CHAPTER EIGHT - CREATING MY OWN LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORY

I'd heard Jack Whitehead talk often about creating living educational theories. I originally thought these were something like a home spun version of the real thing, not having quite that professional finish that marked them out as desirable. Living educational theories were something lesser mortals had to make do with, whilst Piaget and Dewey and others were the quality versions that every serious student wanted to possess. They were also rather frightening entities when I contemplated trying to construct one. I feared getting it wrong, but I was also excited at the prospect of creating something which had the potential to be good. The combination of fear and excitement frequently had me procrastinating for ages while I weighed up everything in my mind many times over, before I dared to start.

Jack never knew how long it took me to understand his concept of the living educational theory - I wonder if I resisted it purely because it was a notion so removed from the immediate, relentless, practical demands of the everyday life of classrooms or school management. We don't usually talk about theories in school. The climate is very much one of 'doing', and the acts of doing are premised on a relatively straightforward set of expectations which are laid out in the staff handbook, or the National Curriculum, or other curriculum documents. We talk about what happens and what we are going to do about it, but we don't usually refer to theories - of any sort. Theories belong to the academy; I belong to the school.

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It was Saturday morning, November 26th 1994, and we had spent Friday talking about epistemology.
'I've been thinking,' said Jack, 'About where your epistemology is grounded.'
I'd also been thinking about this. Epistemology was similar to living educational theories in being 'un-user-friendly'!
Jack spelt it out. 'It's like this', he said,' drawing on the table with his fingers. 'The Whitehead epistemology is grounded in Polanyi's work on personal knowledge; Elliott's work is grounded in Gadamer's theory of hermeneutics; Kemmis and Carr's work is grounded in Habermas and critical theory, but your work is grounded in your practice.'
Overnight I had come to the same conclusions, but was unsure of the status of this knowledge.
'But is that good enough?' I asked.
'Yes, 'he said, 'it's like this - all of us have been engaged in exploring propositional knowledge. We've been playing with words, but you have been working on practice. You have been exploring your emergence as a confident 'I' in your role as a deputy head interested particularly in staff development.'
So what you're saying is that my theories about my practice are grounded in my lived experiences? That I draw my explanations - my theories - of my practice not from propositional knowledge directly - from the writings of others, but from my actual experiences in my role as a deputy head? And I make sense of them through my stories?'
'Yes,' he said. We were both excited at the sudden clarity of this explanation, I particularly, as I had been struggling to place my work in the spectrum of action researchers for some time. I had recognised that my work was different, but had been trying to fit it into a pre-existing category. Perhaps the concept of the emerging 'I' needed its own family.

In this chapter, I want to explore my understanding of the action research enquiry I have engaged in since September 1991. I want to talk about teacher knowledge and where I am located therein, the values I hold about education and the claims I am making about the knowledge I have gained through my enquiry. In chapter 7, I outlined the principles of action research I now hold, and I would like to underwrite these in an epistemological framework, showing how I can legitimate the knowledge I have gained and making public the standards of judgement I should like to be used in judging my work.

I will make two claims to knowledge which arise from my research.

> <u>Claim Number One</u> this is an original contribution to knowledge about the development of a new approach to school based, staff development.

My intention at the start of this enquiry was to investigate the process of reflecting-in-action as part of the role of the deputy headteacher, and to set up communities of teachers who would develop action research skills with a view to improving their practice. I was interested to search for links between staff development processes and pupils' achievements, and I thought I could judge the effectiveness of what I was doing by looking at examination results over a period of time, and changes in pupil behaviour and application to work. My problem with all of this was that, whilst I could present statistics and argue that they support a particular viewpoint, I cannot claim that my research shows a clear correlation between the work that I and the teachers have done, and children's learning. I do not think it is possible to show that relationship because of the multi-dimensional nature of the topic under scrutiny, and I find that many of the arguments concerning performance indicators, 'value added' and quality control are of significance here, and I shall discuss these presently.

This is not to say that I cannot claim there is a relationship between teachers' inservice work and a development in the quality of teaching and learning. I think there is evidence of this relationship in the tapes I have of meetings, which recorded reflective dialogue about teaching and learning; in the Headteacher's report to Governors (archived); in the approval of our inservice training programme by Governors' subgroups (archived); in LEA Advisers' reports to the school on Department A (confidential to the Headteacher); in stories given back to the participants for verification (Heads of Year and Action Research Group); in the teachers' own accounts of their work with children in Post Graduate Diplomas; in evaluation of the Action Research Diploma course for the Woolwich Building Society (taped and transcribed meeting); in the OFSTED report, December 1994 (archived); and in Kingston University accrediting the teachers' work through the Post Graduate Diploma, March 1995. All these point to our in-service work in the school being effective.

Other factors which might be influencing the developing culture of the school include the change in leadership through the new headteacher (from 1993); changes in the organisation of learning through 'tiered' groups; in the focus on examination results; in our catchment area and the range of ability on entry year by year; and the inevitable movement of teachers out of and into the school.

Nevertheless, I have looked at the school examination statistics, and have compared the percentage of students obtaining 5 A-C grades at GCSE with the national figures (*figure 8.1)*. I have also compared the % passes at GCSE in grades A-C with the national figures, in *figure 8.2.*

% of students achieving 5+ passes at grades A-C

	1990	1991	1992	1993 1994		1995	92-95
Roseacre School	26.3	27.5	31.4	32.8	39.2	43.1	
% improvement	0.2	3.9 1.4	6.4	3.		9	+11.7
National Statistics			38.1	41.1	43.3	38.7	
% improvement				3	2.2	-4.6	+0.6

Figure 8.1

% passes at grades A-C

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	92-95
Roseacre School	32.8	37.2	35	39	44	48	
% improvement		4.4	-2.2	4	5	4	+13
National Statistics			51.3	52.4	52.6	52.7	
% improvement				1.1	0.2	0.1	+1.4

Figure 8.2

Some words of caution are needed about these figures. The statistics given in the press when the results are published in the summer usually include the A-C statistic which is related to subject passes, not to students passing 5 or more GCSEs at A-C grades. The tables show that the figure for subjects is higher than for students, and, if at a later time these are inadvertently confused and compared, the comparison is an unfaithful one. The bench mark identified by the Government is the statistic on the percentage of students passing five GCSEs at A-C grades, which is the lower of the two figures. The figures can be distorted by how the cohort is identified; for instance whether the data is taken from all year 11 students, or whether taken from all students who took GCSE in that particular year (they may have taken it early or late). Some statistics give the figure for England; some for England and Wales; some with independent schools, some without them. The national statistics were first collected in 1992, so there are no figures available before that.

There has been a steady improvement in our results. In 1995, for the first time, the percentage of students at Roseacre obtaining five or more A-C passes was higher than the national average, by 4.4%. The gap between the percentage passes at A-C or above for Roseacre and nationally is narrowing; this year it was 4.7% compared to 16.3% in 1992. It could be argued that we came from a low base so had

much to catch up on, but I prefer to look on it that the statistics represent a real development in the school culture which is enabling our students to gain better qualifications.

If I look at two departments with whom I have mainly worked, department A and B, both departments have increased their A-C % results, but department B leapt up in 1991 - the year when I was working with them, as compared to Department A which has only gradually crept upwards. (See overleaf).

	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Department A	16.5	9.2	23.6	17.6	23.23	27
% improvement		– 7.3	14.4	– 6	5.63	3.77
Department B	21.1	30.9	38.3	36.6	35.3	35
% improvement		9.8	7.4	–1.7	– 1.3	–0.3

Figure 8.3 Departments A and B

I can account for these variations in several ways. Department B was a stable team, with an established Head of Department, whereas, Department A had a new Head and Second in Department in 1989, and many other changes of staff over the years. In her report for OFSTED, (December 1994) the head of department wrote 'Since 1989, resignations, including our newly appointed second in charge after one year, and two mid-academic year departures have disrupted our work and that of the pupils. A variety of supply teachers and trying to cope without specialist teachers have deflected much time and energy away from regular pursuits and added to the work load.' In addition, the pedagogical skills needed in the two departments were very different. In department A, teachers needed to be able to engage children from the outset of each lesson, in a very 'labour intensive' way, whereas, in department B, the pupils were not quite so dependent on the teacher all the time. Both departments depend on sequential learning, so understanding of each step at a time is important, but the pupils see the subject taught in

Department A as being of less importance with regard to qualifications. The quality of leadership was also different; in department A it was much more tentative; in department B, it became confident and encouraging quite quickly.

However, I do not know whether our inservice programme of staff development was responsible for improving the results, or whether it was responsible for improving Department B's results more than Department A's. I would also not know whether, if we had not intervened through INSET programmes for Department A, their results might have been lower than they currently are. And even within the departments, the dynamics change from year to year, making an internal departmental comparison not particularly helpful; for instance, department B changed examination boards in 1991, with a higher component of coursework; but in 1994 the government reduced the proportion of coursework in the examination, with, the department felt, a consequent brake being applied to progress, and resultant slight downturn in the statistics.

Judging the effectiveness of an educational process is problematic, and much hangs on the questionable assumption that 'educational qualities can be readily defined and measured' (Gamble, 1990:20). As Norris 1993:33, (and others including Elliott, 1993, Fitz-Gibbon 1990) pointed out, 'not all the qualities or outcomes of education are equally well suited to operational definition and measurement'. Fitz-Gibbon, (1990:60) in discussing the defects of percentage pass rates as performance indicators, pointed to the following (amongst other things) as being problematic:

- the percentage pass rate ignores the curriculum balance - not all examinations are equally difficult
- is the percentage pass rate a percentage of the age cohort , or of what? If students are allowed not to enter, how does that affect the teaching of the group?

Fitz-Gibbon has been instrumental in researching 'value added', heading a move by educationalists away from raw data measures of quality. In setting up ALIS, an information system dealing with 'performance monitoring', the data she collects take account of 'multiple outcomes', not just examination results, and she is able to maintain values such as equality of opportunity, formative monitoring, and support of teachers. Norris (op cit.:36) in talking about the ideology of the 'social market' explained that although there was a need for performance indicators to provide simple and unambiguous measures of

quality, they were unable to do this, because the aims, purposes and values of education are wide ranging, and simplistic measurements left much unaccounted for. Elliott (1993:54-56) talked of the widespread view, common at the moment, that education is a system of 'production and consumption'. Education is judged on effectiveness and efficiency, rather than on educational values, and schools are judged on the basis of production - of examination successes - rather than on the values they might seek to espouse. Teachers are being held accountable for the education delivered to the children in their care, but are being judged on only a small part of what education is about, their examination results and truancy rates, which are thought to be straightforward measures of judgement. The better the examination results and the lower the truancy rates, the better the school.

