UNIVERSITY OF BATH

Department of Education

How can I improve my practice by communicating more effectively with others in my role as a professional educator?

This dissertation is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Education by completion of six taught units and dissertation.

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Abstract

In this dissertation I seek to show my learning as an educator as I try to improve my practice and gain an understanding of how it is that I influence others. Using my own values as an educator and drawing on ideas such as *presencing* (Scharmer 2000) and *mindfulness* (Claxton 1997), I seek to understand better how I communicate with others and connect with them at a deeper level, influencing their actions. Words are not enough to express my meaning and therefore I have presented this dissertation with video clips to try to demonstrate my meaning more completely. It is written as a narrative with events recounted mostly chronologically. There is a limited amount of re-ordering. This is the narrative of my life as a teacher researcher with many different demands on my time. I have taken time, usually during school holidays, to reflect on the problem of how to be a more effective communicator allowing slow, unforced development extending over a year. This approach has allowed my deeper thoughts to surface and to guide my writing. I have so many interactions each day with my colleagues and my students that I seek here to understand how I can ensure good intuitive responses, making a lot out of a little.

CONTENTS

Who Am I?

This is the sort of person I have become:

- ➢ I love my wife
- ➢ I love teaching
- ➢ I love my children
- ➢ I love my garden

Through putting together this dissertation I have developed a greater sense of who I am. I preface my work here with some remarks about the sort of person I am so that the reader can judge for himself or herself the value of my work.

It was whilst I was reading Ben Okri's novel "In Arcadia" (2003) that I reflected on the sort of person I am and what it is that really matters to me in life. In short I am happy and I am concerned to help others. The essence of my love is to help others to complete themselves.

MUSIC CLIP 1

Let her go, Let her go. God bless her

Wherever she may be

She can search this world over

But she'll never find another lover man like me.

(Morrison 2003)

I agree with Bill O Brien when he says that the essence of love is "to help others complete themselves". (In Scharmer, 2000: 30) Thus it is that I love my son to the extent that I spend time with him reading him poetry, telling him stories and playing football.

Inspired by listening to the music of Van Morrison and the uplifting vocals of "The Beauty of the Days Gone By" with words such as:

MUSIC CLIP 2

The beauty of the days gone by

It brings a longing to my soul

To contemplate my own true self

And keep me young, as I grow old.

(Morrison

By letting myself enter the spirit of the music and become enchanted by it, thus opening up the creative channels within me. Linking this "Inarticulate Speech of the Heart" (Morrison) with the work of Otto Scharmer on presencing and Joseph Jaworski (1999) who says "*when you open your soul and when you bring your whole heart in to the room, it changes the structure of the room*".

"Presencing is both a collective/organisational and an individual/personal experience in which the Self becomes the gate through which the new comes in to reality. It is the discipline of bringing one's full Self in to presence and

uses one's highest Self as vehicle for sensing and bringing forth new worlds"

(Scharmer 2000)

The intellectual challenge for me is to understand how I bring my full Self in to presence in my professional life as an educator through the teaching that I love doing. Through video clips of my work as an educator, I explore the discipline of bringing my full Self in to presence as a means of sensing and bringing forth new worlds. These new worlds are intellectual worlds, ideas that are turned into actions, my own and actions by others. I believe that it is at these moments of *presence* that my values as an educator shine through and lead to moments of influence on others and learning for myself.

How have I got here?

I opened a book called The Handbook of Action Research at an article entitled "The Humanistic Approach to Action Research" by John Rowan. This sparked off a series of ideas for me. I like Grof's (Grof 1979) succinct description (of transpersonal), where he says it is concerned essentially with *"experiences involving an expansion or extension of consciousness beyond the usual ego boundaries and beyond the limitations of time and/or space"*

It struck me that what I, as a teacher, try to do is to transcend the personal. Dylan Wiliam (William and Black 1998) talked about "*leaving the ego out of assessment*"[1]. As a teacher I believe that I can teach *the universal truths beyond ego* (Potts 2003[2]).

Wilber says:

"people's peak experiences are really intimations of a possible transition from one level of consciousness to another"

and Maslow (1968) in writing about peak experiences says that during them:

perception can be relatively ego-transcending, self-forgetful, egoless. It can be unmotivated, impersonal, desireless, unselfish, not needing, detached. It is possible in the aesthetic experience or the love experience to become so absorbed and poured into the object that the self, in a very real sense, disappears".

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[1] See my earlier assignment on formative assessment for my understanding of this.

This body/mind unity is echoed in the work of Otto Scharmer in his article on presencing.

I had been considering Scharmer's idea of presencing for some time. The physical act of opening the pages of the book and finding passages with which I could instantly engage gave me that unifying body/mind experience that Rowan was describing. This startling symbiosis inspired me to write my thoughts down amongst crowds of children enjoying themselves at Longleat adventure park. I caught an image of myself much like that described by Ben Okri (In Arcadia, Page 83, 2003) of his character Mistletoe, the artist, as seen by another character Lao:

" *He looked at Mistletoe. She was serenely sketching, lost in her kingdom.*"

Mistletoe is a character that is capable of noticing and becoming rapt in her engagement with the present, shutting out distractions for a period of time and focussing on what is in her mind. It was this image of myself that I caught as I engaged with ideas such as peak experiences and presencing, amongst the crowds at Longleat. Eight months later the image of this experience remains strong for me.

The move towards personal authenticity, what I call being honest with myself and being courageous, was one that I was experiencing at the time as I felt

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[2] Here I feel that I am expressing myself in my own way here and not through the words of others. I am claiming these words as authentically my own and not "borrowed" from another author.

myself growing in my personal and professional life. On a personal level, my wife had recently won a battle with cancer and my mother her battle with depression. Both had shown great resilience in dealing with negative feelings during these battles and they had found the inner strength to overcome adversity. Perhaps that is why this passage from Tolkien resonated with me:

"But even as hope died in Sam, or seemed to die, it was turned to a new strength. Sam's plain hobbit-face grew stern, almost grim, as the will hardened in him, and he felt all through his limbs a thrill, as if he was turning in to some creature of stone and steel that neither despair nor weariness nor endless barren miles could subdue." (Tolkein 1977)

Claxton (2002) talks about resilience being crucial in building learning power. My wife has gone from cancer patient to cancer researcher by engaging fully with the medical research and developing her learning through undertaking a wide range of alternative remedies, refusing the conventional treatments. Such resilience to overcome the feelings associated with the illness and then to confront the medical establishment is in my view enviable.

At a professional level I had a new Headteacher whose calmness and steady hand inspired self-confidence and belief. In addition, I had been ripened for development of my "real-self" by the inspired teaching of Jack Whitehead and mentoring of Sarah Fletcher from Bath University, through the MA programme. They have instilled the self-confidence to recognise my own abilities as much greater than I had previously thought.

Yes, I had truly experienced a state of peace with myself whilst surrounded by anxious parents looking after their jubilant offspring in the playground that is Longleat. I had seen the wood for the trees as Lao, the central character in Arcadia, suggests as the key to serenity and inner peace. In other words, in these moments I had been able to recognise what was important to me and what was not.

"Every now and again life sends us little messages. The messages are meant for us alone. No one else can see them. No one else perceives them as messages. They may seem perfectly banal to the world, but to you, for whom they were intended, they have the force of revelation. Much of the failure and success of a life, much of the joy or suffering in a life, depends on being able to see these secret messages. And much of the magic, or tragedy of life depends on being able to decipher and interpret these messages" (Okri 2003)

MUSIC CLIP 3

Once, every once in a while

Something comes along that feels just right

Once, every once in a while

Just like switching on an electric light

And sometimes you try till you're blue in the face

But when you get that feeling

Nothing's going to take its place.

(Morrison 2003)

In the existential sense, I have come to recognise the importance of taking responsibility for being myself.

I now recognise that my wife reached this state some time ago, during her recent illness, my children remain in a state of grace, my garden has its natural self and my teaching is my means of transcending my ego to facilitate others to find their true selves.

What I have done thus far is to give some biographical details and in so doing I seek to expose my values so that the reader can take account of how my values are influencing my work. I have adopted this approach because I believe, along with others, such as Hammersley (1999), that it is not feasible to produce value-free research.

I am conscious that by including such personal details as I have I lay myself open to accusations of self-indulgence and for some this may consolidate a view that qualitative research such as this, is value-laden, unscientific and invalid. My experience tells me otherwise. I believe that I have learned from conducting qualitative research where I have made my values explicit and used triangulation methods to validate my findings and claims. I believe that I have been able to show in previous assignments how I have influenced colleagues that I work with and students that I teach.[3]

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[3] See my assignments on; How can I manage the development of a guidelines on effective learning document for Westwood St Thomas School in a way that can influence improvements in students and colleagues understanding of

My Professional Values as an Educator

I have been re-politicised by James Kelman (2004) through his book, "You Have To Be Careful In The Land Of The Free". Books such as Kelmans serve to remind us of the importance for humanity of not taking for granted the political process and the importance of politics in our everyday lives.

*"My hero wasnay the usual apolitical right-wing Hollywood prick, his sympathies went to the underdog, he was anti-cops and anti-robbers, anti-authoritarian, he was also a good anarchist; anti-sexist, anti-homophobic, anti-racist, pro-justice, pro-truth, pro-asylum seeker, pro-immigration, pro-equality – christ I could go no forever." (*Kelman 2004)

Much of what Kelman's central character says resonates with me. My hero, or the sort of person I want to be, carries many of the sentiments listed above. Looking further back in to my story as a teacher educator helps me to recognise professional values that I believe I have developed. Through the influence of Jack Whitehead and Sarah Fletcher and my work with fellow teacher researchers in the Westwood Teacher Research Group I believe that I have become more aware of these values and how they have influenced the way that I live my professional life. They have I believe become part of that full Self that I bring in to presence at moments of influence. In this work I therefore explain how my actions are influenced by my professional values and I use my values as a means of evaluating the judgements that I make. I

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learning? Also; How can I live out my democratic values in practice more fully by using formative assessment techniques to influence my own learning and the learning of others?

outline here the values that guide my practice and which I use as standards to judge my work.

