative.

Very responsive to the needs of the group.

(Evaluations from SENCOs 28th May, 2012)

How Do I Evaluate My Educational Influences in Learning

Throughout my research, in this instance my work with SENCOs, I am looking for evidence of educational influences in learning. In this respect, I quote significant comments from emails from SENCOs and my responses to them. Also, I include extracts from letters sent to SENCOs and their responses to these letters. Whenever, I do a presentation or lead on a session, evaluations from SENCOs are highly significant and I select relevant comments to demonstrate my educational influences in learning.

In adopting a living theory methodology, practitioners need to provide evidence of their educational influences in their own learning and the learning of others. Standards of judgements are formed based on the values of the practitioner. In working with SENCOs, I believe that the values I demonstrate are those of commitment, openness, dedication, collaboration, reflection, receptivity and respectfulness (Jones, 2010; Jones, 2011) These values form the standards of judgement on which I judge my practice:

Commitment   I continue to be committed to do the best I can for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities and continue to be committed to do the best I can for SENCOs to enable this to happen.

Openness and receptivity	I continue to be open to the needs of SENCO when concerns are expressed and I try do something about their concerns.
Dedication	I continue to be dedicated in ensuring that SENCOs have the appropriate skills and knowledge required of their role.
Collaboration	I continue to collaborate with other educators in my authority, other authorities and universities.
Reflection	I continually reflect on my practice to improve what I am doing and in how I work with others. Also, with other partners on the course, we reflect on and review the course each year.
Respectfulness	I continue to be respectful of the needs of SENCOs and respectful of the views of other educators with whom I work.

How Do I Demonstrate the Validity of the Account of My Educational Influences in Learning?

I am of the view that my account is valid as I believe that I constantly try to live my values in my practice and strive to live by my standards of judgement. Also, in conducting my research, my account is shared with others from the draft stage to the final. This is done through sending my account to critical friends or sharing it with colleagues at Conversation Café. Conversation Café meets weekly; we share our work with others and the group functions as a validation group. Colleagues comment on whether they see me living my values in my practice and reflect on how I am doing this. They challenge my assumptions and the claims I make and make suggestions as to how I can strengthen my claims. I took this paper to Conversation Café when it was in its draft form. A member of the group felt that whilst I had produced a readable account of my research, she nevertheless felt that I was not putting enough of **ME** into my writings and that I was standing on the outside; that I needed to break down what I perceived as barriers to my self-expression and creativity. She later sent me a diagrammatic representation of what she meant with an explanation (Appendix 1). This sort of feedback is invaluable if I am to get closer to expressing my values and how I live my values in my practice.

In validating accounts, we use Habermas' (1976:2,3) four criteria of social validity which have been simplified into the four following questions (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006). Firstly, is the account comprehensible? In other words, are my meanings being clearly communicated? Secondly, is the account truthful; are the claims I am making sufficiently supported by evidence? Thirdly, is the account sincere; do my writings show that I am committed to living the values I claim to hold as fully as I can in my practice? Fourthly, is the account appropriate; do my writings show that I am aware of normative influences on my practice and thinking in this culture?

Conclusion

In this paper, I have expressed my ongoing concerns as a manager of special educational needs in ensuring that SENCOs have the appropriate training in order that they develop the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfil their role. I have expressed my concerns about

certain factors of the National Award for SEN Coordination and explained what I am trying to do about these concerns.

As a SEN manager, I shall endeavour to live my values as I work further with SENCOs and also the statutory SEN team to ensure that children with special educational needs within the authority are identified; that their needs are met and that appropriate provision is put in place to meet these needs.

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Appendix 1 (This appendix is an appendix to my paper, 'HOW CAN I IMPROVE MY PRACTICE AS A MANAGER OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS? A CONTINUING ENQUIRY', Appendix G)