In spite of extensive research projects on school improvement and school effectiveness, judgements are still being made on results which do not recognise the multitude of other effects which might have a bearing on a pupil's capacity for success. A vast part of the process - the reaction and response of the pupil - is not being accounted for other than in terms of the teacher's responsibility. Pupils come to lessons with their own values, attitudes, and beliefs; they are not passive vessels waiting to receive knowledge but participate in the process of education to a greater or lesser extent, dependent on their experiences and biographical disposition - their results will be dependent partially on their own conception of and belief in themselves. Kushner (1993:48) talked of the need to consider the 'individual at the centre of quality control' and pointed to what he called 'the insupportable fiction' that 'effective schools' can mean the same things to 'different pupils in different places'. However, research by Sammons, Thomas and Mortimore reported in the 'Times Educational Supplement' (October 6th, 1995) claimed that schools do have a significant effect in 'boosting GCSE scores'. Schools achieving high scores all have: high expectations, strong academic emphasis, shared vision and goals, clear leadership from heads, senior management teams and heads of department, consistency in approach, high quality teaching, a student centred approach, and parental support and involvement. What the report does not cover is how this desirable state is achieved. Since league tables were introduced, it has been argued that comparing raw data is unfair. Schools have a different range of ability at intake, different quality of parental support and expectations, different commitment from pupils, different teaching skills and so on. A school may be operating in a fortunate set of circumstances, whilst another might be struggling

to achieve some of the characteristics listed in the research quoted above. If this is the case, the school should be judged on the strides it is making to improve the process of education so that all its pupils can benefit. This means looking at other measures of success, and in terms of this study, I want to explore how I can judge the effectiveness of our inservice programme of education for teachers, the intention of which is to improve the quality of teaching, and through doing so to improve the quality of learning for our students.

I think I can do this by abandoning attempts to produce statistics to posit a correlation between teachers' development and children's learning, and listen instead to the teachers with whom I have been working. Schratz (1993:160) said that 'changing teaching always means changing one's 'practical theory' of teaching.' So if improvements are to be made, teachers will have to show a change in the way they think about their teaching - and the key to this is that teachers have to change the way they think about themselves. During my action enquiry, I have seen transformations in the way teachers think about themselves, from the point of view of beginning to believe in themselves, and to believe that they have the real support of their colleagues to enable them to try out new ideas. The sharing of thoughts and feelings in the Action Research Group has enabled people to know that they can rethink their values, develop new conceptions of teaching and that they will be helped and supported throughout the process. This has given them an excitement about their learning which has increased their motivation for teaching, and is infectious. These are my observations of the group, and are consistent with Zeichner's theories (1993: 205-208; 1994:73-78; 1995:13) about personal renewal. But the real test is not only how the teachers behave in their classrooms which is different from before, but what they say about themselves which they wouldn't have said before, and wouldn't say if they didn't feel.

We submitted our Diploma in Action Research for an award in Open Learning supported by the Woolwich Building Society, and were awarded a prize for the partnership in learning between the school and University, which involved us in a validation of our work to the judges on May 9th 1994. The following are some of the comments made at that meeting which was audio-taped and transcribed, and they show the value these teachers had placed on their learning.

One of the teachers, Rose said, 'I feel very strongly that the personal benefits from this research have been enormous for me. I have become a better teacher as a result of doing this work and as a result of having a framework in which I can discuss what I do in the classroom, which is very personal to people in any job I think, but especially in teaching. And actually being able to have that situation where you can be critical of yourself in a very supportive environment has been one of the most important things................ not only have the students benefited enormously from my increased skills and my increased confidence but they are now more able to do things that I am asking them to do in lessons, for example, I've been working a lot with sixth form groups.....I can now see the benefits of those things on my students, and I think that is perhaps the best part of action research now. I can see this going on, I never want to stop this process whether there is a diploma or anything - I want to carry on doing this because of those benefits of the increased confidence and because you can never be the perfect teacher, there are always things that anybody can do to improve.......'
(R.M., Humanities teacher, audiotape number 99, 9.5.94)

Another member of the group, Sarah said, 'Action research is a way of understanding and organising and working and processing that has not only affected me but I have been able to take it to the classroom and to see it happening with students in the sixth form, and in younger years - Year 9.......as my organisation has improved, so I have tried to reflect that on the pupils' organisation, and I have brought to them the notion of reflection and I think that's been quite amazing. It's encouraged a quality of learning, a quality of ownership, an engagement........ the notion of the self concept was very significant to me, it's all the ways one evaluates oneself and the bearing that has on the way one conducts and influences and interacts and one's experiences and if one is a teacher it can have a very uplifting or diminishing effect on the quality of educational experience of one's students. I think action research has uplifted and enhanced students' experience.......' (S.S., English teacher, audiotape number 99, 9.5.94).

One of the heads of department who worked in the group said in response to a question about the possible exclusivity of the group, that he had been working with the team of heads of department in an INSET programme which was devised collectively, and told them about his action research project. On

asking for permission to use tapes of their meetings, William says 'the reaction has been a very positive one............as time has gone on and I have had an opportunity to talk informally with colleagues involved in the process, there's been nothing but interest and a feeling that the extra reflection that I am involved with can help other colleagues going through the INSET programme think more carefully and more sensitively about what they're doing as well. So in the same way that a class of students might respond in a positive way to a teacher who is working with them in a slightly different way, I've felt a parallel to that, which is that a group of colleagues are responding positively to the kind of changing emphasis that I am having with my work with them as well..........I think the whole thing about this is all about raising the status of ordinary everyday teaching practice which so often gets forgotten. And I think we have all benefited from this to feel what we do is important, what we do is valued, what we do is good and can be better.......To me, that's the mark of good development work...' (W.G. Head of Department, audiotape number 99, 9.5.94).

Nicole, a head of year, talked about the meetings and the fact that people stay till six or six thirty without worrying about the need to rush off home. 'The nature of the work was so personal to us, so important to us as individuals, and I think we have all shared a great deal from each other's experiences. Although we are all focusing on quite different things. there are many common elements to the work we are doing. I always go away from here feeling so much better, the stresses and the worries and the tiredness have gone, I feel fired up to start teaching again and that doesn't happen in other teams in the same way as our group does and that is because it is so personalised.' (N.C. Head of Year, audiotape number 99, 9.5.94).

And the final words from the discussion of May 9th 1994 should go to Rose, who has shared with her pupils the fact that she is learning from what she has been doing with them. She said, 'One student came up and said, "I just want to say something, that's the best lesson we've ever had!" And I felt I was walking on air because this child had said this! And that was a direct result of what we had been doing - because it was a role play lesson and I had never had the confidence to do that before. And I think those students will always remember that lesson, they'll remember the topic they were studying, they'll

remember the issues they were discussing because they actually got involved and engaged in their work'. (R.M., humanities teacher, audiotape number 99, 9.5.94).

There is much more in the transcript that is appropriate to this exploration of finding the links between teachers' development and the learning of their pupils, but I think the above quotations show that something which the teachers considered to be very significant had been happening that could be validated publicly. A further test was whether the pupils noticed changes in their teachers' performance, and there are examples in the teachers' Post Graduate Diploma accounts of comments children have made about these developments. Stone (1995) quoted from pupils' Records of Achievement, which each child wrote during the summer term, having reviewed the previous year's work. Records of Achievement are written independently of the subject teacher in tutorial sessions. Stone had been alerted to these comments by the form tutor, who had noticed the strong positive tone to the pupils' comments about their English lessons. She had been concentrating on giving students more autonomy in their work, and was pleased to note that she was being effective, as comments like the following show: 'I enjoy English because we get the chance to set our own work and to do it in any order we want to, whereas in my old school we had a list of work we had to do, and it had to be done by the end of the week, or we would have to stay in at lunch and break time.' (Rebecca). 'In English we plan all our own work and decide when to do the different tasks, and I think I do this well.' (Christopher). 'I really enjoy English because it helps me to learn the things I need to learn especially making the magazines because that is the sort of thing I want to do in the future. I always liked English but at (Roseacre) it is even better than before because we can take more responsibility for our own learning. (Gemma; all these quotations have been taken from Stone, 1995:appendix).

Salmon (1995), another Post Graduate Diploma student, developed her use of story to facilitate understanding and discussion of the text for A level, 'Antony and Cleopatra' by writing a modern day version of it. She included some very original responses to her story from students in the form of newspaper articles and their own stories, and then quoted from students' reflections on this piece of work: 'usually we sit going through the text line by line. Boring! This exercise gave us the chance to use our imagination and to do something for ourselves rather than to listen to Ms Salmon talk.' And

again, 'the tasks proved very helpful as they allowed us to be imaginative at the same time as revising the text. I enjoyed creating the newspaper articles and was pleased with their outcome.'

Morgan (1995), a humanities teacher who had been researching 'active learning', also quoted from the independently drawn up Records of Achievement of her pupils. She said, 'The changes in my year 10 group were subtle and took place over a number of weeks.......Many of the students referred to their enjoyment of humanities lessons in the personal statement of their Record of Achievement. One student said 'I find Humanities much more interesting now that we cover more interesting topics and I hope it will become one of my stronger subjects. I believe my present teacher has more to offer because of her up-to-date ways of teaching. As my teacher expresses her personal views on the subject areas we cover, it allows us to compare our views and see things from a different perspective from our own. I like the coursework we do in Humanities and I enjoy working towards a specific target' (Morgan, 1995:32). There are further references in the other Post Graduate Diploma accounts (Ross 1995, Coletta, 1995; Barford, 1995, Gaskell in process, 1996) to the changing experience of students' learning as the teachers became more confident in the improvements they have put into operation.

Elliott (1993), Lomax (1994) and Whitehead (1993) all call for action research projects to be validated through opening the work that has been done to critical scrutiny. Elliott (1993:63), in searching for indicators of quality in education talked of the need to open 'reflective discussion' with 'the public', saying 'quality assurance in education cannot rest on fixed and certain benchmarks. But it can rest on mutual understanding achieved through a reflective discourse about evidence of performance.' And he suggested that the evidence can be generated 'by teachers' own action research to improve the quality of their practices'. Lomax (1991:110-113), in looking at the criteria by which action research projects might be judged, talked of the validation meetings, attended by senior members of the institution, for example the Headteacher, within which the project had taken place; invited guests from outside the institution who were thought to have an interest in the topic under discussion, peers who were on the inside of the methodology; and the tutor, who, along with peers, has at intervals had opportunities to give critical feedback. Whitehead (1993:73) talked of social validation; Habermas' view (1976) on 'participating in a process of reaching understanding with you', if you are to validate my claims to original knowledge.