Democracy in my terms

My creativity is expressed by the need to find ways of giving students and staff a voice. This is in tune with my own democratic values explored in my previous works on South Africa and use of video[4]. I believe that disenfranchised staff and students learn the politics of totalitarianism, empowered they learn the politics of democracy. Openness, negotiation, power sharing, social justice, concern for others, these are the qualities that I value in my notion of democracy. Opening the channels of communication to staff and students, involving them in decision-making, empowering them by giving them a voice enhances the democratic nature of the School as an institution.

The influence that I wish to have is a democratising one. Currently power within the School is held hierarchically as strategic decisions are made by the Leadership Group, consisting of the Headteacher, Deputy Heads and Assistant Heads. It is this group that sets the educational agenda in the School, what is regarded as important and what is not. There is consultation with stakeholders, however I do not believe that this is a sufficiently democratic model. I draw on evidence here from parental questionnaires in particular that express a desire to be more involved with decision-making in

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[4] How can I use my own values and my experience of schools in South Africa to influence my own education and the education of others? Also: What methods of enquiry can I use to live out my democratic values more fully? Both of these assignments can be downloaded from www.actionresearch.net

the School. I wish to democratise the social order in the School. The vision, the ideas and the strategy for the School should I believe be more influenced by the students, staff and parents than they currently are. I have already taken some steps in this. The students' perspective on learning has become embedded in our Subject Review process due to the evaluation tools that I have developed as part of the Guidelines on Effective Learning. This involves student questionnaires and student interviews to triangulate with the evidence from lesson observations and sampling of student work.

My democratic principles push me on further. Students are at the centre of my concern as an educator. A professional value that I share with David Milliband, the Minister of State for School Standards, as outlined in his speech to the British Performance Management Conference in Bournemouth (January 2004), is

"to give every child the chance to be the best they can be, whatever their talent or background"

Social Justice

Let me here give some context to my School. Westwood St Thomas School is a 13 to 19 mixed comprehensive school situated in the west of Salisbury on the edge of a large housing estate. The housing estate consists of a high proportion of social housing. 60% of our 705 pupils are from Bemerton ward, which the Oxford Poverty Study for 1998 shows to be the fourth most

disadvantaged ward of the 137 wards in Wiltshire. The intake of the School is further skewed by the existence of single-sex grammar schools in the city. I have chosen to work in this School for 13 years because I believe that I can make a difference to the lives of the disadvantaged pupils. It is my belief in social justice for all that motivates me.

I see this value as extending beyond the boundaries of my own School. Thus, I have established a link with Nqabakazulu School in a black township in South Africa. Working in my own School and with Nqabakazulu School I can live out my values and promote social justice. I find the notion of equity helpful here. In this context for me this means fairness in the sense of providing equal opportunities for students from backgrounds that are less conducive to learning. Working with students that are in such circumstances gives me greater satisfaction than working with students with all the advantages of supportive backgrounds for learning. In a previous assignment I focussed on the work that I am doing with Nqabakazulu School in South Africa. Through my work with students and teacher educator colleagues in Westwood St Thomas School I wish to help them to develop their ability to bring their full Selves in to presence so that they can bring forth new worlds. Here I am influenced by the notion of learning empowering the individual.

The Significance of Learning for Inclusion

Connected with my values of democracy and social justice is my strong belief in the value of learning as a means of empowerment. The notion of lifelong learning is one that I adhere to. I appreciate that I am a different person now

to when I was 18 years old. I have learned a great deal and I have changed for the better. This leads me to believe in the potential for everyone to learn and to reject the notion that the ability to learn is fixed. I therefore measure the value of my work in terms of whether it demonstrates learning for myself and for others. Connected to this is my meaning of inclusion. Inclusion for me is about empowering individuals within my school, both staff and students, to be sufficiently courageous to learn and to develop their ability to learn. It is about empowering them to act as agents of change and for me the root of this is to develop their ability to learn. It is connected to my notions of democracy and social justice in that improving others' ability to learn empowers them (democracy) and leads them to challenge the social injustices facing them and the world at large. I believe that they will do this through their recognition that they are effective learners and develop the confidence, as I have, to engage in human discourse and express themselves in the public domain as human beings.

I seek to live out these values of democracy, social justice and inclusion through learning in the work that I do and I would ask the reader to judge this work on that basis.

How can I presence my Self within a school context and how can I account for the influence that I am having on others?

There is a sense in which I see presence as the key to influencing others in the ways that I work. By this I mean presencing as the sensing and bringing forth of new worlds. These new worlds can be for myself and for my colleagues and students. And so to my story of how I am seeking to presence myself in my professional life and live out my values more fully.

I recount here my work on four fronts over the year:

The Subject Review process – As Deputy Head I am responsible for this self-evaluation process that involves scrutinising the teaching and learning in a subject. Each subject is reviewed every two years.

Leading From the Middle (LFTM) – This is a new course run by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) for subject leaders in Schools. I was successful in getting our School on to the first year of the national roll-out of this course.

ICT Strategy – I am charged with leading a group of colleagues in developing an ICT strategy for our School.

Student involvement – How to extend the amount of student involvement in School life and decision making in particular? As part of the Subject Review

process I interview students to ascertain their views on teaching and learning in the subject under review.

The Subject Review Process

In September I decided to discuss the Subject Review process with Heads of Faculty at a meeting with them. The discussion was open and forthright. Dawn Hampton suggested that staff views are canvassed as part of the review. David Marrs took this up. He suggested that staff complete a questionnaire to give their perspective and to triangulate evidence alongside student and management responses, Those present at the meeting can validate the discussion and the consequent action points are recorded in the minutes.[5] From that discussion I developed the notion that the Subject Review process should be more collaborative, a collaboration between the Head of Faculty and the link Deputy Head. Remembering the words of Shayer (2001) on the importance of collaboration for learning, "*It is the peer to peer mediation that is the major driver of intellectual development. It is the teachers job to manage the lesson so that peer to peer mediation is maximised*". In this context I see myself as the teacher managing the process. And so the Subject Review process becomes one that is "done with", rather than "done to", Heads of Faculty are empowered to share control of the process and I have re-written the document that outlines the Subject Review process.

Another democratising of the Subject Review process gives teaching staff closer involvement by the completion of a questionnaire that seeks their

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[5]I wrote the Guidelines on Effective Learning for Westwood St Thomas School.

perceptions of the subject that they teach. I believe that this is a means of empowering the teacher. It also asks them to compare their own views of learning by their classes with the responses to the student questionnaires, a way of holding them to account and providing an opportunity for triangulation of perceptions of learning. The teacher and student voices are therefore included in the Subject Review process and there is encouragement for mediation.

Leading From the Middle

How to empower Middle Managers further? We have got four places on the Leading From The Middle programme run by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). This is exciting as I see it as a real opportunity to empower four of our least experienced Middle Managers by providing them with the skills and confidence to play out their roles.

I take heart from the idea of distributed leadership. Research by Silns and Munford (2002) shows that student outcomes are more likely to improve where leadership sources are distributed throughout the school community and where teachers are empowered in areas of importance to them. I am heartened by the National Association of Headteachers (2000) research evidence that shows:

" That successful heads led both the cognitive and the affective lives of the school, combining structural (developing clear goals), political (building alliances) and educational leadership (professional development and teaching

*improvement) with symbolic leadership principles (**presence**, inspiration) and distributed leadership practice (empowering others to lead)."*

I decide to share this notion with all the Middle Leaders at my school and gauge their reaction. Intriguingly, the word presence appears again in another context.

So the purpose of my work with the Middle Leaders becomes clearer. We are looking to distribute leadership by empowering Middle Leaders. For me this means helping the Middle Leaders to bring their full Selves in to presence and using their highest Selves as a means for sensing and bringing forth new worlds. This is a purpose that I had arrived at intuitively and that I have now had validated by research into leadership in Schools.

Now I find myself at a training session in Bristol in October. I find that I am expected to operate as a coach to my Middle Managers. I raise the question but do not get an answer, what does coaching mean in this context and how is it different to mentoring? One of the principles outlined by the NCSL is equality in the coaching relationship. Yet the tutors use the terms coach and coachee, which gives me the impression that they are talking about something being done to somebody else. I challenge the notion that the relationship can be equal given the hierarchical nature of School organisation. There is no answer. I feel like I am experiencing a "peak"[6], the antithesis of the despair that I sometimes feel as I face the daily frustrations of my teaching

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[6]

life. I am out of School and have time to reflect as the NCSL tutors talk about the skills of coaching. Am I alone in questioning the principles and the conduct of this training, I need to check.

Lunch provides the opportunity to validate my thoughts. Sure enough others are questioning the validity of some of the assumptions being made. The tutors are working to a script – robots could deliver this stuff. I realise that what is missing is some sort of intellectual basis for discussion between the coaches about what coaching is. The training is based on a deficit model; what we are not good at and what skills do we need to develop? It is the worst example of training, based on a fear that the coaches will not be good enough to enable the Middle Managers to develop as leaders and taking no account of participants values, previous experience or knowledge. Teachers are in need of inspiration – we need to be reminded about what we are doing well and we need to be helped to reach new peaks of performance by developing our understanding of our own roles as leaders.

This training for coaches was insubstantial and almost content free. Apart from some competencies that were given to us as definitive for coaching effectively, there was no intellectual stimulus. A search on the National Mentoring Network website reveals far more useful information. What we are being asked to do seems to me to be offering mentoring support. This definition of mentoring taken from the website (www.nmn.org.uk) , is the one that I relate to most closely:

"The support of one individual by another within a personal relationship developed through regular contact over a period of time" (Pan London Standard)

Parsloe and Wray (2000) make a distinction between coaching and mentoring as follows:

"The distinction between coaching and mentoring is one of contextual roles, responsibilities and relationships as both are processes that enable or support and encourage learning to happen. All mentors seek to develop a special relationship as close as possible to the traditional concept of a trusted advisor and counsellor. They can be more interested in improvements in performance and behaviour over a longer time scale, possibly a whole career, than is the case with the necessary immediate results focus of a line manager."