The 'working' Structure
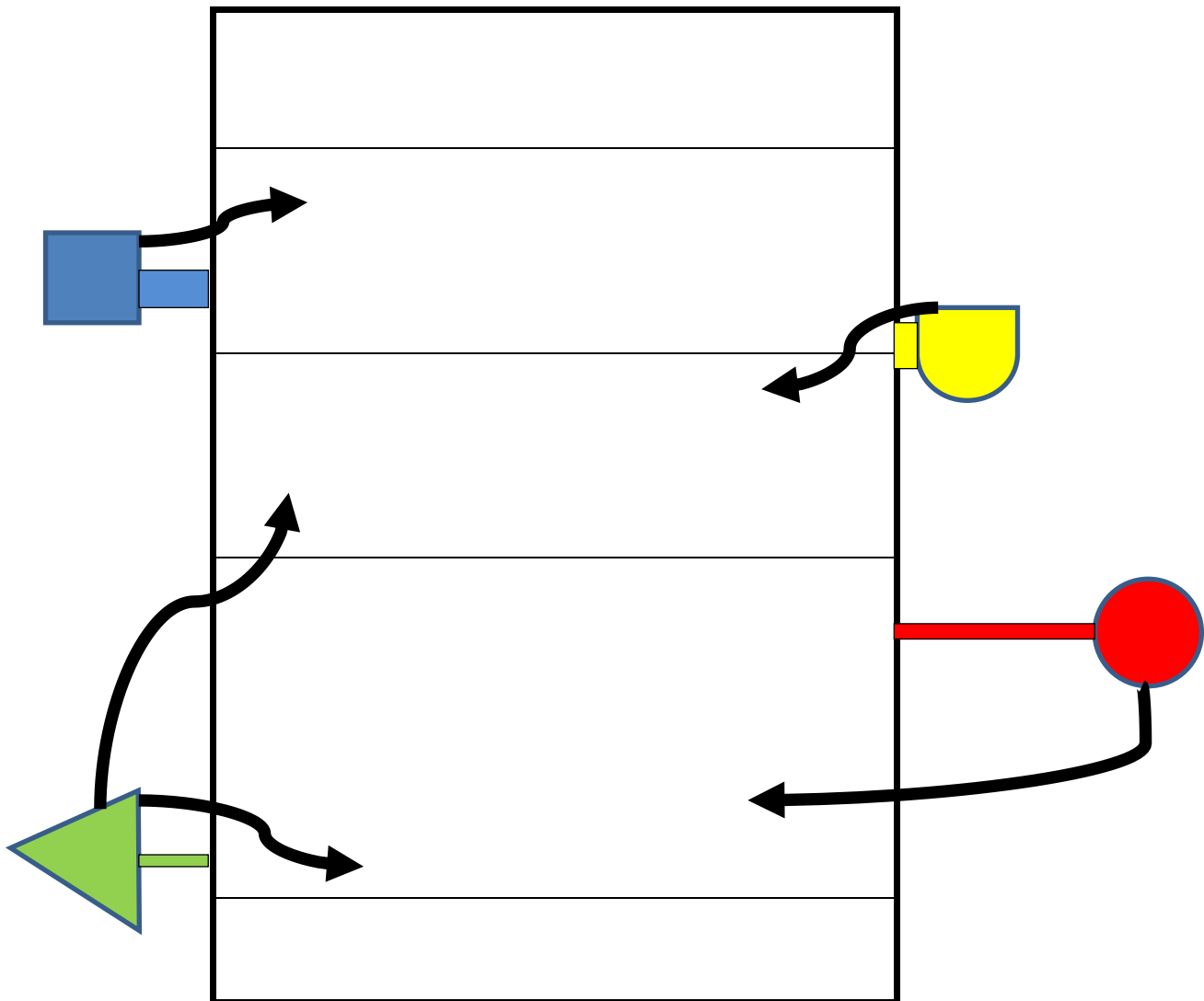
The solid rectangle is the Structure[1] within which work/writing/thinking takes place.

The Structure appears to be the impenetrable membrane inside which creative thinking should, but cannot, take place.

Within that Structure there are different components or compartments which are essential to the Structure and must be completed.

External to the Structure there are other items/issues/experiences which impact on the Structure but cannot penetrate it – this appears to be a contradiction in terms nonetheless I believe it to be true.

The external coloured shapes represent these issues and experiences, the different shapes represent the differing nature of each of these pieces. Note also that the 'umbilical' cords connecting to the Structure are of varying sizes; more specifically they represent the closeness or distance from the Structure and the strength of that connection to the Structure represented by the thickness of the umbilical cord.

[1] The word Structure has been capitalised throughout because of its importance in Chris's mind.

For Christine Jones (an observation by Lynn Spurrell, August 2012)

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