He said that I must express myself comprehensively, and have the intention to communicate a true picture; but also that the person validating the claims enters into a sharing relationship so that both are seeking to justify the meaning which emerges from the study.

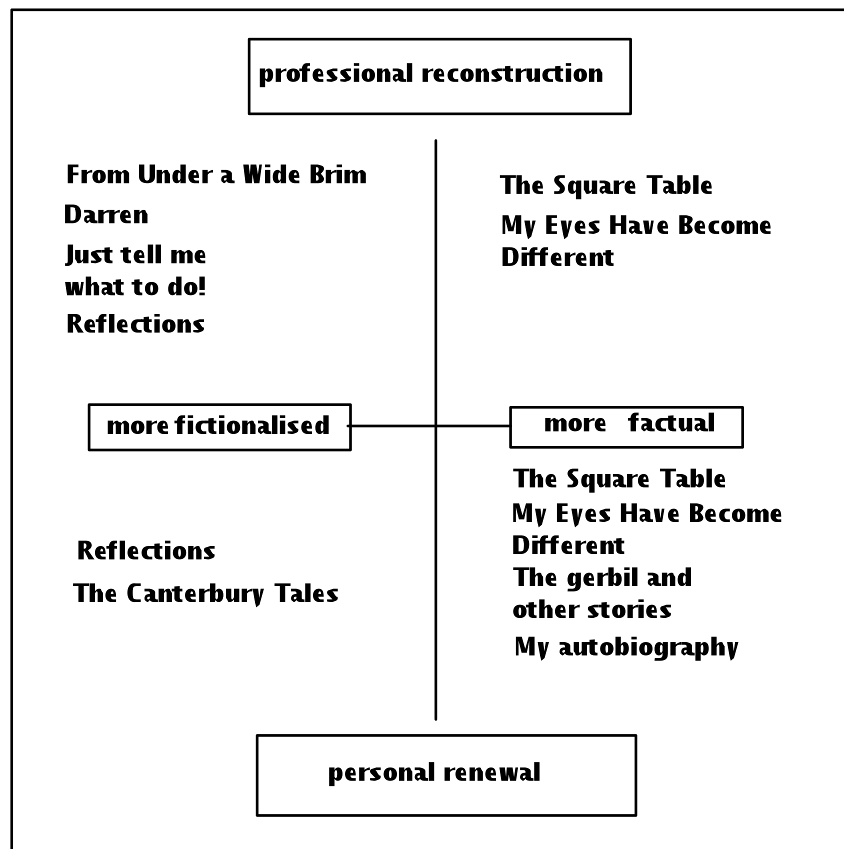
The teachers at Roseacre undertaking an Action Research Diploma have each been through the discipline of a validation meeting at which an assessment is made as to whether values have been clearly expressed, the researched issue has been explored critically, and if the claims being made are significant and supported by a variety of evidence (Lomax 1994:117-123). Where the meeting exposed weaknesses in any of these aspects, the teachers will have gone away to review what they have done, and to see if any changes were needed in order to substantiate their project.

Education is currently poised uncomfortably with politicians calling schools to account for their performance in a way which most educationalists know is simplistic and unlikely to yield the improvements that are sought. Riley and Nuttall (1994) concluded their discussion of 'Measuring Quality' by raising the issue of support for schools following inspection. They asked two key questions, namely, who would support schools; and what would be the most effective system to support schools in a systematic programme of improvement following OFSTED inspection? I have been exploring how to make staff development effective, and I believe that my story, 'My Eyes Have Become Different' shows the powerful nature of what learning communities can give to schools. I think this story holds one of the keys to school improvement, as what it shows is how these teachers' experiences and life histories shape the way they perceive themselves to be, and how, until they feel valued and supported in a collaborative framework, they are locked into the disabling nature of self doubt, which paralyses them within the straightjacket of their implicit theories about education, and they dare not take the risk of trying to get out. My experiences in working with teachers lead me to agree strongly with Goodson, (1981:69; 1992:4) when he said 'in understanding something so intensely personal as teaching it is critical we know about the person the teacher is. By implication, therefore, it matters to teachers themselves, as well as to their pupils, who and what they are. Their self image is more important to them as practitioners than is the case in occupations where the person can easily be separated from the craft.'

<u>Claim Number Two</u> is that I have developed the action research methodology through using story to enable researchers to transform their understanding of a situation, and to engage others in exploring new perspectives of the situation.

One of the principles of action research that the Roseacre teachers agreed upon was that *action research can use fiction to stimulate reflection and to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions. Action research enables the tentative, fictional self to struggle with the 'everyday' self, and celebrates my emergence with - maybe- changed values, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours and feelings about myself.*

I used story to strengthen the rigour of reflection in my action research methodology, and this often resulted in a change in the way I came to understand the situation. It also gave me the opportunity to encourage teachers to explore their concerns through story, with the aim of finding a focus. The following model of the use of story comes from the theoretical one I described in chapter 2.



Using story in action research – the practice

Figure 8.4

I have included in *figure 8.4* the stories that I have written about in my text, so that the reader can see more clearly how it is possible to group them.

Some stories fell into one quadrant, whilst others could be placed in two; for instance, 'The Square Table' was written for middle managers to see their behaviour reflected back to them so that they could decide whether there was anything they wished to change about it (professional reconstruction); but it was also written for me to expose my leadership of the team, and to explore whether I really was giving ownership of their development to the group (personal renewal; chapter 6). 'My Eyes Have Become Different' (chapter 7) was similar, but the purpose was also to record our development over time. 'The Gerbil and Other Stories' (chapter 3) and 'My Autobiography' (throughout this thesis) were both fairly factual accounts of my experiences, written for me to make sense of them (personal renewal). My autobiography also provides an historical context within which my current development is located. On the more fictionalised side, 'The Canterbury Tales' (chapter 4) enabled me to understand some of the complexities of teachers' learning (personal renewal), and gave rise to 'Darren' (archived) and 'Just Tell me What to Do!' which were written to facilitate teachers' development of their practice (professional reconstruction; chapter 6). 'From Under a Wide Brim' (chapter 7) explored how I overturned my leadership style, and the relationships which gradually developed between members of the group. By giving the group my story, they were also able to analyse the trust within the group, and they built a trusting culture during the time we have worked together (professional reconstruction). The teachers in this group who wrote stories, did so to clarify their concerns initially, and this gave rise to their personal renewal (chapter 7, 'My Eyes Have Become Different'). Their teaching changed as a result of their action research, leading to professional reconstruction as their classroom or management practices improved.

My experience of working with teachers has shown me that the setting of their own problem is a really difficult thing to do (see 'My Eyes Have Become Different', chapter 7). As teachers, we frequently recognise that we are unhappy with aspects of our practice, but are unsure about the specifics of the situation, and about how to explore our feelings about it. I think that Whitehead's question, 'How do I

improve this process of education here?' is both powerful and immediate - powerful in that it is straightforward and meaningful to teachers, and immediate in that it is challenging me to look at what I am doing now.

The question locates the context of the research in the personal - in the 'I' of the researcher, but although Whitehead recognised that 'problems do not present themselves to the practitioner as given' (1993:121), his question raises for me a serious dilemma. On the one hand, 'how do I improve the process of education here?' implies that I am in control of the process of improvement, but on the other, I might have a difficulty in exploring and identifying my values as a starting point for setting the problem. In identifying the questions of his action research cycle, Whitehead presented the 'I' as unproblematic.

My experience with action researchers in my school is that it is not until they have written a story of their concerns, and listened to and taken part in a discussion by the critical, yet supportive, group on their interpretations from their own standpoints - bringing to the story their own experiences of life and their own attitudes and values - that the author can recognise some of her own values, and as a consequence, challenge, and change them. Maybe the video approach recommended by Whitehead (1993) as a means to seeing how one's living contradiction exists in practice, is analogous with the use of story - as described in this thesis - in that it represents an action by the participant, which can then be reviewed and discussed by others who enter into a relationship with it.

I was eventually ready to emerge as the 'I' who had begun by existing as a living contradiction. These were the main contradictions: I wanted to reflect in action on my role as a deputy head, but perhaps I wasn't doing so? I wanted to give participants autonomy in developing their own pedagogical skills, but was I really giving them the opportunity to so do so? - I wanted to be a leader who supported teachers to improve their practice, but was I going about it in a helpful way? I wanted to give ownership to teachers for their learning, but was I actually dominating their learning rather than doing so? Through heightened self awareness of the original contradictions, and continued self-study (Lomax and Evans 1995) I am presenting my living educational theory as a dynamic form of theory, which is *'located not solely within* these accounts, but in the relationship between the accounts and the practice. It

is this relationship which constitutes the descriptions and explanations as a living form of theory.' (Whitehead, 1993:73).

Griffiths commended autobiography as a means of gaining reliable knowledge. Other feminist writers, Hollingsworth (1994d:1-3), Weiner (1994:10-26), Middleton (1993:132-142) and Ellsworth (1989:312) have also used autobiography to locate themselves in their situations. My thesis is an autobiographical work; I have located myself - my values and my personal history - within my work context; I tell the story of my experiences with the participating teachers; I reinterpret theories in the light of my experiences - and reinterpret experiences in the light of theories; I take time to reflect on both theory and practice - through thinking, dialogue, and through writing; and I draw attention to perspectives on gender - through focusing on a mainly-women group; and on an aspect of class - through the debate about the use of 'power' in my deputy head role.

However, as Middleton (1993:142) said, this feminist methodology is 'subversive' to social science research, concentrating on the personal, in contrast to scientific research on the social world, which seeks to provide an 'objective' view of reality, working from a perspective outside of the self (Smith 1987:146). Lomax, (1994:11) rejected the social science and scientific research models, arguing that, in these models, 'researchers are outsiders; practical ethics are removed; research subjects are dehumanised; subjective understanding is seen to pollute the 'truth'; nothing changes as a result.' Lomax commended a model of educational research in the place of social science, in which, '(research) is always tentative; it is done by people in education; it has an ethical dimension; it is self-developing; it is practical; it is authentic; it is democratic; it has rigour; it is holistic ; it is influential.' However, Lomax, like Middleton (1993:142) argued that academic gatekeepers exclude, or devalue, certain forms of non-traditional research enquiry - Lomax cited teacher action research, while Middleton cited feminist research - both of which have broken with traditional forms of research to include personal, subjective epistemologies. Middleton (op cit.:142) and Hollingsworth (1994:14-16) both spoke of the risk they took through developing a feminist pedagogy, where the rejection of the objective in favour of the subjective, (in particular), can lay the researcher open to challenges of lack of 'the academic' in her work.