Considering Parsloe and Wray's distinction between the terms, in line with my own democratic values and preference for collaborative working I would prefer my role to be a mentoring one where I develop a special relationship with my Middle Leaders as I work with them over the year. I am mindful however of the hierarchical relations that exist as I am a member of the Leadership Group in the School and they are not. This could be an influence on the way that we operate and on the outcomes. By making it clear that I am not looking for immediate results but to facilitate their learning and development as leaders and to collaborate in enquiry I believe that I will diminish the importance of the hierarchy.

I want to be far more inspirational in my meetings with my Middle Leaders than this course has been for me. So what can I take from the Leading From The Middle programme to inspire my middle leaders? My hope is in the opportunity that the course presents them with to develop an area of their practice. It is this aspect of the course that I will devote my time to. I decide to ignore the advice to coaches to meet with each middle leader separately and after seeking their agreement I arrange joint meetings. This will give them the opportunity to mediate their ideas, to support each other, to inspire confidence in each other and to collaborate. I use my professional values as an educator to judge this decision. Engaging in dialogue as a group of educators will enable us to learn from each other, me from them and them from each other as much as them from me. This is how I embody my democratic values. Joint meetings will give all participants equal opportunities in line with the value that I place on equity. They will all hear the same messages from the participants in the same way. It is my view that situations that illustrate presencing are likely to emerge from these joint meetings. Of course, if confidentiality becomes an issue, or if a participant requests it, a one to one session will be available.

I decide that, with their permission I will videotape the sessions that I have with the Middle Leaders to consider how I am living out my professional values with them and to consider whether I am giving them the best opportunity to find their voice and be creative in their work. It is that creative

space that I seek to give them. I will be able to review the video footage with tem to validate my claims.

What is emerging for me as I carry out my different roles is the complexity of it and the difficulty of reducing it to words – the inarticulate speech of the heart. And yet by claiming that these sources have influenced me, I am somehow appropriating them as my own and denying their true meaning to others.

Leading the ICT Strategy Group

And how can I lead the ICT Strategy Group set up to develop a five year strategy for the School in a way that gives voice to the members of it and allows us to express a common will.? The group consists of three ICT teachers, our ICT technician, our administration manager, the Head of Humanities and myself. Here is a real opportunity afforded us to bring forth new worlds. Scharmers guidance on presencing is useful again here as I recognise the complexity of the problem and that it is not just my problem to solve. The role of the leader is discussed by Scharmer (2000) and the conclusion that he reaches is:

"that the leader's real work is to create conditions that allow leaders – that is everybody who rises to the occasion – to shift the place from which their organisation or system operates."

I like this definition of leadership because it is a democratic one that sees leadership as available to all people irrespective of their position within an

organisation. It is consistent with the idea that leadership is distributed throughout the school community and is not contingent on a person being at a certain level within the hierarchy. I feel happy with my contribution as leader in this respect. All those present contributed to an agreed vision for the School as an ICT rich environment and we had a full discussion of what we need to consider in getting there. This was day one of three days and I felt that we had made a good start. In order to seek corroboration of this feeling I posted an enquiry on the group discussion forum that one member of the group has set up. This is a virtual learning environment that enables the seven members of the group to carry on discussing the issues regarding our developing ICT strategy.

"I would appreciate it if you could find time to respond to this. As part of my MA dissertation I am analysing my own practice, in this case leading the ICT Strategy group. I would appreciate feedback on how you felt the first day went. Specifically, answers to the following questions. Brief responses please.

- *Did you feel heard during the discussion?*
- *Do you feel committed to the common vision and purpose that we formed?*
- *Any other comments?"*

I got a response from one member of the group only. This was disappointing but perhaps understandable given the workload pressures on people. I received this response on Thursday 4th December by email from a member of the group

Mark

Sorry for the delay in replying. The day went well with views expressed and reflected. I think I detected a small amount of pre-loading in the vision statement!

It was a useful day and I do feel involved in the project.
Paul

This response does I think corroborate my view that we had worked in a democratic way; that people had been given the opportunity to express their views and their views were reflected in the vision statement and issues identified from the day. The disappointingly low response to my posting on the learning environment led me to consider alternative ways of gaining evidence for validation purposes.

In order to get underneath this idea of presencing in an educational context I decided that I would video myself working in different situations with different groups of people. Discussion with a colleague[7] led me to the belief that I could study the video footage and draw out from it what was present in each situation and whether there are features that are common to the situations, as well as differences. This might give me some insight in to this idea of presencing.

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[7] Cath McKenna – Head of Humanities at Westwood St Thomas School and a member of the Westwood Teacher Research Group.

I have used video extensively in recent research that I have conducted and found it to be a powerful tool for analysis and reflection[8].

My curiosity was further heightened when I read responses from our own teaching staff to a question that had been raised on a recent Training Day[9]. The question was "What makes a good lesson?" One of the responses was "Presence". That was it, there was neither an explanation of the respondent's understanding of the term nor of the group's understanding. It would be interesting to find out what teachers understand presencing, or "having a presence" to mean.

Student Involvement

At the start of my thinking about this dissertation I had considered that I might begin with a questionnaire to students and staff to ask them how the School might change it's organisation to incorporate staff and student voices more fully. Now I do not see the need for this. I had never devised the questionnaire because I don't believe that I really felt it to be necessary. I have taught in the School for fourteen years. I have come to know how the School operates and as a member of the senior management team responsible for implementing key decisions I have the ability to involve students and staff in the decision making process. Indeed, I have done so, as when I invited students to be involved with the working party on assessment, which developed our School guidelines on assessment. I see it as my responsibility to lead the senior management team in ensuring that staff and student voices are heard through

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[8] See my assignment; What methods of enquiry can I use to live out my democratic values more fully?

creative channels. I recognise the hierarchical nature of the School organisation but I refuse to believe that this precludes the incorporation of student and staff voices in decision making. I have seen the eloquence of students through Subject Review interviews and in meetings on assessment. Thus I strive to live out my democratic values through involving students in decision making.

In canvassing the views of students and giving them a voice I have hit a problem. The new Headteacher wishes to chair the School Council meetings. This means that I cannot lead the group as I had anticipated. I need to consider other ways of giving students a voice. As part of the Subject Review process that I am involved with I interview students to ascertain what they think of their learning in the subject area under review. This gives me access to groups of students. I wonder whether I can set up a group separate from the School Council with a different remit, perhaps with a closer focus on teaching and learning. I need to discuss this with the Headteacher. But no, after further consideration I see the opportunity for student voice that the Subject Review process gives students. This method of working demonstrates how I am using my professional values as standards of judgement, which help me to determine what actions I take. I believe that it is showing how I approach my work in living action research.

"Using our own values as standards of judgement will put us at the forefront of educational enquiry". (Whitehead 2003)

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[9] At a Training Day held at Westwood St Thomas School on November 3rd, Nick Glass of Wiltshire LEA led a session on "What Makes a Good Lesson?"

Their voice is heard and taken seriously in forming a view about learning in a subject area. I can capture the student's voices on videotape and consider how I can improve the way that I empower those voices.

"Student, my student from the silent majority: what goes on inside your head? You and the others can pass through our present school system without being recognised and known as an individual, with no expression of your dreams, aspirations, achievements, anxieties or hidden talents. You carry your hidden agenda on a solitary journey, drifting from class to class, with a sense of 'nobody really cares". (Graham, 1999 cited by Collins and McNiff, 1999, p74).

My response to this is;

"I do care about your dreams, aspirations, achievements, anxieties and hidden talents. As such I want to give you the opportunity to share them with me and for them to become woven in to the fabric of our School. Through video taping my interviews and considering them carefully I can seek a better way of giving you a voice to enhance learning for you in our School. Your comments will influence the findings of our review of the subjects and areas identified for improvement will reflect your own areas of concern. The Schools time and resources will be bent to improving those areas that concern you most".

Thus we have decided to carry out a review of Art as it is an area that is causing some concern within the School at this time.

VIDEO Clip 1 (See Appendix 1)

So as I look critically at the student interviews that I carried out as part of the Art review on November 11th I can see that I am writing too much and paying too little attention to engagement with the ideas offered by the students. I am not being creative enough in my questioning, sticking rigidly to the predetermined questions and not seizing the opportunity to explore the student responses and dig deeper. For example, near the start Matthew talks about how he "*puts his feelings in to his paintings*". I miss the opportunity to explore this creative response, moving on instead to the next question. As I watch myself I see myself on the video with my head down writing answers as the students speak. This could be off putting for the students and act as a barrier to communication.

When I showed this video extract to the Westwood Teacher Research Group for validation several interesting points were made. Comments from colleagues and members of the Westwood Teacher Research Group in response to the video were about how I could show more presence and engagement with the ideas of the students by writing less and focussing more on them. It seems obvious to me now that there is no need for me to write as I have the video recording as a record of the ideas communicated during the interview. Another suggestion is made that in order to fully engage with the

thoughts of the students about Art it would be helpful for them to have examples of their work to refer to and talk to me about at the interview. This would enable Matthew to explain what he meant by *"putting his feelings in to his paintings"*.

This type of reflection has led to action. Next time I interview students I will pay less attention to my pre-determined questions and go with the flow of the conversation. I will video record the interview leaving my written remarks until after the interview and I will ask students to bring along some work from the subject that they wish to talk about. This episode shows me the value of video technology. Without the ability to watch my recording of the conversation I would not have been able to reach these conclusions and make these decisions about how to improve my practice for the next set of student interviews.

Recognising Presence - Have I got at the essence of this idea of presence?

A search on amazon.com gives no relevant matches. As I read more widely given the opportunity that a Xmas holiday affords me, I find that I can relate strongly to a passage in Hare Brain Tortoise Mind by Guy Claxton (1997). Surrounded by Xmas presents and smiling children I find his description of "*mindfulness"* to be apposite and close to my understanding of presencing. He quotes Jon Kabat-Zinn, Director of the Stress Reduction Programme at the University of Massachusetts Health Centre, in describing mindfulness as a state of being "*fully in the present moment, without judging or evaluating it, without reflecting backwards on past memories, without looking forward to anticipate the future, as in anxious worry, and without attempting to 'problem-solve' or otherwise avoid any unpleasant aspects of the immediate situation. In this state one is highly aware and focused on the reality of the present moment 'as it is' accepting and acknowledging it in its full 'reality' without immediately engaging in discursive thought about it"*.