Although my research is both feminist and educational, concentrating on values, self, connectedness, relationships and interventions to bring about practical change, and as such 'at risk' from the academic hegemony, I think I can defend the status of the knowledge I have created through the theoretical discussions in which I have engaged throughout the enquiry.

Another of our action research principles concerns authenticity, accessibility and judgements -*action research can be reported as the authentic story of our development, accessible to colleagues, and judged against the principles which have emerged during the course of our enquiry.*

The 'authentic story' is this account of my professional life, whose validity has to be judged by the reader. It is the story of my thinking as the months have passed by. Because I wanted to present it as a journey of my development, I did not want to offer a finished 'package', in which my thoughts were all explained in an orderly fashion of the type, problem identified, action taken, solution achieved. My actions over the last four years have resulted, as Lomax (1994) advocated, from questioning my values and my assumptions about those values, and about how they were really being lived out in my practice. My actions were designed to resolve complex dilemmas which I had not previously faced in my practice, making the research 'truly formative, facilitating change as part of the process itself, not as a result.' (Lomax, 1994:4).

A major dilemma for me concerned 'telling the truth' in and through story! I agonised over this greatly after I wrote and presented my first story - 'The Canterbury Tales', in October 1992. My account of the dilemmas this created may be found in chapter 5, and I adapted my methodology in using story as a result of the ethical issues I faced. Now, three years later, in reviewing what I think about these issues, I have still not resolved them wholly. On the one hand, I think it does not matter how 'true' the story was. Truth is relative to the receiver - she brings her own 'baggage' to bear on the situation. And it is her understanding in relation to her own experience which is of interest to me. I was not expecting the reader to offer solutions for the beleaguered department; rather, I was hoping that, through professional dialogue, we, collectively, would explore wider, more generalised 'truths', using the story as a starting point. But I suspect it could still be argued that if we do not start from the 'truth' then our

discussions could divert from the key issues relevant for this particular department. This still begs the question, however, 'whose truth?'

D.C.Philips (1993) argued that story writers 'devalue the importance of truth' by using criteria for judgement other than the 'time honoured yardsticks of reliability, validity and generalisation' (O'Dea 1994:95), but Bruner claimed that what is valued in story writing is 'not truth but verisimilitude.......A story (allegedly true or allegedly fictional) is judged for its goodness as a story by criteria that are of a different kind from those used to judge a logical argument as adequate or correct'. (Bruner, 1986:11-12).

Connelly and Clandinin (1990:7-8) argued that we should go beyond 'reliability, validity and generalisation' in judging a good story, and they offer 'apparency, verisimilitude and transferability', as alternative criteria. O'Dea (1994), in exploring the notion of truth in narrative writing, quoted Doris Lessing (1993) who said 'a writer must above all else speak the truth'. O'Dea went on to identify the following as key issues in authenticity in the writing of stories as a research method:-

- the writer may 'utter a lie' (Murdoch 1990) because she does not want to reveal unpleasantness in the researched situation
- she may 'utter a lie' because she accepts the story in an undiscriminatory fashion, because she wants to promote particular feelings and sentiments about teaching
- she may 'utter a lie' because she accepts uncritically a political position of management or classroom practice
- she may 'utter a lie' because she is a dishonest researcher, and whether using story or not, would have 'faked the data' in order to achieve a 'better' result.

I have a lot of sympathy with the first of these issues - namely that the writer may utter a lie because she does not want to reveal unpleasantness in the researched situation. I can remember writing Eloise into the story 'The Canterbury Tales' in the best possible light while still allowing myself the luxury of showing some of her shortcomings. My intention was to underplay the subversive element of her part in the story, because I did not want to be seen as criticising a colleague; but I also wanted to be as fair as

possible towards Eloise because I was afraid I might be 'faking the data' if I demonstrated too openly what I saw as her rejection of our inservice training. I deliberately set the story so that if readers articulated these thoughts about Eloise to me, they would have vindicated what I actually thought about her behaviour, but was too cowardly to say!

I could also understand the issue of accepting uncritically a political position of management or classroom practice. For instance, it would have been easier for me to have used my assumptions about Alistair's teaching (chapter 4) rather than discuss it with him, because when I did, I found that his philosophical standpoint was completely different from that which I had previously perceived it to be. I found he had strongly felt views about how he should relate to children, which affected his practice of classroom control, to the detriment of his teaching.

The issue of authenticity is an important one, which has run throughout my enquiry in different guises. My aim throughout was to tell a truthful tale, but this is not as easy as it sounds, nor until I really explored the issue, did I recognise some of the potential for untruth - or different truths - that there is in my record of events. For instance, in 'The Gerbil and Other Stories' (chapter 3), I edited, rather than was untruthful about, my reminiscences to make the stories politically acceptable to the potential readership, and even so, managed to upset some, by having included less than satisfactory behaviour by some children and having included comments that some colleagues would have preferred me to forget. But if I had written it differently, the story would not have been true for me. It is an account of what I felt, as I remembered what had happened and what was said. But because I do not want to upset people, particularly not close colleagues, I could have altered the story to make it politically more acceptable, in which case, I would have been 'uttering a lie'.

I eventually resolved the issue of authenticity by being more selective about what I wrote, and carefully negotiating with the people I wrote about so that I knew they were happy for me to tell their story. Part of the negotiating was about developing the ability to probe and explore our thinking through dialogue, as you can see in 'My Eyes Have Become Different'. This story has been authenticated by being fully shared and discussed with all the participants. It has also been triangulated through the

accounts written by the members of the action research group and accredited by the University through the Post Graduate Action Research Diploma, which all except Fiona (who is submitting later owing to several bouts of illness) passed in March 1995.

As to the accessibility of the text to my colleagues, I need to be specific about who my colleagues are, and the text to which I am referring. Throughout my enquiry, I have had in mind that I want *teachers* to read about what I/we have done, and this is particularly why I wrote about the action research group in the form of a story. I wanted to place the characters in an authentic culture and setting, and I wanted teachers to be able to pick up the book and read as if they were reading a novel. My experience is that teachers do not read educational books, unless they are undertaking University courses. Day, from Nottingham University, quoted in the Guardian (April 11th 1995) said 'teachers are interested in research but don't have time to read it'; and the Guardian report, written by Stephen Pimenoff, went on to say that 'research reports are often impenetrably written, long-winded, pedantic and full of jargon and statistics'.

I wanted my writing to entice teachers to read it to see what happened to the people involved; for instance, Rose, who was just getting over a 'typical' teacher-stress-related illness; or Sarah, who had such a low self image at the start. By reading our story, teachers would have access to their own opportunity to 'reflect in action'. I note that Harlen referred to 'the easy audience, teachers and other professional educators', in the hope that 'we can reach them by writing in the journals and newspapers they read.....' (1994:13). but I fear that, with the oppressive work load current in schools today, teachers have little energy left for reading what professional researchers have to say about how they might improve their practice. This presupposes that teachers will recognise the need in themselves to change. Reading a novel, however, is liberating; it allows you to travel with the author, to have access to the feelings of the characters in the story, and to contemplate your own life in relation to those of the story. Perhaps one of the differences is in how knowledge is propagated - as Winter (1994) pointed out, maybe there is a dichotomy between projecting knowledge onto the world (phallic knowledge - Belenky et al, 1986:122) - as in being told by researchers - and the receptiveness of connected knowledge - in which as

Noddings (1984:30) said, 'I do not project; I receive the other into myself, and I see and feel with the other.'

An autobiographical perspective

My enquiry is set within the context of my leadership role as a woman deputy head in a comprehensive school, and it is my revised understanding of this leadership that I shall explore now.

The title of my enquiry has developed alongside the enquiry itself. Jack Whitehead said that I needed to put the 'I' into the title, as in 'how can I reflect in action as part of my role as a deputy headteacher in a comprehensive school, in order to facilitate teachers' development and to improve children's learning?' I can create this title now that I have completed the research as I can see clearly what I have done; before I started, I might have been likened unto the practitioner who 'lives in the 'low swampy ground' amongst the messy muddles of real life' (Griffiths and Tann, 1991:100). Why does Whitehead say, 'you need to put the 'I' in the title'? Why does he not say, 'You need to include yourself in the title?' What makes the 'I' seem special, whereas 'yourself' is ordinary? The concept of the 'I' is a difficult one - both in terms of revealing the 'I' and in talking about 'I'. In schools, we do not talk in this way about ourselves. On the whole we do not engage in metaphysical introspection, and the suggestion that the 'I' lives both outside of me in the sense that it can be put in the title of my research project, and also is me in the sense that I am prepared to expose myself as living contradiction, is an alien idea.

Nevertheless, I will go along with the idea and elbow my way into the title. I can now stand side by side with the rest of the words and I am looking out from them. I am part of the meaning. If I were not there, I could evade my part in the enquiry. I could look at others. I could make a theoretical study. I could avoid the study touching me. I could avoid changing my ways. But if I go back to study Whitehead's texts (1993, 1994) more carefully, I see that 'I' doesn't just exist on its own. 'I' exists as a living contradiction. So when I see 'I' in the title, I must translate this into 'I - a living contradiction' - or in terms of my own study, my own 'I' reflecting in action, in which my values indicate to me that this is what I want to do - reflect in action, but that my lived experience suggests that I am not doing this as effectively as I wish. This in itself is an embarrassing admission. What school would want a deputy

head who did not reflect on her actions in order to improve them? I am surprised that putting the 'I' into the question does not paralyse the action researcher with fright before a start is made on investigating the situation!

It is hard to talk in terms of 'I', because I have to own what I am saying. By talking in terms of 'I', I have announced that the study will be about me, and my colleagues will have expectations of me as a result. It is really difficult to deliberately make myself vulnerable - to be committed to making myself accountable through publicly expressing my thoughts and feelings. So, how can I use Whitehead's language, which is immersed in its own meaning and is not commonly understood in school communities, and still maintain my integrity as a deputy headteacher in the eyes of my teaching colleagues? In my everyday work I am committed to the demands of my job, the needs of my colleagues and the needs of the pupils. This takes precedence over the language I use to describe and explain my educational development. Therefore, I need to be careful about the language I use as I do not wish to lose the confidence and goodwill of the teachers in school. The teachers are important because they are an integral part of my everyday life. Without their support, my story would be very different. I need to attempt to explain my developing understanding of myself in language which is accessible to teachers.

But I cannot undertake this personal development on my own, and one of the principles of action research drawn up by the Roseacre teachers reinforced the need for collaborative support - *action research is about understanding and developing our sense of ourselves, through listening, talking , sharing and supporting.* In exploring this principle, I have come to the view that there is a social dimension to action research which is at least as important as the need for reflexive study of the self in order to improve practice. Marion Dadds argued cogently that action research is more than a cognitive activity; it embraces 'the need for trust, co-operation and mutual support' (1993b:290), as well as putting oneself 'at risk' (Winter 1989:60; Lomax and Evans, 1995) through self-study. Dadds suggested that action researchers need to learn the skills of emotional management, so that they do not 'employ immediate defence, emotional closure and cognitive closure as the first and disabling strategies' (1993b:300). I think that the group of teacher action researchers at Roseacre have developed heuristically this social

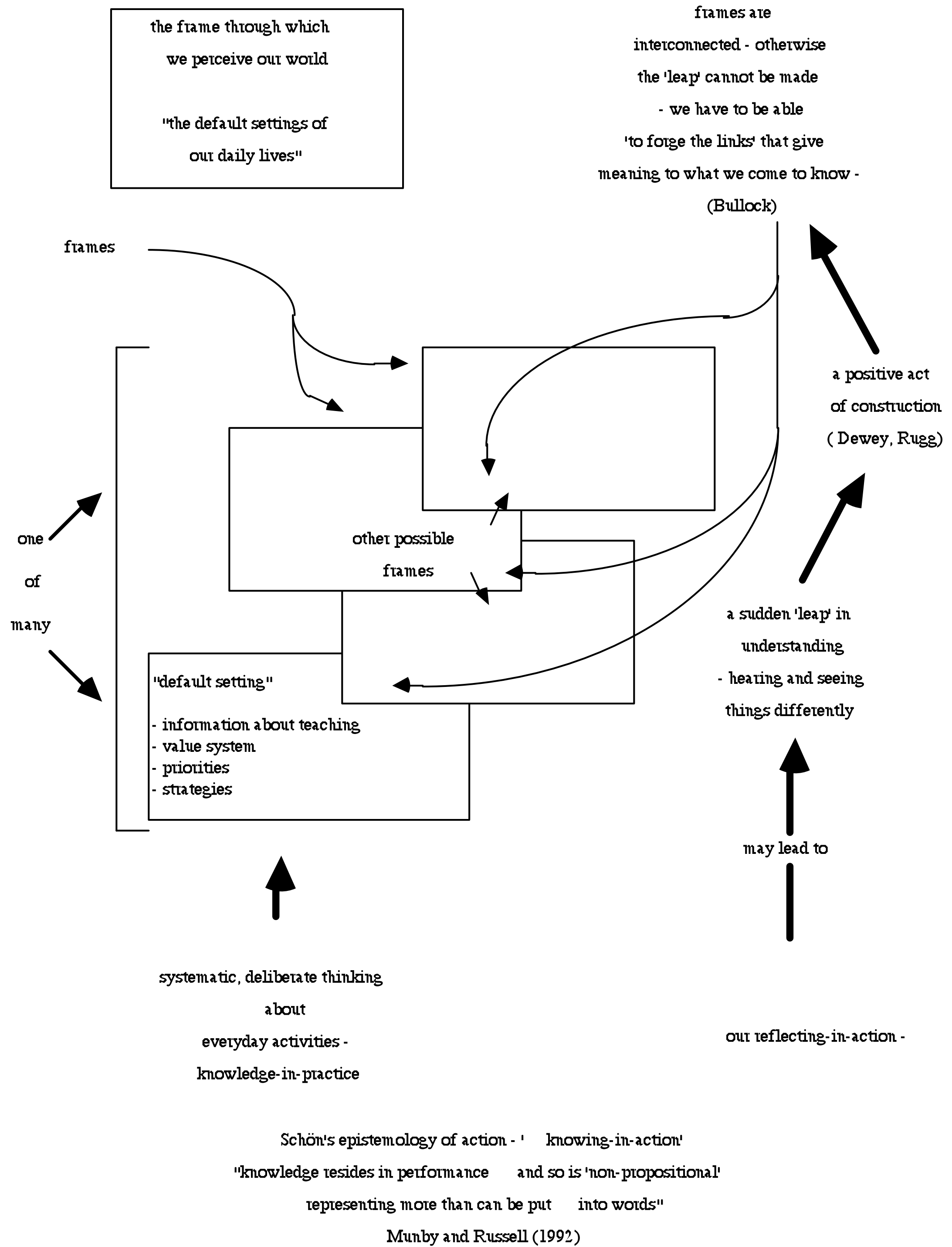
support of each other, as we have encouraged the researcher to recognise and acknowledge emotions within the research, but to distance herself from her own emotions by writing a story of her concerns and to develop her self exploration through calling upon the collegial support of the group.

The social support for me has come from a variety of different people. I gain stimulation and support from the research group at Kingston University, from my supervisors, my close colleagues at school, and also my critical friends, Zoe and Peter. The action research group at school also, through their continued interest in the community we have created together helps to stimulate my interest and also other people's around the school. Without these relationships with people, my work would be considerably impoverished.

But I have also been interested to pursue the concept of reflection in action and to see how reflection can be used to enable me to reconstruct my knowledge from my experiences. Grimmett (1988), in discussing Schön's conception of reflection (1983), pointed out that it takes place 'in the crucible of action'. I think this is a good starting point in that the crucible, or melting pot, conjures up the heat of the moment - 'the action present', as Schön has called it. Schön (1983:165) claimed that teachers needed to 'reflect-in-action' in order to 'reframe the problem'; without 'reframing' the development of understanding is likely to be superficial and the knowledge gained is likely to be 'bolted on'. I found the use of story of great significance in enabling 'reframing' to take place, and in particular, the writing and discussion of the story 'The Canterbury Tales' marked a quantum leap in my understanding of my enquiry as a whole.

Figure 8.5 is a diagrammatic representation of my understanding of the concept of 'framing' and how it relates to change. I have started with Schön's epistemology of action, which is his theory of 'knowledge-in-action'. Teachers act on the basis of decisions they make from their store of intuitive knowledge; by the nature of their work, their judgement of a situation has to be spontaneous, and as a result of their

Figure 8.5



response, so further actions will be set up inevitably. I used to think that intuitive knowledge was a euphemism for acting without thinking, but having thought more about the tacit knowledge referred to by Polanyi (1958), I began to see that, as a teacher, I build up a store of experiences. I relate them to my view of knowledge, my attitudes to children and to learning, my values and beliefs which have been gradually developing through my lifetime, so that I have a vast store of knowledge from which to draw

in my decision making process. But I do not spend time thinking through this tacit knowledge. My knowledge is 'implicit in my actions'; I can use it instantaneously
(MacKinnon and Erickson 1992:199). But I act on the basis of the way in which I 'frame' (Minsky 1975, Schön, 1983, Wyer and Srull, 1984) my experience and existing knowledge. My 'frame' is the way in which I 'perceive and execute' my professional tasks - 'the default settings of (my) daily life' (Barnes, 1992:16).

The frame that I bring to any context allows me to interpret what is going on there, including unexpected features and events. As an experienced teacher, I frame my response to situations and events on the basis of my previous experience and knowledge, my values, my attitudes towards learning, my priorities, the strategies I would expect to work in a given context, and so on. It follows, then, that everyone's frames will be different, and I have the potential to move from one frame into another one of my own making, but I will not do so unless my current frame proves to be uncomfortable in accommodating how I wish to act or what I am trying to understand.

Figure 8.5 can be used to explain the frames through which I might perceive my life. I operate from one frame only, but it will be 'one of many', and I refer to my knowledge-in-practice in my everyday role, systematically thinking and referring to my frame to enable me to make judgements about what I shall do and how I shall do it. Through 'reflecting-in-action', critically reflecting on my understandings so far, and looking at the problem from different perspectives, I can come to a new understanding of the meaning of that which had been puzzling me. Each new reflection-in-action increases the 'range and variety of repertoire' that I can bring to future unfamiliar situations (Schön 1983:140). This sudden 'leap' to hear and see things differently, Schön refers to as 'reframing' the problem.

Reflecting-in-action presents the situation differently, with a construction of a new frame which will accommodate the newly understood information. It seems to me that this is the positive act of construction referred to by Dewey (1909/1933:14-15), Rugg (1947:114-15), Bullock (1975), and Groundwater-Smith (1988:256). If I cannot reframe the problem, then I either remain disconcerted by it, and continue to feel the incongruity, or I abandon my attempts to sort it out, probably claiming that it is

of little consequence anyway! If I do manage to reframe the problem, my new frame overlaps with the old frame. I cannot totally overthrow all my experience, values and beliefs in order to accommodate the new information, but I see the world differently from how I perceived it before. When reframing does take place, the fact that the frames need to overlap progressively accounts for why any progress made is only a small step at a time.

This brings me back to the process of change. Schön's exposition of reframing indicated that if I cannot reframe my way of looking at a problem, I cannot comprehend the change I may need to accept in order to deal differently with whatever the problem is. I may go along with a change someone else suggests, but I may not understand it and so my frame remains the same. I may be persuaded to act differently, but I will find my actions incongruent with the way I frame the problem, so I will be unhappy with my actions, which will seem to be 'bolted on' to my customary practice.

I think I can apply this to Eloise's situation (Chapter 4). Her 'default setting' was too far away from where we wanted her to be, and that for her to have reframed her pedagogical stance would have represented too large a jump, which she was unable to do. Perhaps this was why she appeared to reject the in-service support we offered her.

There needs to be a precipitating factor, situation, experience, or problem which unsettles the teacher's equilibrium and causes him or her to wrestle with their current understanding; they have to feel uncomfortable with the situation before an attempt will be made to reframe. If a teacher has no reason to believe that a change in teaching behaviour would be beneficial, then there is no impetus which might drive him or her towards any reframing of their conception of the situation. Whitehead (1993:80) referred to a potential impetus as the recognition of a conflict in the teacher's values, which acts as a catalyst in moving the teacher on to investigate how he or she can act to change his or her practice through the dialectic formulation of a living educational theory. If support can be given to enable the teacher to ask the question, and to pursue possible solutions, then she is able to start from 'where she is now', and so it is possible for differentiation to be structured into the in-service programme. I found that encouraging teachers to write their stories of their concerns enabled them to find a starting point,

and to ask their own questions following this, in much the same way as I had done over 'The Canterbury Tales'.