I find my own children in the *present* state much of the time as they discover new meanings and develop new skills. Learning to play games like golf seems easy to my children. They can follow the coach's instructions without question, getting the grip right first time without questioning and reflecting on previous experience and past failures, as I tend to do and so learn more slowly. Back to Kabat-Zinn on describing mindfulness as a state of being in the present moment *"without trying to work out how to change it, and without drifting off into a state of diffuse thinking focused on somewhere else or some other*

time." I think of how this might apply to my work as a teacher in the classroom, as a Training Manager with my Graduate Trainee Teachers, as a coach with my Middle Leaders. What evidence can I look for to demonstrate this state of mindfulness, of being fully in the present? It seems obvious to me that the best method for collecting evidence will be video as it will show what behaviours I demonstrate as I show my presence, or my lack of presence. Will there be certain behaviours that I demonstrate when I am fully present in the situation? Video can assist me in giving me the opportunity to examine these behaviours and to reflect on my use of language. It will also allow me to consider the body language of all those engaged in the dialogue. I recognise that my view will be influenced by my own values so that the way I see it will not necessarily be the way the situation is perceived by others. This highlights the need for some form of validation of my perceptions, a process that I will engage in. A colleague and fellow teacher researcher of mine suggested that I use Venn diagrams to indicate behaviours or actions that are common to situations when I am presencing. And so my question becomes: When I am coaching Middle Leaders, training Graduate Trainee Teachers or teaching or interviewing students what behaviours are common when I am demonstrating, in Guy Claxtons words *"mindfulness"*, in Otto Scharmers words *"presencing"*. As I write this I feel fully focused on the job. My mind looks for and finds words that fit my purpose and new meanings. It searches for and finds ways of showing what I mean. I link my own thoughts with what I am reading. I think of actions that I can take to represent my meaning eg the use of video. To finish off Kabat-Zinns description as quoted by Claxton *"The mindful state is associated with a lack of elaborative processing involving thoughts that are*

essentially about the currently experienced, its implications, further meanings, or the need for related action".

Surely this presencing, this state of mindfulness is the essence of learning. In order to understand, or get close to understanding my influence on others I have to recognise not only the behaviours and actions exhibited by myself, but also the behaviours exhibited by others in presencing their selves and I need to evidence claims that I have in some way influenced their behaviours or actions.

Evidencing my Claim to Influence the Learning of a Colleague

Nelson Mandela in his inaugural speech as president of South Africa in 1994 talked about the liberating potential of *presence*.

" Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually who are you not to be? …..There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you….As we let our own light shine we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." (Mandela 1994)

This idea that we should be confident and assured and without fear is one that I can relate to in my role as an educator. As I throw off the shackles of fear and in Mandelas words *" let my light shine"* I empower others to do the same.

Working With a Middle Leader Colleague

As I watch the video of my one to one mentoring session with one of my Middle Leaders (See Appendix 2- Video Tape 2), I think I perceive a moment when this light shines through, when I empower the Middle Leader that I am coaching to take on an idea that she had previously been persuaded against due to the fears of her course tutor. I feel that the video footage shows me as the liberator of this idea. I believe that the significance of the video footage in my learning cannot be overstated. I think that it is the video footage that has

allowed me to identify this moment by reflecting back on the conversation that we had and synthesising it with my learning from reading authors such as Claxton. First let me set the context for the video conversation. Be Kuzniar is the Head of Modern Foreign Languages at my school and she is one of the participants on the Leading From The Middle course. Part of the course is to develop a Leadership Focus Plan for which she has to identify a focus for development over the next five months. She will be expected to make a presentation to her fellow participants about how she has developed her skills as a Middle Leader through this development. Having been highly critical of aspects of the LFTM course earlier on in this dissertation, I do feel that this is a worthwhile part of the course as it gives the Middle Leader the opportunity to develop an area of real interest for themselves. The video shows that our conversation draws on a diagnostic assessment of her strengths and weaknesses as a Middle Leader and also on a Subject Review document that contains targets for development for MFL. After about five minutes I make a tentative suggestion about a possible link between a target from the Subject Review on introducing student self and peer assessment in MFL and a statement from the diagnostic on using refined systems to monitor and assess pupil progress.

Video Clip 2 (See Appendix 2)

I believe that it is clear from the video that this suggestion is made in a half-hearted way. I see that I am not animated in any way and fail to ignite much of a response in my colleague. The video brilliantly captures her looking

downcast and her face betraying what seems like a complete lack of enthusiasm for the idea. In fact, it surprises and shocks me to see such a lack of enthusiasm. I recognise the need to check out my view of this with her. Is that the way she was feeling about the idea?

Video Clip 3 (See Appendix 2)

Then there is a sudden change as I use the language of *mindfulness* saying *"The other thing that came to my mind just as I was looking at this"*. Although I say that it came to my mind at the moment that I was looking at the documents, it would be close to the truth to say that it came to my consciousness as I was looking at the documents. I have known Be Kuzniar for twelve and a half years as a colleague. I have worked with her closely for the past two and a half years. We have worked together on a number of issues to do with Modern Foreign Languages in the School. I know the department well, thus I have plenty of experience to draw upon in making suggestions as to a way forward for her as a Middle Leader for the department. The idea would have been lodged in my subconscious and now is the time that it is brought to the fore and consciously expressed. As I espouse the idea that she might consider looking at the role of MFL in the School in 2005 I come alive. The video captures me expressing myself more fluently. There is more eye contact and I start at this point to use my hands to communicate as well, it is as if my whole body is involved in the idea at this point. There then follows a part of the conversation when the idea is consolidated and possible objections are overcome. The video captures lots of smiles during this. At one point Be says *"I like that, that would make me*

(she hesitates) *…..happy"*. We are both smiling at this point. I feel fulfilled as a coach. It is interesting to note that I would not have been conscious of that feeling without having the video to reflect on.

I feel that I have empowered my colleague. I have connected with Be's creativity through my intuitive insight. Jack Whitehead (2003) talks about *" a spiritual quality of life affirming energy",* that he experiences in the presence of a colleague. Put another way then, in words influenced by Jack Whitehead, *my own life-affirming energy is expressed with my colleague in a way that does not impose on the other but helps them to express their own*. In Mandela's words I have *let my light shine.*

"As we let our own light shine we unconsciously give other people the permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." (Mandela 1994)

As I contemplate further the significance of these moments captured on video I think of the research in to resilience conducted by Carol Dweck (1994) of the University of Illinois in her publication, *Toward an integrative model of personality and intelligence: a general framework and some preliminary steps*. Resilience in this sense refers to the ability to tolerate the frustrations and difficulties that inevitably occur in the course of learning, without getting upset and withdrawing prematurely. Dweck (1994) found this resilience to vary widely amongst people and her research led her to speculate that "bright girls" are the group with the most fragile grasp on learning because they have the

least experience of having difficulty in learning and having to overcome those difficulties to sometimes succeed. I wonder whether this dialogue between myself and Be is an example of her developing her resilience. I believe that I helped Be to flex her learning muscles by enabling her to overcome her doubts and stick with the plan that she had previously considered. In our conversation she was clear that she had previously considered the idea and had rejected it due to objections from her tutor about its' suitability within the time scale. I gave her the confidence to see a way through the difficulty. This is why I speculate that this was a significant part of our conversation. Overcoming this difficulty and not giving up on what is a worthwhile idea demonstrates her resilience as a learner. My learning from this is that in my role as a mentor I can act as a role model by sticking at learning in complex situations when difficulties arise, thus demonstrating my own resilience and at the same time giving my Middle Leaders the confidence to be resilient. This can empower them to make bold choices to lead their departments through a variety of complex and challenging situations.

"True learning is unpredictable; it is exciting and life-enhancing; it enables a person to become an individual, not susceptible to the politics of the market place; it encourages questioning about the way our society is run; and it enables the individual to find the answers for him-or herself." (Bowring-Carr 1997)

This quote comes close to describing the learning that I am trying to promote. Flexing the learning muscles and developing resilience in learning enables

that person to become less susceptible to the predominant ideology of market forces, to question governance and to pursue the right path for herself (just check that the evidence presented in the dissertation actually demonstrates this rather than being one of your hopes or intentions).

Later, I was able to validate my claim to have influenced Be. We met again about four weeks later. I showed her the video of our previous conversation and told her my interpretation of it. Her comments were:

"I was finding it difficult to make sense of what I have to do as a Head of Faculty and trying to reconcile the results of my diagnostic with my role in School"

This was in response to the section of the video prior to the act of mindfulness, during our conversation on the possibility of her planning a project on assessment. Another response she gave to this part of the video was:

"Without video I would have remembered the conversation but not realised how unenthused I was by the assessment idea"

When I show her the next part of the video where I make the suggestion about her planning for 2005, my moment of mindfulness, she responds with:

" How revealing!.......Gosh! It speaks volumes….. If I hadn't seen that I wouldn't have remembered it. I am enthusiastic about planning for 2005 because it is meaningful and linked to the diagnostic."

How can I understand what it was that led to this moment? I think it was the fact that I gave myself the time at the start of the conversation to consider the evidence that I had in front of me; the diagnostic assessment results and the Subject Review. Secondly, the trusting relationship that I have with this colleague. Thirdly, I have several years experience of working alongside this colleague and have had many conversations with her. These factors allowed me to take my time in reaching a stage when I was able to be intuitive and to help her express her own life-affirming energy. I am curious to know whether I can identify such moments with other colleagues and in my other roles.

Validation of my claim

It is always a surprise to me how insightful and challenging the comments from members of the Westwood Teacher Research Group are. There I was opening my professional life to scrutiny by the group, asking them to validate my judgements and to comment on whether I was living out my values.
Far from confirming outright my claim, the response to my video footage did something far more significant. It made me question my values and my approach to my life as a professional educator.