But teachers do not operate in isolation; they are part of an institution and need to fit in with the prevailing norms of ethos and culture (Fullan 1982, Barnes 1992, Nias 1985, Lortie 1975, and Riseborough 1985). Barnes (op.cit.:27) pointed to the fact that teachers' frames are greatly influenced by the institutions in which they work. He said the school elements which affect the way in which teachers conceptualise aspects of their work include:

> 'the effects of bureaucratic practices on the control of teaching; the effects of age, career goals, and specialism on individual teachers' frames; the presence of powerful subgroups within the overall ethos of the school; the effects of diverse and unclear goals upon teaching practices; the influence of students' priorities and behaviour; and the forces that lead to an anti-theoretical bias in the profession'

Barnes (1992:23) pointed to the need for mutual trust to be developed if change was wanted within the institution. For change to be effective, the conditions of support and challenge needed to be set by the professionals. As Hargreaves and Fullan (1992:1-19) said, the school should be managed to take account of the need to provide conditions conducive to facilitate teacher development, for instance in setting time aside for meetings, in supporting the financial resourcing of teachers' learning and in avoiding 'quick fixes' in terms of training. Further strategies for development include 'involving staff in decision-making processes, valuing staff contributions and initiatives, and developing school cultures in which teachers work closely together and support each other in the improvement and change process' (op.cit.:14). This, of course, is easier said than done, and much of the substance of my enquiry was concerned with how supportive, yet challenging groups of colleagues can be set up and encouraged to take responsibility for their own further development. This has become the complex response to what started out in the beginning as a relatively straightforward investigation into reflecting in action as a deputy headteacher.

One of the principles of action research that the Roseacre group came to 'own' was that *action research is about dialogue, collegiality and support for each other. It is about building a learning community which recognises the centrality of feelings, and the need to express these as part of the learning process.* Until I undertook this study, I would have paid lip service to dialogue, collegiality, support and the expression of feelings as part of the learning process. I 'knew' about them in that I had read of the importance, for instance, of feelings in learning, partly through John Holt's work on 'How Children Fail' (1964). But I had not experienced the significance of feelings in learning for adults in quite the same way as I have during the last four years, and I believe my understanding of this emerges in this story of my development - in this unit of appraisal (Whitehead, 1993:72, 1994:5).

I have often been asked why the Action Research group at school is composed mainly of women, and, before studying the literature on feminist theory, I was at a loss to answer this to my satisfaction. There was never an intention that it should be a mainly-women group, but for much of the time it has been. We have often asked ourselves how the group manages to function so well, and why teachers keep wanting to come to the meetings, despite sometimes, great pressure of work. How do we manage to be a learning community, in which dialogue plays a large part in supporting our development?

I went to the literature on feminist epistemology in an attempt to explain what was happening. Feminist theory on relatedness and empathy particularly interested me in relation to the interactions of the action research group and I wondered if this might contribute towards an explanation of our ability, as a group, to explore teaching dilemmas in a way which enabled each of us to move forward in our enquiries. My exploration brought me to the feminist theory of 'difference'. This theory of difference, argued by Gilligan (1982) holds that there is a general concept of 'normal human development' which is 'embedded in psychological discourses and has a male gender specific basis.' (Usher and Edwards, 1994:193) Harding (1986) and Gilligan (op cit.) suggested that girls and women are socialised to see identity, morality and education differently from boys and men. Gilligan talked of autonomy, separateness and independence as being particularly linked to masculinity, and says 'For boys and men, separation and individuation are critically tied to gender identity since the separation from the other is essential for the development of masculinity'. (Gilligan, quoted in Tennant, 1988:60-61)

She went on to point up 'the quality of embeddedness in social interaction and personal relationships which characterises women's lives in contrast to men's', whilst Walkerdine (1989) drew attention to the fact that within theories and practices of education, gender assumptions promote male rationality against female emotionality and it is believed that the emotions, more finely tuned in women, undermine the capacity for rational thought. Gilligan (op cit.) and Lyons (1983) drew attention to responsibility orientation rather than rights orientation in women, and said that this leads to conceptions of self that are 'rooted in a sense of connection and relatedness to others, whereas the rights orientation is more common to those who define themselves in terms of separation and autonomy.' (Belenky et al, 1986:8). Chodorow (1978) and Miller (1976) both claimed that more women than men see themselves in 'terms of their relationships and connections to others' (Belenky et al, op. cit.:8), although Belenky pointed out that such 'differences in self definitions do not necessarily divide along gender lines'. (op cit.:8).

I was uneasy with the concept of 'difference' in feminist epistemology, as I felt it opened up the argument that women can do certain things and men can do others, whereas my experience suggests that there is sufficient overlap between men and women for the difference argument to be of little consequence and in particular, as Kenway and Modra said (1991:145) 'definitions of girls' ways of learning and of girls' interests and motivations are developed which tap right back into gender stereotypes from which escape is sought.' I do not want to explain our group dynamics in terms of stereotypes, although I find I am in certain sympathy with the models of communication and knowledge generation which are ascribed to women. Case (1993a, 1994), for instance, talked of women's speech - 'indirectness, mitigation of criticism, solicitation of others' ideas, mutual sharing' (1994:160) - as being supportive of a climate in which problems can be exposed and attempts made to solve them, and went on to say that males having a 'wide verbal repertoire' show advanced active listening skills such that they can act supportively in a way which is more usually associated with women.

But even though I am strongly drawn to this argument, my experience in school tells me that it is not always the case. I know of a team which is all-women, but in which mutual sharing, solicitation of others' ideas and empathy is almost non-existent. Halberg, (1989:5), in a critique of feminist epistemology, raised particular doubts about the theory of difference in relation to men's and women's reasoning. She pointed out that both men and women use their experiences in thinking about reality, and if we were to accept that their thinking is different, this presupposes not only that their experiences will be also, but that there will be 'very similar and gender-specific experiences within the two sexes'. I think it is unlikely that this would be the case, as a feminist epistemology based on experience would need women to be divided into many subgroups - black, middle class, working class, old, young, managers, non-managers, and so on - and to relate their way of knowing with the many different kinds of experiences they have been through as members of these groups. So there would be a female managers' epistemology, or a young, white, middle class, professional woman's epistemology - thereby fragmenting the concept of communality of women's thinking. As Halberg suggested, this highly relativist view of knowledge is of little help in determining an epistemological standpoint.

Belenky et al (1986) researched women's epistemologies in a study which involved only women, thereby giving voice to what they called 'women's ways of knowing'. This is not to say that only women know in these ways, but that the study was taken from women as subjects, and it is perfectly possible that men could have a way of knowing which fits one or other of the categories described. Belenky et al were excited by finding 'separate' and 'connected' knowing in the lives of the women to whom they spoke, and felt that the theories of feminist writers (Gilligan 1982, Lyons 1983) came alive in their study. They pointed to relatedness within the connected way of knowing and said 'Connected knowers develop procedures for gaining access to other people's knowledge. At the heart of these procedures is the capacity for empathy. Since knowledge comes from experience, the only way they can hope to understand another person's ideas is to try to share the experience that has led the person to form the idea.' (Belenky et al, 1986:113). They advocated connectedness, and talked of the connected teacher, who tries to create groups of people who 'nurture each other's thoughts to maturity' (p221).

I find this a helpful idea. I can relate 'the connected teacher' to my role as the leader of the action research group, and my view is that by offering opportunities to teachers to share their experiences and their thoughts and feelings about those experiences, I have created an environment where they feel comfortable and, having learnt to trust each other, are prepared to share their private thoughts with the group, to help other group members to explore their own, and to add to their knowledge base through nurturing each other's ideas. It is not just because we are (mainly) women that we can do this, but because we have entered into a 'connected class', in which we work collaboratively to support each other's development. A further dimension is that both I as the teacher and the teachers as the students are engaged in reflection - I do not come to the meetings with answers to their problems, tell them to do things and go away again. We are all involved in searching for solutions to problems and as Freire (1971:67) said, 'through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers.'

My view of leadership has changed as I have developed my practice throughout this study. In terms of facilitating teachers' learning, I understand much more about taking people with me, rather than dominating or controlling the groups with whom I work. The feminist reconstruction of leadership asserts that 'the ability to act with others to do things that could not be done by an individual alone' rejects the individualism and dominance of masculinist models of leadership and stresses the value of relationality, and 'women's experience, which is affective or experientially based' (Blackmore, 1989:123). This account of my action research is an account of my leadership; it is a description and explanation of my life as a deputy head in a comprehensive school.

Whitehead (1993:67) claimed that when an action researcher asked herself the question 'How can I improve this process of education here?' and followed this through with a systematic enquiry made public, she was creating a living educational theory. The living educational theory is the account of the 'description and explanation' of the researcher's educational development. The living educational theory documents the changes the researcher has brought about in her practice and in herself, and gives explanations for them. How have the changes happened? What has the action researcher done to implement them? What are her reflections upon the actions and the outcomes of the actions? How

does all this tie in with what other people have done or theorised about? What does the researcher know now about her practice?

Whitehead went on to say that living educational theories cannot be presented in propositional form, as this does not accommodate the question and answer of the kind 'How can I improve this process of education here?' A theory presented in propositional form is given as a statement of fact; it does not contain contradiction or reflexivity within it. Living educational theories, however, answer questions but also raise others, and may contain within the discourse propositional logic to support an argument or as part of a dialectical critique. Whitehead argued for 'a reconstruction of educational theory into a living form of question and answer which includes propositional contributions from the traditional disciplines of education.' (op. cit.:68).

Newby (1994:120) in taking McNiff (1993) to task for extrapolating from Whitehead's writing that traditional and propositional forms of knowledge should be abandoned in favour of living educational theories, argued for the place of propositional logic in judging the results of an action enquiry. He pointed out that being reflective, honest and seeking the 'evolution of a caring and rational society' (McNiff, op. cit.:107) are not sufficient conditions for producing acceptable research. He warned that 'thinking can be done expertly or badly, and that traditions of expertise are digests of the best that has gone before' and should be used by action researchers to inform their practice through engaging in 'dialogue with the experts'. I agree with both Newby and Whitehead that propositional logic is important as part of our tradition of knowledge, and I have sought to integrate it into the story of my development. I have used it both to support and to cast light on my reflections, and to inform my thinking when I am planning for further action research cycles.

In his further exposition of 'theory', Whitehead (p 68) quoted Argyris and Schön (1975):

> 'Theories are theories regardless of their origin: there are practical, common sense theories as well as academic or scientific theories. A theory is not necessarily accepted, good or true; it is only a set of interconnected propositions that have the same referent - the subject of the theory.

> Their interconnectedness is reflected in the logic of relationships among propositions: change in propositions at one point in the theory entails change in propositions elsewhere in it. Theories are vehicles for explanation and prediction. Explanatory theory explains events by setting forth propositions from which these events may be inferred. A predictive theory sets forth propositions from which inferences about future events may be made..........'

I think this helps to demystify 'theories' for me and points to the fact that theories can change - they are not fixed and immutable - and if inferences about future events in my life can be made then theories can be considered as personal rather than as belonging to others - as in belonging to academic researchers. I think my thesis, which Whitehead called 'the unit of appraisal' (Whitehead 1993:72), is a description and explanation of a part of my professional life, using propositional logic to inform some of my dilemmas and questions, and makes a claim to know my own educational development. It makes sense of my practice, and I own it as my living educational theory.

Developing teacher knowledge through action research means looking at teaching as an intellectual activity rather than as a series of technical strategies. Education has been construed by Aristotle, in 'The Nicomachean Ethics' (1955) as technical, practical and theoretical reasoning, in which the technical is the application of given means to achieve known ends - the teacher is told what to do and how to do it - for instance in teacher assessment for National Curriculum levels; practical reasoning, on the other hand, makes decisions based on previous experience and knowledge and takes a course of action in which neither the means nor the ends are known beforehand. Theoretical reasoning, according to Aristotle, is concerned with intellectual questions of the kind of abstract concepts rather than theorising about the real world of practice. Theoretical reasoning fits with the rarefied ethos of academia; my argument against it is that the theorising I do as a teacher researcher which arises from practice rather than contemplation, is counted as mattering less.

Kemmis, 1995:11-17, argued that the work of Habermas reinterpreted these theories of reasoning, and, together with the work of Schön (1983, 1987) on 'the reflective practitioner' pointed to the links between thought and action as part of the role of a researching teacher. Indeed, Schön urged us to move away

from the 'technical rationality' mode of teaching, in which 'many practitioners, locked into a view of themselves as technical experts, find nothing in the world of practice to occasion reflection..........For them, uncertainty is a threat; its admission a sign of weakness.' Against this, Hollingsworth and Sockett (1994:36) quoted Zumwalt (1982) also, along with Schön, who advocated teaching as an intellectual activity involving the 'deliberative ability to reflect on, and make wise decisions about, practice', while Lytle and Cochran Smith (1994:37), promoted a view of teaching as research, in which teacher learning is seen as 'constructive, meaning-centred and social.' They said, further, that learning from teaching should be a commitment throughout a teacher's professional career. They believed that if learning from teaching were to be seen as a normal part of a teacher's life, then teachers' knowledge would be treated as legitimate and authoritative, as the school and school activities are central features in the construction of teacher knowledge. The academy and the school would then become more equal partners in the development of teacher knowledge.

I think my living educational theory shows powerfully not only the construction of my own knowledge as a teacher across a period of four years, but it also shows how I have developed a structure within the school to enable experienced teachers to collaborate in learning from their experiences, and to use this learning to project themselves into action research cycles which change their thinking and actions as teachers and, when shared with a wider audience, add to the knowledge base of teaching.

But does anyone take any notice of this knowledge drawn from teachers' theorising about the practical activity of teaching? Zeichner (1994:73) revealed the worrying contradiction in his own practice, which was pointed up by Somekh at a CARN conference, that he used his students' enquiries as examples of action research, and testified to the transformational character of teacher research for the participants involved, but that he had not made use of the knowledge so obtained. As a result of this realisation, he advocated that there was a need 'to find a more central place for teacher-produced knowledge which incorporates the voices of teachers and students in teacher education courses'.

But teacher knowledge, it could be argued, is not necessarily any better or more secure than 'academic' knowledge. Many writers, including Kemmis and Carr (1986), Whitehead (1993) McNiff (1992) Lomax

(1995), Zeichner (1994), have talked of the need to promote a good social order through educational research, but I suspect that there is no common view as to what a 'good social order' actually means in practice. I would argue that I have come to my value positions strongly influenced by my supervisors, my senior colleagues at school, my school culture, my reading, my experiences, my reflections and my pre-existing beliefs and attitudes. My values are based on equality of opportunity for all pupils, but I suspect that as a teacher in a comprehensive school, my view of this is influenced by the culture of the school and how we interpret equal opportunities. Equality of opportunity can also be seen differently by men and women. It is not always possible to see the concept from the perspective of 'the other' - it rather depends on how one is experiencing the world at the time.

But although it is possible to look at action researchers who say 'we want to promote a better world' and be dubious about the question 'is their better world the same as mine?' it is also clear to me that, in engaging in teacher research, I believe that my values lead my actions in moving towards a more fulfilling and satisfying way of life for me, and for those with whom I work. I am driven to change my practices because I recognise that they do not reflect fully my values, and I therefore feel ill at ease with myself. I take steps to change my actions and the way in which I see and think about my actions. I set about changing myself for the better - better in the sense of living more consistently the set of values that I hold. I believe that this is a value-laden, educational process - that I am taking part in an educational enquiry to get in touch with and live more fully my values about being a deputy head and supporting teaching and learning. It is educational because I act to change myself according to the values to which I am committed.

But I do not think I can do this on my own. I need a group of people to challenge my thinking, to put alternative points of view, to point out inconsistencies in my thinking, to make problematic the assumptions I have taken for granted; in short, to engage in dialectic critique. I need to be able to trust those other people, so that I can be open in my dialogue with them. I want to feel their support and to know that they treat my enquiry seriously, and will give me critical feedback on it. I want to feel confident that the group will help me move towards creating a 'better world' and that we will challenge each other to explore, to put into words which expose their meaning and to live more fully, both our

own values and the values implicit in the aims of the school. I think the power of the action research group - at Roseacre School and at Kingston University, goes some way, through dialectical critique (Winter 1989,p 46-55), towards questioning ineffective thinking (see Newby earlier) and a complacent understanding of one's own values.

When I started my action research enquiry in September 1991, into the role of reflecting in action as a deputy headteacher, I recognised values I held which I came to identify as being negated, to some extent, in my practice (Whitehead, 1993:80). They were:

- I valued equality of opportunity, in which teachers should be able to talk, share thoughts, feelings and experiences, and have access to qualifications
- I valued offering the opportunity for teachers, and children - to develop the self so that they can become autonomous, taking control of their lives, rather than being swept along by the tide
- I valued being part of a thinking and creative school culture
- I valued a love of learning and believed that pupils deserve teaching which inspires them to love learning, so my responsibility was to help teachers achieve this

I still hold these values, but now recognise other values which have emerged through my practice over the last four years.

- I value collaborative support within schools, which can and should make rigorous demands on people- both 'recipients' and 'originators'
- I have respect for and belief in those people who want to learn and to change and I am excited at seeing professional and personal change taking place, which ultimately benefits children in classrooms
- I value the use of dialogue as a means of exploring our understanding of teaching and learning

By December 1994, I, and the action researchers at Roseacre, were able to draw together six principles of action research (Chapter 7) as a result of the enquiry in which I had engaged. I was interested to see strong affective and relational connections running through my principles - understanding myself,

dialogue, support, communities, feelings, fiction, reflection, intervention, and discovery which were in keeping with the emerging values. Whilst other models of action research include some of these in varying degrees, I believe that the strength of our school community of action researchers lies particularly in the development of in-school dialogue and support, strengthened through the use of fiction, and the recognition of expressing feelings and experiences in learning situations. Feminist theories of knowing have helped me to understand our experiences, and, through our final principle, I can look back on *action research as being our own voyage of discovery about our lived experiences, using the literature to develop our thinking about our practices.*

I have recorded my voyage of discovery in this account of my professional development over the last four years. My lived experiences are the stories of how I worked with Departments A and B, the Heads of Year, the Action Research Group, the Curriculum Group and so on, to improve our practice. These stories are situated in my personal experiences, but I have also related them to theories of teaching and learning in the literature - so that I can make sense of them in relation to other people's thinking and actions.

In drawing the stories together into this account, I have created a 'living educational theory', in which I have incorporated propositional theories to help to explain my experiences. I have evaluated 'theory' against my lived experiences to see whether the theory sheds light on my practice, rather than giving my practice as an example of a particular theory. I believe I am using theoretical knowledge in seeking to explain my work, and in so doing I am using theory and practice to answer the question 'How do I improve the process of education here?' I am bringing to life and adapting the theory, as I am clothing it in an experience through which I have lived. I arrive at my own view of the truth of the situation through critically examining my experience, the theories I read and my reflections on what has happened. But I also, as Hollingsworth (1994c:77) pointed out, come to what I know through 'relationship'. Relational knowing, according to Hollingsworth (op cit.:78) 'is similar to Clandidin and Connelly's (Clandinin, 1986; Connelly and Clandinin, 1988) notion of personal, practical knowledge, embodied in persons, embracing moral, emotional and aesthetic senses, and enacted in situations.' So I come to know as a result of knowing about myself, and about my relationships with my colleagues and

with the situations in which I work. Much of this relational knowing I have come to as a result of the conversational nature of my experiences - through the trust built within the learning communities of teachers which enabled the participants to question, comment, explore, give voice to hesitant thoughts, make tentative statements, make jokes, come to conclusions.

Griffiths (1994:73) claimed that feminist theory in relation to education (Weiner 1994; Arnot and Weiler 1993; Hollingsworth 1994) challenged 'the neutrality of traditional epistemology.' Until I read more about feminist epistemology, I thought that this would be a women-only epistemology, based on the radical feminist view that women have been dominated by men in a patriarchal society throughout the centuries. I thought that a feminist stance would therefore exclude men, and I was unhappy with this as a concept. I had no reason in my recent experiences to want to exclude men, and particularly to make them feel I was criticising them. In my own work situation, I do think that much progress has been made to develop more 'women-friendly organisations and practices' (Weiner 1994:56) characterised by the lessening of hierarchical leadership and emphasising collaboration rather than competition (see Chapter 1). And I agree with Griffiths (1994:74), who made clear in her review of feminist epistemology that 'feminist challenges are addressed to everyone: the challenge is to find an epistemology which is suitable for both men and women.'

Feminist theory takes a standpoint against positions of privilege, whether of gender, race, class, handicap, and so on; it therefore supports the value position of equality of opportunity. But Griffiths then points to the diverse views of feminist epistemologists, claiming that on only one thing are they all agreed, namely that there is no single 'God's eye view' of knowledge. There is no objective truth. The starting point for feminist epistemology is that knowledge is always located in the self or subjectivity; once beyond this first step the agreement ends. She said that the message of 'the epistemological lesson for everyone - both men and women - is that ....a method needs to include (1) individual experience; (2) theory; (3) time for a process of reflection and re-thinking; and (4) the perspectives of various groups chosen on political grounds.' (op. cit.:75).