What sparked some reflection was a comment by a member of the group about the way that I was communicating with him, in a way that he felt stifled

his creativity. I was saying "*mmm*" or "*yes*" repeatedly in an affirmatory way whilst he was talking, in a way that I thought encouraged the other person to open up and be more forthcoming. I am now cognisant of the fact that some people perceive, what I had seen to be an encouraging act, to be in fact discouraging of them, because of the way that I was closing down their thoughts as it appeared to them that I was *"already there"* in terms of their thinking and therefore had appropriated their thoughts. There is a danger that I will stifle creativity and the learners playfulness if I am affirmative too quickly, giving the impression that I have understood and want to move on to what I might see as more important things.

"One day you're gonna have to face the deep, dark, truthful mirror
And it's gonna tell you things that I still love you too much to say"
(Costello 1989)

Perhaps my discomfort comes from the feeling that this might be a result of my own insecurity in my own position (Deputy Head) in the hierarchical order that exists in my School. Perhaps this is a feeling that I want to come across as *"all knowing",* so that I appear as worthy of my lofty position in the hierarchy. It could be that this stems from a perception that I have that colleagues expect those in senior positions to *"know"*. I can see how this presumption of mine stifles the creativity of others. Some humility is needed. Recognising the falsity of this perception allows me to relax and be more confident in my interactions with colleagues. I can see that having the

confidence and taking the time to say *"I don't know"* or *"I don't understand"*, can release the creativity of others.

This is a learning experience for me and as Claxton (2002) writes about Building Learning Power (BLP)

"BLP leaders, whether in private or in public, need to be open to their own learning. They need to be reflective: interested in mulling over their experiences and learning from them."

"And now the cynical ones say that it all ends the same in the long run
Try telling that to the desperate father who just squeezed the life from his only son."
(Costello 1989)

Avoiding cynicism is important for me. In order to be a learner-teacher I strive to be a reflective learner and to model learning for others.

I tend to agree with Loughran (2002) when he says that the perspectives of others encourage effective reflective practice. These perspectives can lead us to question our sometimes long-held assumptions and can lead to a *"wisdom in practice"*. I think that this is a case in point, where through the validation process I have been forced to question certain assumptions that I had about how I communicate with others. This reflection leads me to change my practice and is therefore effective.

There are certain parts of my life that remain hidden to me and to others. I was adopted at a very early age. I only strongly suspect this because of my birth certificate. I have never explored it more thoroughly because of a feeling that to do so could seem disloyal to my adoptive parents. Is it this that makes me insecure and nervous at the prospect of rejection when I open up my professional and personal life for scrutiny by others? How do I manifest this in my relationship with others? I feel the need to be more open and perhaps I ought to explore this hidden aspect of my life in order to be more comfortable in being open with others in my personal and professional life. I wonder if I brought this issue in to the open and resolved it to my own satisfaction, whether I might be more able to accept the possibility of rejection and be more willing to be open to the creative ideas of others. Writing this is in itself a therapeutic exercise in that it puts this hidden part of my life in the public domain and this motivates me to act to open up this part of my life as I take responsibility for it. I find an opportune moment to ask my parents about it. My fathers' response is short and I notice the strain on his face as he says:

"I don't know", in response to my question about my birth certificate saying that I was registered born in Lymington in the New Forest when I know that they had always lived in the north of England. That short response and the emotion that went with it confirm for me that I was adopted. The knowledge makes me more appreciative of all that my father and mother have done for me. In the coming weeks I feel that communication between us is easier. A hidden doubt and insecurity has been aired and we have moved on as a

family. Adopting a reflective approach in my personal and professional life has been beneficial.

It is this very dialogue that highlights the value of validation for me. The process encourages others to question whether or not my claims to self-knowledge are valid. In doing so I am forced to reflect critically on whether I am living out my values fully in my personal and professional life and on how I can become a more effective professional educator. I have learned from this that I could be more reflective in my listening and less affirmatory and that this could give the opportunity for some people to be more creative in my presence. Thus my creative self would be expressed through others.

Leading From the Middle (Again)

My next Leading From the Middle session is a meeting with three other coaches or mentors (coaches in the NCSL tutors' language, mentors in mine) and a course tutor at a twilight session in the February snow. This time I am more impressed with the session. The tutor encourages us to reflect on the process so far from our own perspective as coaches/mentors. This gives us the opportunity to share experiences and to reflect on our experiences. We are then encouraged to consider how we can take the process of developing our respective middle leaders forward. At one point the tutor stresses the importance of asking powerful questions as prompts for the middle leaders. For me this is a key point in the meeting and it sets me thinking about such questions. I am disappointed because we are not given time to consider what these powerful questions might be but I connect very much with the notion

that asking these questions is crucial to guiding the development of our middle leaders and from this point on I am mindful of this. The notion of powerful questions is one that I explore later in this dissertation (See Pages 47 and 51). I feel my presence most strongly when after half an hour or so discussing other things I suggest something that has been in my mind. My mind has been dwelling on this notion of powerful questions and my suggestion is that one of the key questions might be for the middle leaders to consider how they can demonstrate that they have had an influence during the leadership project that they have undertaken. I know that my suggestion has an impact because the tutor rewards me with verbal praise for coming up with such a question and the other coaches/mentors rush to write down the question as I elaborate on it. For me this is an instance of presencing and mindfulness. It was a moment when I brought to the fore what had been at the back of my mind. I was able to share this with others and I claim that by doing so I influenced them. I believe that it is an example of how my understanding of *mindfulness* is influencing my actions and is evidence that my belief in this as a professional value is leading me to use it as a standard of judgement against which I evaluate my actions.

At this point I also connect with David Hargreaves work on innovation subtitled, *teachers transforming teaching* Hargreaves (2003). Hargreaves talks about how teachers naturally look for ways of doing the job of teaching better and are in that sense natural innovators. I see my role as mentor to the middle leaders as one where I help and encourage them to be innovative in Hargreaves sense of *"learning to do things differently in order to do them*

better". I claim to be innovative in the way that I am using video to seek to understand my practice more fully. I shared this notion of using video to capture my mentoring of middle leaders with the other coaches/mentors at the Leading from the Middle session. There was a lukewarm response from the other coaches/mentors with the usual objections on the grounds of fear and suspicion of video. Reading Hargreaves encourages me to continue the group sessions for my middle leaders as he says, *" Much of the creative innovation is locked in the heads of individual teachers. In other professional worlds, such as medicine or business, innovation has been developed in a much more explicit and co-ordinated way and then disseminated much faster than in education."* (Hargreaves 2003). He goes on to ask, *"Could this be made to happen amongst teachers too?"* My response to this is that sharing innovative practice can be made to happen as we have demonstrated through the development of the Westwood Teacher Research Group and its' networking with other teacher researchers. My contribution to this in school is to lead small groups of teachers, such as graduate trainees and middle managers, and bring them together in forums where they can share innovative practice.

Such a forum is the meeting that I arranged with the middle leaders on the LFTM programme in February. I had asked the middle leaders prior to the day whether they would be willing to share their ideas for their Leadership Focus with each other. All had consented. We met after School and I recorded the meeting on video.

VIDEO Clip 4 (See Appendix 2)

Watching the recording a week later I was startled by one passage. Leading up to the extract, Be talks eloquently about her Leadership Focus and her plan for developing it. This is heartening and confirmation for me that she has taken this focus on following on from our previous conversation described a few pages earlier. The extract begins with me introducing my powerful question for Be in the following *way "One thing you might want to think about, from almost a personal point of view really, is how can you demonstrate your influence on this?"* This seems to be a powerful question to me because it requires a considerable amount of reflection. Be leans forward and says *"Right"*. I notice that I then put my hands to my mouth and as I seek to clarify meaning I withdraw them. This results in an audible kissing sound as I begin to speak. I hold Be's gaze. I think that this is me intuitively showing my loving regard for this person, for my colleague Be with whom I have worked for many years. At this point the other person, Warren, is focussing his gaze on me. During the subsequent conversation, which seeks to clarify and explore the meaning of personal influence and how it might be evidenced, I encompass Warren in my gaze. I believe that this lets him know that this is for his consideration too. Indeed, Warren joins in the conversation later on showing that he has felt included in it. Be can be seen to scratch her head on several occasions during this conversation, an intuitive act that perhaps implies a need for more time to consider a response to the question asked. I recognise this by later saying "that's something to think about". In this way, through the use of video analysis, I feel that I am starting to understand the notion of presencing and the sorts of behaviours associated with it. Later in the conversation, Be responds to Warren's explanation of his focus with

suggestions about how to develop the process of peer and student self assessment, citing how they do it in teaching French. This is an example of sharing innovative practice. For me this passage of video is a rich example of presencing, mindfulness and sharing of practice. Would others feel the same way about it? The reader can judge from the attached video clip.

The end of the Leading From The Middle programme brings me to the end of my role as a coach for this group of middle leaders. At the final presentation evening, as the middle leaders talk through their findings from the year I begin to realise why I think the course has been of value. There are 15 middle leaders present and they recount their journeys through the year. We are organised in to groups and I am privileged to hear three of these stories. JJ recounts:

"It has been a painful process for me and it has taken me out of my comfort zone. I have been forced to be introspective and consider how my leadership behaviour has affected others. I have stuck with it despite feeling uncomfortable throughout."

This is an interesting response. It seems to illustrate that JJ has been resilient as a learner as he has stuck with the course even though he has found it tough going. There is also the recognition that the course was unlike any other he had previously done in that it was less structured around how to be an effective middle leader and more around personal development.

In two of the three presentations that I heard there had been conscious attempts by the participants to change their behaviour as leaders. In both these cases there was a perception by the participants that the teams that they lead had improved over the year. In one case this view had been validated by an OFSTED report. All three participants recognised that they had areas of practice that they wanted to develop further.

It seems to me that the value of the course lies in the opportunities for middle leaders from different Schools to network and collaborate in their own development. It promotes reflection and the challenging of assumptions. It provides opportunities for validation of perceptions by encouraging participants to seek the views of colleagues on their leadership style and characteristics (and on the evidence they provide of influence on the learning of others as well as themselves?).

My criticisms of the development day for coaches remain. This was the first year of the programme and this day was poorly thought out. The tutors were not happy with it and they had not put sufficient thought in to providing an alternative to what had been scripted for the programme. However, I do feel that the basic structure of the course is sound. My two colleagues who participated in the final presentation evening validated this view. Both said that they had found it very useful to reflect on their leadership qualities and that they liked the way that it allowed them to focus on an aspect of their leadership for development.

Leading the ICT Strategy Group (Again)

The ICT strategy group has now spent three days together. We have come to a position where I am able to draw up a draft strategy document. I feel the need to check the contents of this document with the members of the group and so will circulate it to them first for comments before finalising it for presentation to the Headteacher and Governors. Having led the group in three whole day meetings over the past four months it is an opportunity to explore my understanding of presencing and the nature of influence in the group. I have not video recorded any of the sessions and so am unable to analyse the discussions that took place in the same way that I have done elsewhere. Instead I decide to write a questionnaire to the members of the group[10] and seek their responses. I have misgivings about this process. Will they feel it is important enough to devote the necessary time to it? Will it reveal any information of value to me? Mindful of both of these misgivings I decide to proceed with the caveat that, if nothing else, it will at least allow me to compare the value of a questionnaire to video analysis in terms of understanding presencing.

From six questionnaires circulated I receive two responses. This despite issuing the questionnaire a second time two weeks after the initial request. This confirms my view that one of the difficulties in using questionnaires as a research tool in this context with teachers and non-teaching staff who are busy with a range of complex tasks, is likely to be a low response rate that can lead to getting an unrepresentative view of the situation. In order to avoid

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[10] See Appendix 3

this misrepresentation I had deliberately written open-ended questions so that I could get personal responses.

As I read the responses (See Appendix 3) I get a sense of my attempt at writing powerful questions referred to earlier in this dissertation (See Page 47). Claxton (2002) clarifies the notion of powerful questions for me when he talks about *"orchestrating learning"*. In this context a powerful question is one that encourages learners to think and talk about learning. I believe that my questions: *"Overall, how effective do you think the group was?" "Why do you think this was?"* and *"Were there any specific actions or behaviours that you, or others, exhibited during the meetings that influenced the group?"* were questions that encouraged the respondents to reflect on their own learning from the meetings. I also think about what Desforges (2004) said in his speech to the National Teacher Research Conference on his notion of *"tools for learning"*. He argued that the value of teacher research lies in the tools for learning that are developed as a result of it. A powerful question can act as a tool for learning. I believe that my questionnaire stands as a tool for learning.

The response that I find most interesting is the view that during the discussions on the ICT strategy there was *"some confusion over strategy and immediate moment issues"* (PL). I find this interesting because this person seems to see strategy as something that should be separated from the present moment. My own view is that a strategy creates an image of the future and identifies actions to achieve that image that are rooted in the present. This is, I think, consistent with Scharmer's notion of *"Learning from*

the future as it emerges" and with my understanding of the notion of mindfulness.

My Values as a Teacher Researcher

In writing this dissertation I am exploring how I might live my values fully to develop my own and others learning. An article by Paul Greenbank (2003) in the British Educational Research Journal got me thinking about the values underpinning my research and how these values have influenced my research. I begin this piece with a reflection on my own background. My B.Sc. degree in Economics and Politics gave me an insight in to two different approaches to research. In Economics I was encouraged to adopt a broadly positivist approach utilising data from large-scale surveys and quantitative techniques seeking an "objective truth". As a teacher of Business and Economics I see this approach in texts on the subjects. In Politics on the other hand, I was adopting an interpretivist approach accepting subjectivity and my inability to depersonalise research. When I chose to write my politics dissertation on the philosophical influence of Hegel I was choosing an interpretivist approach to research over a positivist one.

The educational research that I have engaged in since beginning my Masters Degree has been interpretivist as I have accepted the influence of my own values on my research. Thus I have written extensively about my own background and socio-political influences from my father, my education, my working life and my family life. The research methods that I have adopted

have been qualitative rather than quantitative. I have used approaches such as student interviews and participant observation abandoning attempts at objectivity (I tend to agree with Popper here in his point that objectivity is grounded in intersubjective criticism and that we can strengthen the objectivity of our accounts as we subject them to the mutual rational control of critical discussion – hence I see your concern to test the validity of your ideas with others and taking account of their critical responses as part of a process of enhancing the objectivity of your accounts). As a teacher researcher these are methods that come more easily and more naturally to me. They are methods that are directly linked to what I do in the classroom every day, conduct conversations with students and observe progress with a view to enhancing learning.

My democratic values encourage me to accept the ideas of Bohman (1991), Harre (1978) and Menzel (1978) in validating my claims. They argue that:

"Any valid account or explanation of a social situation must respect the perspectives of the actors in that situation."

Therefore I validate my interpretations by reference to the perspectives of the participants.

It is a small step then for me to arrange to interview some students in front of a video camera and to interpret the outcomes. When choosing situations that I think illustrate the notion of presencing, or demonstrate my living out of my

professional values or not as the case may be, I have checked the validity of my perceptions with the participants concerned.

It is more difficult, and frankly less interesting for me to organise to conduct a carefully structured questionnaire. I do not however dismiss this approach as I have constructed such a questionnaire and arranged for it to be carried out as a part of the subject review process at my school to gain a student perspective on learning. The quantitative analysis of the data gathered through the questionnaire produced less interesting results than the qualitative approaches that I have adopted in this dissertation. I find it difficult to see how I could get nearer to understanding the nature of presencing as it pertains to my role as an educator through quantitative research methods.

Here I declare a political interest. This dissertation has been funded by a Best Practice Research Scholarship (BPRS). It is interesting to note how government funding of teacher research through the BPRS scheme has led to a mostly qualitative methodology. I had this confirmed by Iris Keating at BPRS (February 2004) who informed me that this was the case. BPRS began in 2002 and seemed to represent a shift in government thinking towards the development of a body of teacher research based on qualitative research methods. The idea of teacher research fits in neatly with the government emphasis on lifelong learning. The sudden announcement of the withdrawal of BPRS in the summer of 2003 seemed to be for more pragmatic reasons as financial pressures forced cuts to be made. For me this was confirmed by this email response that I got from Janet Barfield at the dfes.

"You may be aware that the Secretary of State made a commitment last summer to ensuring that more funds go directly to schools. As a result of that decision, all funding for DfES centrally run CPD schemes like BPRS will end on 31 March 2004.

From April 2004 schools will receive increased direct funding which will give them more flexibility to use resources to meet their specific needs. This means that your school can decide whether to fund your research based on the headteacher's and senior management team's assessment of how it will improve your subject knowledge and meet priorities set out in the school development plan. Of course the school will also need to weigh the costs of your research against other demands on the budget, but it is right that they are able to use their increased flexibility and autonomy to make such decisions.

I am sorry that I cannot be more helpful"

Janet Barfield
CPD Team

Of course, cuts could have been made in other budgets. It could be seen as a return by government to their former preference for quantitative research by favouring it with their limited research funding. This may be because:

"Policy-makers have felt that qualitative methods, especially those adopting

an interpretivist approach, have failed to provide clear-cut solutions – instead

they have presented an overly complex analysis of educational issues"

(Nisbet 2000)

This approach will impede research into presencing and teaching and learning situations by teachers in Schools. It will not be possible for those Schools that encourage teacher research to fund it as there was often a concentration of teacher researchers within relatively few Schools and all Schools have received only a marginal increase in their budgets as a result of the ending of the BPRS scheme.

The process of developing a better understanding of myself as an educator and a teacher researcher is a complex one. As I consider this more I begin to see the importance of understanding my own values and the extent to which they influence me as an educator. Prompted to try to understand the influence that others have had on me and how I graft on to my living presence the traits and personality of others, I engage in a conversation with a colleague and fellow teacher researcher, Simon Riding. He has developed the notion of "Living myself through others" and claims that it is a value that underpins his life as an educator and as a human being. He defines living myself through others thus:

"'Living' implies that the work is taken from something that is still in the

process of developing. 'Myself' implies the nature of the autobiographical

account that I wish to contribute to educational knowledge. 'Through' implies that I am interacting with others to try and aid my own professional growth and understanding of the work that I am undertaking, and consequently as a by-product, improving theirs. The 'others' is the sense of sharing and collegiality that encourages a growing of epistemology to aid professional improvement." (Riding 2004)

He says:

"I want to explore my belief that the future I can create is embedded within the narrative past that I have come from: it is the sharing of these narratives, through working with others that will allow me to understand my present and future. I believe that through taking stock of these past narratives, my own future may well be better." (Riding 2004)

My emailed response is:

"Thanks for this. It is interesting. I have to think how it relates to my thoughts on presencing and mindfulness. It is an interesting value and I am certainly close to you on the idea of day to day interactions influencing our practice and that of others. The notion of others trusting us is interesting. I am also discovering the importance of trusting my own judgement as well. I think this is more secure as I understand my own value base more. Claxton (2002) in Hare Brain, Tortoise Mind, led me to consider how to make better intuitive responses and part of this is, I think, trusting your intuitive judgements. I am less sure about your claim that it is a working class value. I hesitate here

because I remember my own learning as part of my Social Science first degree. I just remember that the whole notion of class is a minefield when approached from a politicial and sociological perspective. Defining working class is difficult. To talk about working class, as opposed to middle class values, is even more difficult."

Mark Potts (March 2004)

And later…… a further response from me:

"What about living others through myself? I wonder whether this gets nearer to my idea of "grafting the traits/ personality of others on to my own living presence". I am thinking about how others influence me here. Understanding this can help me to understand how I can influence others through my presencing. By considering "Living Myself Through Others" and "Living Others Through Myself" there is more of a notion of interaction and interdependence, a recognition that the influence is both ways. Is this a value that you can identify with?"

Mark Potts (March 2004)

Simon's response to this is:

"Great to hear your dialogues with yourself and your internal struggle with pinning down ideas....I know it well. I like your ideas but the 'living others

through myself' implies to me that the 'I' is at the centre of the living and that others are influencing the 'I' - the 'I' is almost like a buddhist self(?) that allows others to inhabit it for a time to develop before moving on: in terms of an analogy, it's like the 'I' is a flower filled with nectar and the 'others' are the bees that drink from it?