<u>Criteria for Judgement</u>

And finally to the judgements made about my work. Michael Bassey (1994:2) said that the quality of research can be 'described, but not measured. It can be discussed, but not defined with precision.'. He went on to refer to quality in 'the elegance of the process' and 'the elegance of the product', and, more particularly in relation to the product he suggested that 'quality in educational research requires the outcome of research to have a significant and worthwhile effect on the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy makers towards improving educational action.'

I believe that my action research enquiry did have a significant worthwhile effect on my educational judgements and those of the teachers with whom I worked, and as Whitehead has said, I think the standards on which I am judged should be the meaning of the values which have emerged through the course of my research enquiry over the last four years. Whitehead (1993:71) claimed that 'values are embodied in our practice and their meaning can be communicated in the course of their emergence in practice'. This seems to me to be entirely consistent with an enquiry which is grounded in practice - that the judgement should be made on whether I have shown through this account that my values have emerged as being lived in my practice.

My first claim is about a new approach to school based staff development, which contributes to the improvement of the quality of education within the school. Have I shown the multi-dimensional nature of judging improvements in children's learning? Have I shown that improvements in the quality of teaching have taken place through the transformation of teachers' views of themselves? Have I shown the significance of teachers asking and answering their own questions, within the supportive framework of a trusting group? Have I demonstrated how I improved the quality of support I offered teachers in encouraging them to pursue their professional development, throughout this thesis, from working with department A in the early stages to working with the action researchers at the close of my story?

My second claim is about the use of story. I would like this to be judged on whether I have shown the power of reflection on and through story, and its use as a means of learning; on whether I have shown the excitement and exhilaration of writing and sharing stories for personal renewal and professional

reconstruction; on whether I have demonstrated a new way of representing research through story, incorporating my thoughts and feelings into the text, enabling the reader to consider these concurrently with the more traditionally recorded data, particularly in 'My eyes have become different'. I would like the reader to consider whether my first case study (The Canterbury Tales) shows how I developed my inservice work with teachers, as I reflected on how teachers learn through analysis and discussion of experiences that can lead to reframing, through exploring the ways in which they construct knowledge, and therefore need opportunity to make sense of it, through discussion and emotional and intellectual support.

<u>Post-Script</u>

I would like to draw my thesis together by exploring a very recent paper by Gore and Zeichner, 1995, in which, through examining what they referred to as the dangers of emancipatory action research, they showed a shift in their thinking away from critical theory and, in my view, moved towards a feminist epistemology. Gore and Zeichner (1995:204) argued that despite all the rhetoric from the academic community about empowering teachers through creating a knowledge base for teaching, the development of teachers is merely illusory. They claimed that teachers' theories, embedded in and arising from their practice, should be given the recognition they deserve, rather than, as is currently the case, the academic world reifying its own knowledge of teaching, and, through emancipatory action research, directing teachers to develop what academics think teachers need to know, and encouraging teachers to study what counts as 'socially critical knowledge' through the way courses and assessment are structured. Teacher education has been highjacked in the interests of giving educational research a higher profile but the irony is that the knowledge generated in teacher action research studies is not used as part of the knowledge base of teaching. According to Gore and Zeichner, teacher educators are seeking a more just, humane and equitable world and hope to achieve this through encouraging teachers to undertake emancipatory action research. What is not wholly clear is whether it is common practice for teacher educators to study their own practice through action research in order that they themselves are part of this movement to improve social justice. If they do not, there doesn't seem to be much justice or respect for the teachers over whom they have influence. It could be argued that teachers are disenfranchised because academics speak for them in creating 'teacher knowledge'. They

encourage teachers to change their practices to create a better world, but do not value the status of knowledge that teachers produce about their practice, and do not see it as inconsistent if they, as teacher educators, do not put their own theories to the test of practice and engage in their own cycles of action research to improve the social situations in which they work.

The question that I am perplexed about is, has emancipatory action research emancipated anyone? If it had emancipated teachers, their accounts would be recognised alongside those of the academic community, but as Gore and Zeichner, Lytle and Cochran Smith (1992) and others have said, this is not the case. If it had emancipated women, there would be more accounts of both men and women, instead of mostly women, seeking social justice for this oppressed group and there would be more practical outcomes, such as more women headteachers and deputies.

Weiner (1989:47) has written what she described as a critical analysis of the teacher researcher movement, saying that 'mainstream (male-stream) researchers' were characterised by 'the neutral teacher, the reflective practitioner and critical enquiry'. Mainstream researchers claimed to be radical (Elliott, 1981) and addressed controversial issues, yet they ignored gender as one of these. Neutrality implied that somehow, the research was to be value-free. Feminist writers challenged this mainstream view of research and of social justice because it was premised on a masculinist perspective of power. It is interesting that Kemmis and Carr (1986:130) talked about educational theory being concerned to 'identify and expose those aspects of existing social order which frustrate the pursuit of rational goals...' and to 'improve the rationality and justice of their practice.......or their situations....' (1983:162) Yet why, if it was so important to challenge these injustices, did Kemmis and Carr only talk about it, and point the way for other people to act? Did they ask the question, 'how can I work to free society from the restrictions it imposes on girls and women?' Or 'how can I empower women so that equal opportunities in academia (or schools) are real?' Why haven't they - and other critical theorists - demonstrated in their practice what this most altruistic of theories meant? Is this the ultimate in living contradictions, that theorists propound the theory of the need to move towards a more just and equitable world, and then do not notice that they are not doing it themselves? Or is it simply the case that 'theoretical

knowledge' is more highly prized than 'practical doing'; that 'thinking about doing' is better than 'doing' and changing life's inequities? How can this be?

Griffiths (1995:231) pointed to a range of feminist views of knowledge, and that there were many differences between them. But she also found commonalities. She said feminist epistemologies 'spring from a moral/political stance, which upholds freedom, justice and solidarity for women, and they pay explicit attention to 'self' or 'subjectivity' of women.' So feminist epistemologies are not neutral, they hold a moral/political value and construct the self through valuing experience. Barrett (1980) and Arnot (1982; 1993) pointed to male middle class values as being propagated in schools and Weiner (1989:49) drew attention to the need for feminists to understand 'the power of structures which maintain social inequalities both inside and outside the school'.

Eames (1995:435), a school teacher who has established action research as a form of professional development in his school, has linked feminist epistemologies and grass-roots teacher action research. Weiner (1989:47) referred to feminist researchers as sharing certain assumptions, which Eames thought were close to those of teacher researchers, and included that changes should be made in the social/economic/political position of teachers and women; that their experiences should be made visible, and that teacher research and feminist research need not necessarily be about, but should be for, teachers and women.

In their chapter, Gore and Zeichner (1995:211) have moved towards a form of action research informed by feminist epistemologies; they saw action research as being 'emancipatory' within the particular situation in which it takes place; they wanted teachers and student teachers to work together, and urged teacher educators to 'spend time reflexively addressing the emancipatory processes in which they are engaged.' They have opened a discussion on 'how our use of action research contributes toward or hinders the realisation of greater educational equity and social justice.'

I think it is important that as a teacher I reflect on my practice. Through this enquiry I have become aware of the androcentrism of much writing about teachers and teacher knowledge and have been

surprised at my own failure to recognise this in the past. Although I am pleased that I now understand 'the female lens' through which to explore my practice, I am concerned that, on talking with a group of academics, I was advised to 'play down' the feminist underpinning to my work! Two things concerned me; first, that feminist theory is evidently still not understood or validated by the academic community and secondly, that something as fundamental as how my life's experiences informed my work should be cast aside in the interests of academia. I reiterate Griffiths' (1994:74) exhortation that 'feminist challenges are addressed to everyone: the challenge is to find an epistemology which is suitable for both men and women.'

I reject the critical theory approach to action research and replace it with a relational form of action research operating within a dialogical community, in which experience is valued and shared, the development of trust is a central feature and improvement in the professional practices of teachers is the expected outcome. Through this means social justice can gradually be lived in practice, and teacher development will contribute to the enhancement of the life chances of our students.

Epilogue

The Princess remembered her conversation with the Queen
"What are you doing?" the Queen had asked.
"Well," the Princess replied, finishing her cartwheel and holding her breath in some trepidation, "I've found a new way of going on. I'm engaging in a different perspective!"
"A different perspective!" murmured the Queen. "Whatever next!"

The Princess of Trampogymnastics had peered from under the wide brim of her hat at her teams and announced,
"I think my new perspective is good. Just look at Hats over there - how much they are helping each other, and what interesting shapes they have made. And also, the Square Table team is beginning to think for itself."

The Queen had shaken her head quizzically as she walked away, but was there an uncertain smile of approval on her face?
"Only time will tell!" thought the Princess of Trampogymnastics, as she resumed her cartwheeling activities.

"So what tale did time tell?" the Princess asked herself three years later.

Well, it told of how the Queen bowed out two years ago and was replaced by another leader. As he settled into his job, she began to see differences between Queenship and Kingship. She grew accustomed to his style, and was pleased to share her perspective with him. She saw signs that he wanted to learn about girls' and women's experiences in education and she liked to talk about these and was pleased when he engaged with the issues and argued with her about them.

Over the three years the Princess had less and less need of cartwheeling, as she was able to maintain her 'new' perspective in her leadership of all her teams. The Square Table got involved in various important initiatives, and Hats grew to Hats 2 and eventually to Hats 3. The 'Starting Management' team got going and was excited to see how relevant its learning was to the realities of school life.

The Princess thought through the highlights of her new perspective and decided that the greatest moment had come in a meeting of Hats 2. A young teacher had been videoing her tutorial session with her Year 11 form. She'd been with her tutor group since she started teaching four years ago - they had grown together, and the tutor, Becky, had become very skilled at working with them. She had wanted to improve the 'feedback' sessions at the end of the lessons. Through the discussion on her video, she suddenly came to realise that feedback should come from the students, whereas she had thought 'feedback' was her skill in summing up the learning. She wrote 'The impact from this comment by Nicole was enormous. It was like seeing one of those 3-D pictures for the first time. It's so obvious to the people that can see it and it's such a delight when you do eventually see it yourself! I couldn't wait to share it with someone. I was astounded. I had mixed up the real definition

of feedback. I had it in my head that my summary at the end of the lesson was feedback.

'It was a huge realisation, with mixed emotions, when it actually clicked. At first I didn't want to admit that I had misunderstood such a simple concept. But this didn't last as I was excited to realise what it was all about..........Now I can't believe that I hadn't understood the concept of feedback in the classroom........Having made this realisation I couldn't wait to incorporate it into my next tutorial session.'

The expression on Becky's face had changed from one of puzzlement, to dawning recognition and then to the amazement which comes across in her account. Her excitement was infectious.

Becky had shared her experiences with us and we had felt privileged to be a part of her happiness.