Whilst I like this, living myself through others implies for me more of an active role for the 'I' - the self. It's almost like the 'self' going in search of the 'other' in order to help it live: the flower goes searching for the nectar to fill it before the bee can drink. Perhaps though, living others through myself is the natural progression for this: it is the next step. once the self has found the other, it is then there to be drank from? Perhaps this is something about how you are at a different stage of your career than I am: as deputy head your role is different to mine as Head of Faculty?

Really enjoying this dialogue.

Strength and honour.

Simon"

And a few days later:

"Still thinking about this as I am writing on my PHD.

I suppose also this is the issue that Jack (Whitehead) is always talking about, that he cannot ever claim to have influenced anyone else other than himself.... living myself through others implies that you can gain something from them but isn't necessarily influencing them. I suppose for me it implies that I am searching to understand myself...that I cannot influence others until I know

myself...until I have searched and found myself. a lot of the school leadership stuff I'm reading talks about the importance of the school leader knowing themselves but as usual, doesn't say how this can be achieved. Living through others is one way to be able to find yourself through the relational and dialogical nature of the 'living': The self is an active vessel searching for the self within others.

However, living others through myself, for me implies a passive self that allows others to live through me and that the search for the self doesn't exist? Still thinking.

Simon

Conversations such as this show the value of dialogue in our development as learners. My belief in the value of learning drives me on to take further actions that take forward my own learning and that of my colleagues and students. Engagement in such dialogue has become a key aspect of my work with colleagues and I have tried to illustrate the nature of that dialogue through the video clips and through the narrative of this dissertation.

This dialogue with Simon will continue even as he leaves my School for a promoted post in another School. Such is the benefit of email.

How does the way that I use video fit with my values as an educator?

As I have developed my story over the year I have come time and time again to reflect critically on the use of video in my practice. At the British Educational Research Association – Special Interest Group (BERA – SIG) conference at Bath University in June 2004 I found myself again questioning my use of video as an agent of change. What I found pertinent was a comment by Rosie Penney about using video for *"truth seeking and truth telling".* I found myself thinking about how I use video to seek the truth and how much more truth I have gained from using video than from other research tools. The inclusion of video clips in this work is my attempt to tell a greater truth than words can. Words alone simply will not do.

I have been using video with trainee teachers to help them to reflect on their practice. I recognise that within the hierarchical structures of the School I could be regarded by the trainees as someone who is here to tell the trainees what to do and how they should teach. I seek to avoid that imposition and in line with my democratic values help the trainees to see the implications of the

ways that they work and to connect the way that they work with their own professional values. To this extent I see my role as helping them to reflect on their practice by, as Schon (1991) describes it *"guiding their seeing".*

I agree with Loughran (2002) when he says:

"Experience alone does not lead to learning; reflection on experience is essential".
and
"Effective reflective practice involves careful consideration of both "seeing" and "action" to enhance the possibilities of learning through experience".

As Loughran goes on to say it is important who is doing the learning from the experience. It will be more effective if the trainee teacher analyses and makes meaning from the experience. This is where video comes in.

Now I am charged with a more difficult task as I am asked by the Headteacher to coach a teacher who is deemed to be "struggling". My coaching is the final part of the support structure before a decision is made whether or not to proceed with formal competency procedures. In this case using video is hedged around with difficulties and I will need to proceed with caution in using the video. There will be the need to clarify the status of the video, how it is used and who sees it. There will be the need to make the experience as non-threatening and as supportive as possible. I recognise the potential difficulties with this and yet it is the potential for us both to learn from this experience and

the creative energy that it produces that drives me to suggest it to him as a means of support.

As I write this I question the notion of a *struggling teacher*. In whose terms is he struggling? The answer to this is that it is in terms of the School's expectations of teaching and learning in the classroom. These expectations are driven partly by OFSTED and as we are due to have an Inspection shortly the OFSTED standards are influencing our thinking. Yet there is more than OFSTED influencing this decision. There is an expectation from the school leadership team that standards of learning are high and judgements about the quality of learning are made against the guidelines on effective learning that I developed with my colleagues.[11]

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[11] See the document, Guidelines on Effective Learning for Westwood St Thomas School updated in July 2003.

How can I live out my values and use my expertise to help a colleague to become a more effective teacher?

The first question that arises for me in this process is; do I use the language of OFSTED in dialogue with my struggling colleague (whom I shall call J.), so that we talk about him being a struggling or unsatisfactory teacher? Alternatively, do I use the language of what Robyn Pound (2004) calls *"alongsidedness"* [12]? I decide that in accordance with my values it is most important to live out this notion of alongsidedness.

"Alongsideness, meaning creating and sustaining connections that enhance collaborative enquiry, intends to support the generation of personal theory for application in practice." (Pound 2004)

I was alerted to the work of Robyn Pound by my tutor, Jack Whitehead. A look at her work on the web site, www.bath.ac.uk led me to take an interest in her notion of alongsidedness. Robyn developed the notion in the context of her work with families in the health service. What drew me to this notion was her interpretation:

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[12] See Improving health visiting through practitioner research – developing an epistemology of alongsidedness. This is downloadable from www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/pound

For me alongsideness represents reduction in the power inherent in professional relationships. By asking how we can learn and effect changAe together, our relationship becomes more reciprocal and responsive to all of our needs. Integral to alongsideness is the life-affirming spark of connection, which in itself is educational but so hard to represent in text. (Pound 2004)

It is very much attuned to the values that I espouse (Pages 10-14). Democracy or power sharing in professional relationships in order to reduce the impact of hierarchical structures is one of those values. A focus on learning collaboratively and learning as an agent of change is another. I relate to the emphasis on connectivity between people and I see this as supplementary to my interpretation of presencing and mindfulness earlier in this narrative (Pages 32 and 35). Robyn also talks about the diifficulty of representing the *"life-affirming spark of connection"* in words, this being the rationale for my use of video to accompany this narrative.

Alongsidedness helps me to describe the way that I want to work with my colleague, J. I wish to engage in a collaborative enquiry in to our practice as teachers. During the enquiry I will support the generation of my own and J's own personal theory of teaching for application in practice.

This leads me to decide to start our conversation by saying that there is the potential for both of us to learn from this process. I then go on to suggest that I put myself in the same position as him and ask J. to video record a lesson of

mine. I will then watch the video myself and make assertions about it. We will then watch it together and he can challenge my assertions. We will then reverse the process so that I video one of J's lessons, he watches it, makes assertions and I challenge him about them. This is how I will live out the notion of alongsidedness. We will be learning together and from each other. I recognise the need to ascertain whether or not this has taken place and how I can evidence any claim that I make that this learning together has happened. One way will be to video the conversations that we have about the lessons that we video. I can show extracts from these and the viewer can agree that it validates my claim, or otherwise. This process is also connected to my value of democracy as I seek to reduce the impact of the hierarchical nature of the relationship between us as colleagues with myself as a Deputy Head. I realise the difficulty of democratising this process, especially in the context of the competency process that underpins it. The "struggling" teacher (J.) is likely to see the process as imposed. Nevertheless, it is precisely because it is such a challenge that I wish to be creative in the way that I approach it. It also connects with my belief in the value of learning. This is an opportunity for us both to learn from the experience and become more empowered to express ourselves as effective teachers.

Over the next three weeks we video each other's lessons and meet to discuss them. When we meet we have already watched both of the lessons on video. Unfortunately, we do not have a copy of the video on VHS tape to watch together and I have to use the digital camcorder to play back the tape. This means that I am unable to tape the conversation that we have as we watch

the lessons together. Instead I take copious notes as we converse. What follows is an account of the conversation that we have about the lessons.

J. observes me with a Year 10 Life Skills class. Several of the students are identified as having special needs. I have seated them carefully around the room to reflect their progress with tasks. About half way through I ask them to consider the qualities that they need for work and then I ask them all to participate in a discussion about their work experience placement, which begins the following week. *"I seem to be enjoying it"*, I assert as I see myself smiling at the group during the lesson. J does not comment directly on this remark but it seems to unlock the need to talk in him and he initiates a conversation about routines at the start of the lesson. *"I want to develop my own start of lesson routine based on the School one".* Two contradictory things go through my mind. One is the need for consistency around the School and therefore the necessity for us all to be using the same routines so that students get to know them. The other is to encourage J. to be creative in developing a routine that works for him. My response is *"It would be best not to make it too long",* I go on to clarify, *"Not to give it too many parts".* J. reacts, I think, to the concern (about consistency) in my voice and says, *"Like the Science Department, they have their own".* He then moves on almost immediately to say, *"There are two things I find difficult. Getting students to drop their personal baggage when they enter the lesson. I tell them to drop the issue that they are arguing or upset about and talk about it at break or lunch time."* My response is, *"You are right to be firm about that".* He responds with, *"It is difficult to come across as firm but not uncaring. I perceive that*

students see me as uncaring". I suggest some words that he could use in such situations, such as *"I realise that this incident has upset you and I am concerned about that. Now I need you to focus on the lesson and if you would like to talk about it after the lesson I am perfectly happy to do so".* Yes, says J., seemingly concurring, *"and I can make myself available after the lesson to talk it through. The students have a closer bond with Alan* (The Head of Department) *than they do with me. They go and talk to him if they have a problem, rather than coming to me."* To me this sounds like J. is showing the value of caring for his students. He is concerned for them as human beings. This is confirmed for me when he follows up by saying, *"I am enthusiastic about my Maths, but I need to shift my focus towards the students. In my planning I need to think about them and what <u>they</u> are doing more."* This is I believe clear evidence of a shift in J's thinking taking place. He is moving towards a more student-centred philosophy with the focus on the students learning rather than solely on his teaching. The video may or may not have prompted this shift in thinking. It may have been occurring over some time and may well pre-date the video lessons. However, it is interesting that J. made this statement to me at this time. It gives us a possible focus for development of J's practice as we could collaborate on some lesson planning that is predicated on ideas about student learning. Later on in our conversation J returns to lesson planning and says, *"My planning is becoming more a visualisation of what I predict will happen. Previously my plans were very prescribed and took less account of the students abilities".* This seems to indicate a learning process for J as he recognises the need to plan for student

learning. It is interesting that he sees this as a step forward in his development. This is a process that I seek to support.

At this point it is the video of my lesson that is still on the screen. Our discussion is not being driven by what we are seeing directly on screen. I surmise that this is because J. has already seen the footage and he is making the assertions that he has already considered. I return to watching my lesson and make the comment, *"I sound patronising here".* J's response is *"perhaps sometimes you have to be patronising".* Still, I am uneasy with the way that I sound in this part of the lesson. I then say, *" I find it difficult to get them to listen when I or other members of the class are talking".* I talked through with J the process that I go through in order to generate an atmosphere conducive to listening. This process involves setting expectations, giving warnings to individuals, sending people out of the room for a short period, keeping individuals back at the end of the lesson and giving detentions for persistent offences. J tells me, *"I adopt strategies, including writing a pupils name on the board as a warning. I probably tend to move to detentions much more quickly than you and often the pupil doesn't know why they have got a detention. I need to explain it more clearly to them".* I make the point *"It is about making your expectations clear from the outset, so that pupils know the boundaries and the consequences if they go beyond them".* J concurs and says *"In September I will spend some time going through how I expect pupils to behave in my lessons, so that they know right from the start".* J has concluded that this will be a useful strategy for behaviour management. Again, it could be a focus for us to work on together. What is emerging from this discussion

are a number of aspects of practice that we can continue to work on together in the new academic year. I am becoming mindful of the need to move the process of working alongside my colleague on. A meeting early in the new academic year to re-visit this discussion and to look at how we continue our work together seems important to me.

Much of our discussion has been about issues surrounding behaviour management, which is the aspect of J's teaching that has been identified as *"in need of improvement"* by the Headteacher and his Head of Department. However, our discussion has not been solely about how to manage behaviour as we both recognise that aspects of teaching, such as lesson planning, have an impact on behaviour in the classroom.

J is a person who is building his confidence as a teacher. This next conversation illustrates, I think, his fragile self-confidence and much of our work together will be about building this confidence. As we watch the video of his lesson with a well-behaved and conscientious group of Year 9 students he reflects on the progress that he has made in developing his confidence during the year.

"When I have done things outside the classroom it helps me in the classroom, for example, lunch duty. Students see me as someone with authority. Recently, I took responsibility for finishing some exams. If they see me leading an exam they will see me having more authority. I try to put myself in

positions of authority so that students see me as a person with authority.

Maybe it's just in my own head and it gives me more confidence".

This is an interesting assertion and a recognition of how to develop respect in the eyes of the students. However, the self-doubt continues when he says shortly afterwards, *"It knocks my confidence when students misbehave in my lessons".* My response is *"We all have bad lessons when students misbehave, no matter how experienced we are".* Much of my work in September will be about building his confidence.

What my work with J shows so far is, I think, the beginning of a process of alongsidedness as we establish the connections to enhance collaborative enquiry. We need to sustain these connections through further meetings, discussions and collaborative work involving using video. I claim that our conversations so far, as illustrated here, show that we have generated personal theory for application in practice. Asked what he thought of the use of video and discussion of the lessons his response was *"It has been a useful process, It has helped me to be more reflective, It has been very useful and very helpful".* I think that there is evidence that J has learned from the experience. I concur with Loughrans view that the learning is more effective if the trainee analyses and makes meaning from the experience. This is what I think has happened here.

How does my work with J sit with my values? J is an underdog. My work with him is about developing his self-confidence. He has been working with a Head

of Department who has undermined his self-confidence and appears to J and I to have given up on him as a colleague. This Head of Department is leaving and he will have a new line manager from September. I will not give up on him. There is an opportunity with the new line manager to help J to become a valuable colleague and make a significant contribution to the department and importantly, to enhance the learning opportunities for his students. The notion of alongsidedness sits comfortably with my belief in living out my democratic values. The notion of learning from the experience sits comfortably as well as J becomes more self-confident and feels more included in the School community.

What I am missing here is video footage of our conversation. Watching the video footage after the event would have allowed me to distil further the key elements in our dialogue and to consider more closely the way forward. Had I been video recording the session, I could have focused more closely on J during the conversation and picked up on his body language instead of noting down the points that were being made. I know that there are points that I missed and therefore what I have is not a complete account of the conversation. (See notes – Appendix 4)

<u>Conclusions</u>

Through the work that I have engaged in during my writing of this dissertation I have come to recognise the importance of the one to one communication. The relationship that I have with the person with whom I am communicating is crucial to the presencing. To be fully present I must have a loving relationship with that person. I think that I have been able to demonstrate my ability to presence myself in small group situations, as with the group of coaches in Leading From the Middle.

During my writing of this dissertation I attended the National Teacher Research Conference. The keynote speaker was Professor Charles Desforges and he made what I felt to be a very powerful point, which was that to have the greatest impact on pupil achievement research must do more than provide knowledge, it must create tools for learners that allow them to engage with learning activity and these tools can be intellectual or practical. (Desforges 2004) This notion matches my own value concerning the importance of enhancing learning. It is also echoed, I think, by Guy Claxton

(2002) in his book on Building Learning Power, in which he says that good learners are people who;

"think about what they are learning that might be useful in different settings, and explore in their minds how to disembed their knowledge from specific contexts, to increase its' range and power."

I therefore feel comfortable in using this notion as a standard of judgement against which I can measure the impact of my research. The question becomes for me:

What are the tools for learning that have emerged from my research?

Or

How might what I have learned be useful in different settings?

In answer to this I think that I can identify the following tools for learning:

- The dialogue with Graduate Trainee Teachers about learning
- The student interviews with structured questions
- The dialogue with middle managers during the Leading From the Middle programme.

- The use of video and subsequent reflection as a tool for learning with colleagues.

For me this illustrates the significance of dialogue. Much of my writing is about dialogue and analysis of it.

By talking in terms of *"tools for learning"*, as Desforges does, there is a danger that this will be confused with what Habermas calls *"technically useful knowledge".* The tools for learning that I describe here are not knowledge tools that can be duplicated in other conditions and reproduce the same results. They are, I believe, what Habermas would call *"emancipatory"* in the sense that the knowledge created leads to freedom from dominant forces, such as School hierarchies, and freedom from distorted communication through the use of video to present a more complete picture, as Rosie Penney says, using video for *"truth seeking and truth telling".* Through my research I have come to know myself better and gain a greater awareness of the connection between my values and the knowledge that I have created. As I have come to know my values I have used that knowledge to guide my actions in my professional life.

All of the scenarios that I have written about have developed as a result of self-reflection. As I have engaged in dialogue with these groups of people I have been conscious of my own learning path as well as theirs. The videotapes capture some of the learning pathways that we have followed and the tapes stand as a record of the journey. I have learned how useful video

can be in recording the learning journey and how they can aid reflection on learning. This is a lesson that I have shared with all the participants in my research and with the other members of the Westwood Teacher Research Group as part of the validation process.

The notions of presencing and mindfulness as ways of expressing what is happening at moments when influence is being demonstrated is I believe a creative way of clarifying a complex situation. I am mindful of the idea that it is very difficult to communicate what is happening at such moments but I hope that I have come close to doing so. For me this has been a learning experience, and through the use of such language I believe that I now have a better understanding of how such moments occur. I believe that they occur because of a close relationship between the participants, a relationship of trust built over time that allows them to empathise with each other and in the words of Carl Rogers quoted in Guy Claxton's (2002) Building Learning Power:

"To be with another in this way means that for the time being you lay aside the views and values you hold for yourself in order to enter another's world without prejudice."

During these moments of empathy as Claxton calls them I believe that the person has what I call a loving regard for the other person. And just how important is this tool for learning? To Claxton (2002) again:

"Scientists have suggested that this semi-conscious mode of cultural transmission may play a more important role in human development than any amount of deliberate instruction."

Another way of summarising my study is to call it a series of anecdotes. Research by van Manen (1995, 1999) shows the value of anecdote. In writing this series of anecdotes I have constructed a personal account of situations from my perspective and this has given me a sense of understanding of the situations. As I have written about the situations, I have been forced to reconsider them and this has led me to question my assumptions and enhanced my learning. I have therefore developed new knowledge from my practice and this I believe illustrates what Loughran (2002) calls a *"wisdom in practice"*. I have built my own professional knowledge through reconsideration of a series of concrete examples from my professional and personal life.

Where Am I Now – A Year On?

How have things changed as a result of my writing of this dissertation? I claim that I am wiser for having written it. The writing of it has made me more reflective. I have taken to being more critically engaged with my reading material as I have incorporated aspects of what I have read in to my work. I recognise the value of video in helping me to learn and improve my practice,

to the extent that I now use video routinely in lesson observations and to record my meetings with colleagues. I have come to recognise the importance of non-verbal communication and to be more comfortable about silence. I have learned to recognise the importance of allowing the mind time to wander and to mull matters over. I am in less of a rush to complete things. I take more time to notice things, though still not enough. I am more appreciative of the value of intuition and creativity. I think that I recognise the value of professional and personal relationships and some of the key elements that sustain and develop those relationships. I am more aware of and have greater confidence in my own values. I am more conscious of when I am and when I am not living out those values.

What next?

Inspired by discussions at the British Educational Research Association – Special Interest Group conference in June 2004 at Bath University, I now consider how I can continue my self-study as a teacher researcher.

"Reinvention through self-study can be a powerful and highly effective means of self-transformation and a catalyst for professional growth. It can be

wonderfully motivating in its ability to bring home a painful or a beautiful truth,

and help us appreciate and even bring about our most meaningful moments

as teachers" (Mitchell and Weber 1999)

The next study of myself is to lead to a re-invention of myself as a coach. The issue that I am grappling with is how I can live out my professional values as I develop my skills as a coach in two different contexts. One is working as a coach alongside teaching colleagues and the other is as a soccer coach as I am responsible for a Salisbury City Juniors soccer side, in which my own son plays. Thus my personal and professional life come together with this notion of coaching. My next enquiry is therefore born – how can I develop my coaching skills as a professional educator in both of these contexts?

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<u>Appendices</u>

1. **Video of Interview With Students as Part of the Art Subject Review.**

2. **Video of Meetings with Middle Leaders.**

3. **ICT Strategy Group Evaluation Questions and Responses.**

4. **Notes From Meeting With J.**